

SOMERTON U3A

Newsletter 3

June 2020



LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE

Chairman's Message

I am very pleased to tell you that your Committee met last week, yes we did. A Zoom meeting was quite an experience for most of us, we survived and completed our decisions in just under 2 hours! Our main focus has been the AGM and also enrolment for the new membership year. We will give you more details as to how we are going to manage these very important dates with in the next few weeks. Until then keep listen to the news and keep yourselves safe .

Judi



Editor's Note

Welcome to the third edition of the Somerton U3A newsletter.

The theme this month is "Gardens" and members have shown us how spending time in their gardens has given them so much pleasure over the last couple of months.

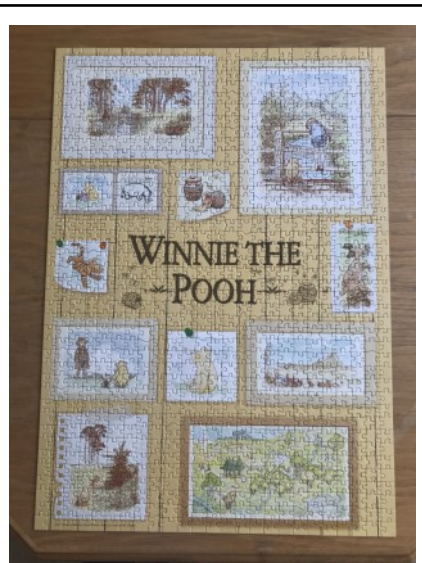
For those of you not of a horticultural bent, have no garden or are no longer able to tend one, we would love to know how you have been spending your time.

In between caring for the garden, I have been trying to get to grips with all my unfinished craft projects, not too successfully, I hasten to add.

However, others like Lois, Judi's mother, are made of sterner stuff.

See the photo on page 11 of all the wonderful blankets she has knitted

for Yeovil Baby Hospital. (The pattern kindly provided by new committee member, Liz Short).



This photo shows one of Judi's families favourite past times, doing jigsaws.

We would love to hear how you've been spending your time.

Have you taken up a new hobby?

Have you made yourself a daily exercise regime?

Has your hair changed dramatically, colour or style? I nearly went turquoise but that's another story!

Are you rediscovering the delights of a long forgotten television series?

Are you finally reading that book you always said you would read one day?

So tell us what you've been doing to keep your spirits up, doesn't have to be long and a photo speaks volumes!

Gardening!



OUR FAMILY OF ROSES Dee Clarke

Our garden, although quite small, is full of different plants. However, the roses are special and all have names! Sorry, but we are a bit silly like that! So let me introduce you. At the moment, Tess (Tess of the Durbevelles) and Winnie (Winchester Cathedral) are blooming well.



Tess of the Durbevelles



Winchester Cathedral



Later in the year we will see Claire (Claire Austin) a creamy white, Graham (Graham Thomas) a lovely deep yellow, and Connie (Constance Spry) a deep pink. We have two other roses, both yellow: Banksy (Banksiae Lutea) and Tex which we bought from Tesco and decided to call the yellow rose of Texas. Unfortunately Banksy has decided not to flower this year which is a disappointment because he should be absolutely bursting with flowers at the moment - but there is no sign of any buds at all. Tex - well he has a (tiny bud showing but when it will come into flower is anybody's guess. I suspect towards the end of summer.

The Joy of Gardening!

Well, I've spent quite a bit of time weeding, which I love. I do it all by hand as I don't use chemicals of any sort.

The birds, blackbird and robin, are always near and keep me company.

I look at the garden, with ideas in mind, as to what could be changed, so I have spent time splitting and replanting.



Silver birch and alliums



Clematis in Monica's garden

I've been breaking up large clumps of daffodils and replanting them. (I heel them in until I decide where I want them to be).

Then I sit, relax and listen to the sounds of nature.

Bliss!

Monica Richmond

My Garden

Julie Hopkins



Over the past few weeks my garden has been a great solace, even though it is small and I don't have flower borders, I find I get so much pleasure from planting different varieties of plants and small shrubs in pots of all shapes and sizes. We have been so lucky with such beautiful weather while being in lockdown, that spending time weeding and rearranging the pots to create small garden areas, or rooms as it is now called, has been very therapeutic and calming.

The spring weather has been exceptionally warm and my garden has been full of colour from daffodils, tulips and now roses, lavender, pansies and primulas. One shrub in particular has been so full of bloom that it is bowing under the weight of the flowers; I only know it as a potato tree.

More colour is yet to come from hibiscus, iris, sweet peas, and clematis. I'm hoping I will get a fig or two from my fig tree this year. Incredibly, because of the hot summer we had last year I had a tiny olive on my olive tree and a small bunch of grapes on a vine I have been nurturing since I moved here. Apart from the potato tree, the vine and one rose bush, everything else is grown in pots, all in a tiny garden.

I often sit by the window, in all seasons, looking out at my beautiful garden, watching all the birds that come to visit and a cheeky squirrel. They have a good old rummage in the pots sometimes so I have to put large pebbles on the top to deter them. I find they all have such different characters.

The blackbirds in particular are really territorial and spend more time seeing each other off than feeding, but really love rooting around in the grass for worms. The pigeons bumble around in a very laid back way, whilst an occasional magpie struts his stuff and starlings chase and squabble. Blue tits, great tits, chaffinches and gold finches used to come to the feeders but I have had to stop feeding them because a naughty rat keeps making an unwelcome visit. I spend as much time as I can outside and although I'm not very good at identifying the birds' songs, I can recognise the beautiful full throated melody of the blackbird, the chattering of the starlings and cheeps of sparrows, the whistle of the swallows and swifts as they whiz over, the soothing "coccoo", "coo coo" of the pigeon, and the beautiful trills of the robin and wren who all come to visit. It makes me feel very lucky and I count my blessings every day.



Quotes!



"Gardening's a labour full of tranquillity and satisfaction; natural and instructive, and as such contributes to the most serious contemplation, experience, health and longevity."

John Evelyn 1666

"The lesson I have learnt, and wish to pass on to others, is to know the enduring happiness that the love of a garden gives."

Gertrude Jekyll

"A garden is the best alternative therapy."

Germaine Greer

"Gardening is the purest of human pleasures."

Francis Bacon

"Gardening is a way of showing that you believe in tomorrow."

Author unknown

"Gardening adds years to your life and life to your years."

Author unknown

"Remember that children, marriages and flower gardens reflect the kind of care they get."

H. Jackson, Junior

"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need."

Marcus Tullius Cicero

"Garden as though you will live forever."

William Kent

"I like gardening – it's a place where I can find myself when I need to lose myself."

Alice Sebold





Revelations from a Somerton Garden in Covid -19 Spring

The beginning of the year left our garden fairly bereft of flowers – for insects, or other food –for birds, but the feeders kept the house sparrows and starlings alive, whilst food they dropped kept wood pigeons, dunnock and blackbirds, the ground feeders, busy underneath. The pond, which didn't freeze, had one only visit from the frogs whose spawn never came to anything.

It was mid-March, and the crocus were nearly over before the first butterflies appeared, a comma and a brimstone; a pair of ravens flew over, why weren't they tending a nest(?); and a new visitor, a male blackcap dropped in (once) for breakfast.

Lockdown was announced and more time in the garden revealed peacocks and brimstone looking for any nectar they could find and honey bees were never far away from the rosemary bushes. Hoverflies were active over the lawns, especially the spike-nosed rhingia species and the first ladybird of the season spotted – a 7-spot. Toward the end of the month both herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls were noticed somewhere over the fish ponds.

The daffodils were looking distinctly poorly, unlike the forget-me-not, when a rook(!) landed for some food, and goldfinches, which have been in several nearby gardens all winter, thought we were worth a visit. April had arrived and with it both blue tits and great tits, although both are sporadic visitors. The sun brought a greenfinch within 100 metres, and a robin landed.

As it warmed, both buff-tailed and red-tailed queen bumblebees could be seen quartering the flower beds for food, and a likely hole to start their nest in? They like the herb garden best. It was the 7th before the first orange tip male appeared and its food plant, garlic mustard, was only just showing. However in a fortnight a lot can happen and before the first female appeared, and laid some eggs, the plants were in flower. The other spring butterfly to appear was the holly blue, a male appropriately basking on the holly, and again it was a fortnight before the females turned up looking for egg-laying sites. They have been around daily ever since and wallflowers seem to be a great attraction as drinking stations for these insects.

Early April was very dry and warm. We even sat out! But rain on the 17th brought a flush of variety of birds, especially to the front garden – 10 species in a day, when six or so is more normal. This was when we suddenly became aware that a lot of noise was being generated out there – birds were announcing territorial rights, and in some cases outright war took place. (Ask our wood pigeons!). We have four pairs vying



for space, and food, and whilst we were distracted by a war in the back garden, another pair bonded (?), and made use of an old nest fifteen feet away from our front, lounge, window without us noticing. It was the appearance of the first bats that drew our attention to this pair who were really into their joint brooding.

What has surprised me the most of this Corvid Spring is the amount of sex that goes on under our noses! I knew what 'billing and cooing' signified, but watching what happens afterwards, four or five times a day, came as a shock. Our pigeons are well bonded! I've photographed butterflies locked in embrace, for an hour plus, so no surprise there, but to find ladybirds at it for long periods, even whilst feeding on an excellent crop of blackfly, on the spirea, watched by their larvae (4th instar?), was the limit. or is it?

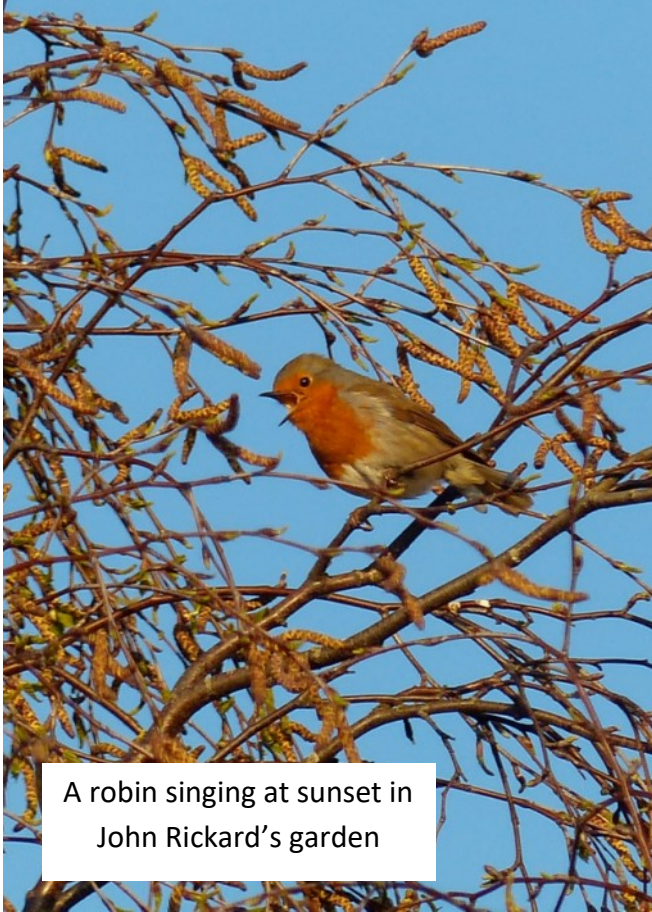
The swifts arrived overhead today – low down early on, and much, much higher – where the insects had risen to – this afternoon. I understand they have their own method of reproducing as well!!

..... Time for a nice 'Cup of Tea'.

David Perkins



Local Wildlife Spotted by You



A robin singing at sunset in John Rickard's garden



Please send us your suggestions of what it is...

Photo from Steve Davis



Jenny Lewis concentrating hard while playing croquet



Pheasant in Marilyn and Paul's garden

Time for a Makeover

BEFORE Judi Powell's patio as it used to be



The blue shed was taken away last autumn to be a little girl's Wendy house.
The new patio was built just before Christmas last year..... and has been very well occupied this spring.

AFTER..... Judi Powell's garden as it is now



The new patio was built before Christmas last year and has been well used this spring.

Leisure

My favourite poem is "Leisure" by William Henry Davies. It starts, "What is this world, if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare"

I have done a lot of standing and staring since lockdown started. I have always felt so privileged to have a garden to work in and the satisfaction of watching plants and flowers I'd forgotten about, bursting into bloom, but never as much as now.

My goldfish greet me every morning. I can talk to them

and my plants. As well as a mental lift, I also get fantastic exercise doing all the necessary jobs in the garden. Who needs a gym to go to, even if they were open?

I'm also very fortunate to have a vast front garden, the Cary Valley, stretching out for miles in front of me and I don't even have to do anything to it!

What is there to complain about? I do miss all my U3A friends though. Let's hope we'll be able to see each other soon.



Pamela Miley

Looking
across the
lawn in
Pamela's
garden

Miscellaneous Ramblings Around Somerton

The lockdown coincided with nature starting to welcome in the spring. Hedgerows and trees have grown leaves, making the task of trying to spot whatever is wibbling away to itself near impossible – it was hard enough when they were bare. Farmers' fields have been progressively ploughed, prepared and seeded and the crops have rocketed up at a rate matched only by the river banks and their ubiquitous nettles. This has happened against a background of noise, although mostly not man-made. Without this artificial noise, the sound of birdlife has been omnipresent, borderline deafening and there for all to



hear.

Most of my rambles have taken me out of Somerton through the open country to the south, woodlands to the east or, most often, to the levels to the north-west, with no two days being the same. What would appear to have been there all the time has been the skylarks, ascending, descending or just plain hiding in the sky; how do they do that? The fields bordering Sale Piece Drove have been so rich in them that I have re-christened it 'Skylark Alley'. One day I saw a solitary lapwing there doing that low level swooping thing that lapwings do; on others there have been kestrels hovering menacingly. Another day I thought I heard curlew and in late April, a cuckoo could be heard in the distance.



I started to taking a camera with me, sometimes to help identification when I got home, always with the hope of a good shot but most usually to get a photo of where something really interesting was, sadly half a second before I pressed the shutter button. This was particularly so for the numerous shots showing where a kingfisher had just lit up the river but applied also to the various warblers, black caps, woodpeckers etc that came to taunt me. Fortunately on other occasions I was able to capture shots of grey wagtails, yellowhammers and a particularly rare example of a robin doing a plausible impersonation of Inspector Clouseau.



Quite by coincidence, on the day I heard the cuckoo, the swifts returned, proving that even in this strangest of years, 'the globe's still working'*.

* From 'The Swifts' by Ted Hughes. I recommend reading it <https://martyncrucefix.com/2015/05/13/ted-hughes-swifts/>

Dick Carlyon

Organic Gardening....Composting



Composting is important in any garden. Not only will you get rich, organic compost for your plants, you'll be encouraging a healthy diversity of wildlife into your garden.

Composting means allowing organic material to rot down naturally into a crumbly brown, fresh smelling product.

Your kitchen and garden waste can easily be recycled into a precious natural resource - a rich and fertile food for your soil that will also encourage wildlife into your garden.

Let's not waste it!

More great reasons to get composting

You can use your homemade compost to grow healthy, nutritious fruit and vegetables.

Peat-based compost has caused a rapid decline in the UK's peat bogs.

By making and using your own compost, you are feeding nutrients to the soil, improving drainage, friability and aeration. Wildlife loves compost - thousands of mini-beasts and other tiny organisms work together to make it happen.

Many creatures find a compost bin a snug warm place for the winter, including slow worms, hedgehogs, frogs and toads.

You will be feeding your plants and boosting wildlife food chains.

You will be attracting a whole range of friendly beetles,



Mike's compost heap with friend

insects, birds and small mammals into your garden.

Composting is a job in the garden that can be started at any time of year, so there's no time to lose!

https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/sites/default/files/2018-02/Making-Compost_0.pdf

Mike Davis



A lady slow worm

A thought for those who do not have a garden

If you don't have a garden or are unable to care for yours as you once used to, I understand this must be a very frustrating time.

Perhaps you are used to sitting in a friend's gardens or visiting open gardens when times were more normal.

Whatever your situation we are thinking of you and we all hope that fairly soon, we can return to actively participating in enjoying the sights, sounds and smells of a beautiful garden in like-minded company.

Mr and Mrs

Paul and Marilyn Muffett

Marilyn and Paul were married in June 1970 so will be celebrating their golden wedding at the end of June. They were married in Pembury Old Church in Kent with the reception being held at the Elizabethan Barn in Tunbridge Wells.

Marilyn and Paul were both born and raised in that area of Kent. When she left school, Marilyn became a nurse and Paul worked for a time with the family engineering firm in Tunbridge Wells.

In 1987 the family moved to Cowes on the Isle of Wight where Marilyn worked as a senior sister for the NHS and Paul subsequently worked as a welfare rights advisor, a manager of a community club and finally for the NHS.

Paul and Marilyn have a son and a daughter, Andrew and Lorna and four grandchildren.

They moved to Somerton in 2014 to be nearer their children.

When and where did you meet?

West Kent College, Tonbridge, Kent 1963

Describe your first date

A college dance

First Impressions

Marilyn

Very polite!

Paul

Likeable and fun

Was it love at first sight?

Marilyn

No! But Paul was definitely likeable!

Paul

Paul doesn't think so.

When and where was the proposal?

Marilyn

At a New Year's Eve party with college friends in an oast house in Hildenborough, Kent, sitting on very prickly hay bales. The ring, a sapphire surrounded with diamonds, we chose together later.

We didn't get married until I had finished my training as, in those days, I would not have been able to work as a nurse as a married woman.

Paul

Dare I say I can't remember?

What are your most vivid memories of the wedding?

Marilyn

The reading of the telegrams is so vivid in my memory!

We had so many of them, particularly from Paul's colleagues in his office in London.

I also remember the lipstick decorated car windscreen that had to be cleaned on the station in Scotland before we could drive off! We must have driven to London peering through the gaps!

Paul

At the reception my brother persuaded his wife to remove her bra (in the ladies' loo I hasten to add!) so that it could be tied to the car radio aerial.

Also, the best man collected coins from the guests to put into the hubcaps. We put our car on the train to honeymoon in Scotland where it rained every day for the first week.

Three words to describe Paul

Marilyn

Polite, caring, responsible

Three words to describe Marilyn

Paul

Dependable, attractive, kind

What's the secret of a long and happy marriage?

Marilyn

Patience, adaptability and being able to compromise to another person's viewpoint.

Paul

Teamwork is essential when faced with the highs and lows of everyday life and bringing up of two children.



Marilyn and Paul's wedding day 1970



Marilyn and Paul recreate their wedding pose 50 years later!

Tribute about Jean Francis from Sue Bedlow

You may already have heard through the Somerton U3A grapevine of Jean's sudden death in April following a severe stroke.

Jean led the Card Craft Group and several of the Group members have offered their thoughts about her following her loss.

Some of us have known Jean for ten years and some only since enrolment last year, but we agree that she was an inspiration to us all. She was enthusiastic and generous with her ideas and skills. Jean had been a teacher and Guider before her retirement and she never lost her headmistress outlook. She was firm when she felt it was necessary and unstinting in her praise when we achieved success with our crafting.

The passion with which she approached card crafting rubbed off on us all and we all managed to learn and improve under her guidance. She taught us to tackle techniques that at first seemed beyond us and rejoiced with us when we were successful.

Jean was a good, kind and generous friend. Wendy and Sue shared with her many interesting and eventful trips and meals out together and as the three had such diverse

personalities, always had much to discuss and debate and although they often disagreed, needless to say, they always ended up the best of friends. There were many such occasions with shared tears and endless streams of laughter, not least because of Jean's dry sense of humour.

Another of her passions was guiding and she was the very effective and respected chair of the *Friends of Foxlease*, a guiding activity and training centre in the New Forest.

Jean was modest about her own achievements including demonstrating live on Blue Peter in the early days of the programme. She was always deprecating about her skills as a hostess but the Card Craft group always had a wonderful tea party in her garden when we met in the summer to plan the November Craft Day. We are going to miss that, and her, very much.



Lockdown Blues

Oh my gosh, it's five weeks now
since lockdown has begun,

I thought it wouldn't last this long,
we'd have it on the run,

But here we are, wondering when
it will go away,

There's not much left that we can
do to keep us home all day.

We've cooked and baked and
dusted and polished, even done
the brass,

The house has never been so clean
with floors that shine like glass,

The washing is done and the
ironing pile is something in the
past,

The time's been spent doing all the
chores we always left 'til last.

With wardrobes cleared and
drawers all sorted, it really is quite
strange,

There must be something left to do
or even rearrange,

All books are read and indexed and
neatly put away,

The jigsaws are all finished and
boxed for another day.

The garden is immaculate, not a
weed to hitch

The lawn is mown in perfect
stripes, it looks like a football
pitch!

The shed is painted a lovely green
to add a little grace,

Even the tools are put away and in
their proper place.

And now I don't know what to do, I
really am confused,

I really thought I'd done all that
but really am bemused,

It must be isolation that has finally
turned my brain

Cos when I woke this morning,
everything was just the same!

Julie Hopkins

Hats Off to Lockdown

If any member is a keen knitter, you may like to get out your needles and wool and make some blankets for new babies. I'm reliably informed that babies are still arriving despite the lockdown!! You can put this time to good use and enjoy the satisfaction of being able to do something useful.

Baby Blanket



Your baby blankets should measure approximately 60cm x 60cm. To knit up your blanket, you will require 130 stitches on size 4½ needles with DK baby wool. I don't have a particular pattern for this so enjoy just making one up yourself.

I have knitted as follows:

8 rows of K then continue in stocking stitch, knitting 8 stitches at each end of every row.

K to last 8 rows ending with a P row then K the last 8 rows. Cast off.

Once completed, they can either be sent to Yeovil Hospital or any hospital with a baby unit who will make very good use of them. Yeovil also require a small number of hats – many new parents bring their own so they only need a few of these.

Baby Hat

Size 4½ needles with baby double knit (must be baby wool)

Cast on 56 stitches

Knit 8 rows

Stocking stitch until work measures 11½cm

K6, K2 together 7 times

Pearl

K5, K2 together 7 times

Pearl

K4, K2 together 7 times etc until

K2 together 7 times then pull thread through remaining 7 stitches

To make it easier to sew, slip the first stitch and knit the last on every row. Be sure to sew the headband loosely as new babies have tender skin.

Please do not add any buttons or embellishments to the blanket or hat.

Finished blankets and hats should be sent to:

**Special Care Baby Unit
Yeovil District Hospital
Yeovil BA21 4AT**

Enjoy!

Liz Short

<https://www.yandlesartandcrafts.co.uk/inspiration/130-baby-blanket-for-ydh>



...new groups



Diary Dates

...coming soon



Today's Drink Special:

The Quarantini

**It's just a regular martini,
but you drink it all alone
in your house.**

Scarlet Fever Epidemic in Somerton 1864

Scarlet Fever (Scarlatina) is caused by a bacterium *Streptococcus pyogenes* which causes a "Strep sore throat" accompanied by a fever. It usually occurs in children between 2 and 12. As its name suggests it is characterised by a red rash over the entire body with a sore throat and a fever. This is caused by a toxin that the bacteria produce.

Before the early 20th Century Scarlet Fever was dreaded for its risk of complications causing long-term heart and kidney damage and arthritis, as well as death. By the middle of the last century the potency of the bacteria seems to have diminished and the disease has become regarded as a fairly unusual "one of the childhood illnesses" which, in any case, responds to penicillin.

The deaths recorded in the Parish Burial Register in the 1860s reveal a tragic story.

1862	1863	1864
24 Adults	31 Adults	29 Adults
5 Infants	6 Infants	11 Infants
6 children (2-10)	8 Children(2-10)	29 children (2-10) 25 in the months Aug-Oct

The explanation comes in a book **A History of Epidemics in Britain** by Creighton, Charles, 1847-1927 (transcribed in full on the website of Yale University's Medical Library) "In the period 1861-70 the great scarlatinal years were 1863-4 and 1868-70

While no county of England has been free from this infection, the bulk of the deaths have fallen upon the capital, the great Lancashire and West Riding towns, the Black Country of Staffordshire and Warwickshire, the mining districts of Durham and South Wales, and in the earlier part of the period, upon the south western counties.

...nor is scarlatina an infection that keeps mainly among

the poorer classes.."

And the proof comes from a death certificate of a 3 year old. On 19th September 1864, Joseph Hill Puddy died of Scarlet Fever with which he had been ill for 7 days.

Such events change the course of lives. Many of you will remember the very popular Don Puddy who died recently. He had been the Baker at the Triangle. Don Puddy told me that Joseph had been the older brother of Don Puddy's grandfather and had he not died in this epidemic would have been the Baker himself and passed the skills to his descendants.

Elaine Griffiths

Times Change

*Looking through old photos,
I'm sure we all have plenty,
I've some of me at 83
and some of me at 20.*

*If I could wave a magic wand
and be as I was then.
Trot down the street
on dainty feet
and be whistled by the men.*

*Alas, I'm getting older
but still I'm in good fettle,
But the only whistles I get now
Are those coming from the kettle.*

Shirley Wooster

The Big Lunch 6&7 June!*

*(but it will be a little different)!

The Big Lunch is the UK's thanksgiving weekend for neighbours and communities - a time where people come together to celebrate community connections and get to know one another a little better. Now more than ever, we need to make time for each other, so let's get the nation talking over a cuppa and a bite to eat and have some fun with The Big Virtual Lunch

<https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/thebiglunchhomepage>

Smallpox Epidemic 1905..... Nancy Schooling

In 1905 there was a smallpox epidemic in Europe. In Russia 221,000 people died, but figures were much lower in Western Europe. In Britain only 180 died, and one of them was near Somerton.

That year the railway was being built through Somerton. The viaduct was nearly finished and so was Skew Bridge and Green Bank on the boundary with Charlton Mackrell. There were hutted camps for the navvies and their women and children.

In early May the Poor Law authorities in Bristol wrote to the Langport workhouse to warn them that a tramp had left Bristol heading for the Langport area and he was thought to be carrying smallpox. The workhouse took in tramps to the casual ward for overnight shelter. As soon as the Master heard there might be a smallpox case, he arranged that none of the people who stayed overnight had any contact with the permanent inhabitants of the building. The tramps were to be seen by a doctor (if he was available) and sent on their way as quickly as possible. A meeting of the Poor Law Guardians Board was arranged urgently.

The Board was reluctant to undertake extra expense, but they agreed to pay the doctor for the additional work and to engage a second doctor to help if necessary. They also agreed to set up a temporary field hospital in a field at Snap Hill (which you can see straight ahead as you drive through Skew Bridge). They isolated all infected people in two tents, and all contacts in two more tents in another part of the same field. Four male nurses were appointed to look after the patients. Most of the patients were

railway navvies or their dependents who were living in the hutted camps. Four came from a hut in the lane from Charlton Adam to Keinton and seven from a hut at Welham near Skew Bridge. An ambulance had been hired to take cases to the field hospital.

The Board agreed to pay two thirds of the men's wages while they were in quarantine, and to provide food, beer and tobacco, to ensure the men stayed in the field and did not wander off to the local public house. Everything was set up within a few days and the medical inspector from the Local Government Board visited Snap Hill and said everything that could be done had been done. Dr Ingle, the Somerton GP, was appointed to look after the patients, with more help if needed. All the local schools were closed for three weeks to reduce the chance of infection.

On 27th May, fifteen inmates of the Langport workhouse, one nurse and a tramp had been removed to the hospital at Snap Hill. There were 37 notified cases. By 3rd June, two more hospital tents had been acquired and two female nurses, and cases from as far away as Wincanton were being transferred to Snap Hill. In all there were 42 cases and one death – the original tramp.

Archdeacon Brymer, vicar of Charlton Mackrell, refused to have any smallpox burials in his churchyard!

This information was taken from newspaper reports of the Board meetings.

Spot
The
Celeb
2
..answers
next
month...



Dee's Lockdown Journal

Well, here we are in Week 4 of lock down. And so far, we are having a great me! The only down is that Mum is also in lock-down in Ashley House and we are unable to visit her. However, my sister and I write to her regularly and I have managed a phone call to her. She is well but suffering from lack of outside stimulation on as not only have family visits been banned but none of the entertainers can go in either.

Leo and I on the other hand are constantly kept busy by our various group leaders who keep in touch regularly. Sue, our ukulele leader, gathers requests from each of us every week and then sends them out to us on a Thursday with instructions to "sup up" when we stop for our mid-session cuppa (she is a hard taskmaster!). Nancy sends us a weekly quiz to keep us researching our history – have we learnt a lot! I am trying to keep my art group focussed on finishing the panorama of Somerton centre we had started. We were going to show this at the National U3A Day but now will just be for ourselves at our first session back. Carol from Family History is on the other end of a phone or email for any queries we might have, Elaine from French Conversation might be setting up Zoom meetings, our birdwatching group is exchanging reports of our individual experiences, Astronomy has always been an emailing group, and we are waiting to hear whether the many garden visits Jane has organised will still go ahead. There are some groups which can't carry on for the time being but we hope they will still be there when this is all over.

We continue to keep in touch with our ever-increasing family by telephone, email and Zoom meetings (no letters, we are far too modern for that!).

One of my stepdaughters sends me a daily quiz. I think she feels a duty to look after these oldies who must be suffering so badly in the lock-down. I am so busy I have only done one of them! We are lucky, of course, that not much has changed other than going out to lunch a lot! That is extra work as I now have to cook every day.

The other regret I have is that our garden is no longer a

place where we can sit and enjoy the sun like we did last year. Our drive was in the process of being replaced when the lock-down occurred and our contractor was unable to get any supplies, so has had to leave it. Here are photos of last year and this year.

Alan, our contractor, will be back as soon as restrictions are lifted so hopefully there will still be some summer to enjoy with the new drive and everything else put back into place.

But the big new interest in my life has been a series of book binding workshops with Nina from Ace Arts in Somerton. The course started a couple of weeks before lock-down but Nina has continued with tutoring us in this fascinating craft by Zoom meetings and emails. I am totally hooked and busy putting together anthologies of my paintings and Leo's writings and making sketch books for the arty members of the family. I had no idea until I started this that there were so many kinds of books (other than hardback and softback) and have really enjoyed exploring and making them.

Lastly I must give my thanks to my neighbours. Always friendly and chatty in the past, we now come together (at 2m distance of course) on a Thursday evening to clap and, in Leo's case, bang the bodhran (an Irish drum) to show our support for the wonderful job the NHS are doing. One of my neighbours texted me to say in spite of having lived here for nearly 19 years, she has never felt a sense of community like this past Thursday. We hope it will continue and we hope to celebrate post Covid 19 with a street party or similar.

Denise Clarke



Reading Group Book ...recommendations



Valerie Taylor

Larry's Party Carol Shields

An unusual story following Larry who lives in a remote area in central Canada; it tracks his life from his first hasty marriage to discovering a fascinating new hobby which will affect the whole of his life.

On their honeymoon in England, he and his wife visit Hampton Court and it starts a life-long passion for mazes.

On his return home to Canada, Larry makes a maze in his garden which his wife hates. Not surprisingly, not long after they separate.

Larry pursues his new hobby and eventually becomes famous for designing mazes. While accepting commissions, he meets many unusual and interesting people.

The climax of the story is a party that Larry throws.

The book is an easy, pleasant read and an interesting study in human nature.

Margaret Morgan

Capture the Castle Dodie Smith

I started lockdown full of good intentions. Now is obviously the time to tackle the 1,300 plus pages of Vikram Seth's panoramic novel set in the time of Indian independence, "A Suitable Boy" which has been looking at me disapprovingly for years! Sadly, just because you have the time and no excuse, it doesn't mean that you – well me obviously - actually use it in the way you imagined (rather like the photo chest.... was going to sort that as well. It's still in chaos...).so no Vikram, instead a return to an old favourite, "I Capture the Castle" by Dodie Smith. (Yes, she did write "One

Hundred and One Dalmatians", but don't let that get in the way, this is totally different!

A Bohemian family living in strange circumstances, the castle, in a much reduced state, are gently infiltrated by two Americans.

The result of the clashes of culture, lifestyle and aspirations are beautifully drawn. Characters are amazing sympathetic and interesting and the writing fully engages with the reader. The narrator is wonderful and you become her friend.

A terrible film was made some time

Marilyn Muffett

The Keeper of Small Things Ruth Hogan

A delightful read, funny, sad and a little mysterious at the same time. It centres on a collection of lost objects each of which has a story attached to it.

It's very imaginative with two heroines, sympathetic characters and loose ends which are eventually tied up!

A gentle and uplifting read for the present time.



Mary Beth Greenop



The Music Shop by Rachel Joyce

The Evening Readers Group has covered many genres and subjects over the years, but for the lockdown my choice would be “The Music Shop” by Rachel Joyce. This was one of the few books that every one of us enjoyed! It’s a gentle read that will transport you back to 1988.

It tells the story of a man who sells records and refuses to contemplate that CDs can ever replace vinyl and who also has the gift of finding the right record for each customer.

However, like all good reads it’s about so much more; community, change, love in all its forms and acceptance.

If you loved “The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry” you will enjoy this – even if you haven’t read this, I strongly recommend you lose yourself in the delight of this easy and heart-warming read.



Julie Hopkins

The Beekeeper’s Promise Fiona Valpy

One of the good things about belonging to a book group is that you get to read books by authors you wouldn't normally choose. However, there are a number of books sitting on the bookshelf I've been meaning to get around to but never had the time, for one reason or another. So, with the ongoing isolation and social distancing I've been catching up.

One book I've recently read is *The Beekeeper’s Promise* by Fiona Valpy. Thinking it was going to be a light hearted romance, which isn't usually my choice, I was soon drawn into a story that had me spellbound. Set in France it unravels the lives of ordinary village people, one family in particular, and how they managed

to survive the invasion and occupation by German soldiers during WW2. It is a beautifully written, gentle yet harrowing story that portrays the rapid transition from a peaceful rural life into a life beset by cruelty, injustice and domination.

It embraces the resilience and bravery of families and neighbours and how they supported each other and pulled together to fight the common enemy, and gives insight into how ordinary French people endured their lives and what was happening to them and their country. I found it very touching and thought provoking and without being over sentimental, the fact that we have all just Celebrated VE Day it was very relevant to everything that is happening in our World today.

Group news from SUBS Somerton U3A Ukelele Band



The SUBS are continuing with their weekly Thursday afternoon music sessions via the wonders of modern technology. One of our members, John Rodgers, has set up a Zoom link so that we can all have a good play and sing along to our favourite songs. Sue, our leader, coordinates the song lists from the choices we have made, and sends them out so that, music at the ready, we can all play along.

At first there were a few hiccups with a time lapse but this has all been ironed out and it's as if we have all met again! (That reminds me, we must learn that one) take care everyone. Stay safe and well.

Editors Note: We would love to know if you have been managing to keep in touch within your groups. Please send us details and / or a photo.

Spot the celeb!

...answers from
last month



1	CHARLES DICKENS	25	EMMELINE PANKHURST
2	EDWARD ELGAR	26	MAX MILLER
3	INGRID BERGMAN	27	ERNEST RUTHERFORD
4	ERIC BLAIR GEORGE ORWELL	28	TED RAY
5	HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC	29	ERIC SYKES
6	MALCOLM SARGENT	30	W G GRACE
7	WILLIAM GLADSTONE	31	DUSTY SPRINGFIELD
8	ALF RAMSAY	32	AUDREY HEPBURN
9	ARTHUR WELLESLEY	33	BUSTER KEATON
10	JOSEPH JMW TURNER	34	DENIS NORDEN
11	MERYL STREEP	35	VINCENT PRICE
12	JANE AUSTEN	36	MAGGIE SMITH
13	QUEEN MARY	37	MARIE CURIE
14	AGATHA CHRISTIE	38	JOANNA LUMLEY
15	GORDON BANKS	39	BARRY CRYER
16	MARGARET RUTHERFORD	40	NIKITA KHRUSHCHOV
17	HERBERT HOOVER	41	ALMA COGAN
18	DWIGHT EISENHOWER	42	EMILIA FOX
19	FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT	43	PHIL SILVERS SGT BILKO
20	TEDDY THEODORE ROOSEVELT	44	CLEMENT ATTLEE
21	NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN	45	PETER ALLISS
22	ROGER UTTLEY	46	SOPHIA LOREN
23	JACK CHARLTON	47	BRIGITTE BARDOT
24	LEN HUTTON	48	JACK BENNY

Correction

In the May newsletter we printed a poem "Time for Us Girls" purportedly by Pam Ayres which has been seen all over Facebook and Twitter. Judy Finnigan of Richard and Judy fame even mentioned it in an article she wrote in the Daily Express on April 18th where she was extolling the resilience of the so-called baby boomer generation.

However, on April 14th Pam Ayres tweeted,

"This poem seems to be everywhere attributed to me but it isn't mine. It's by Jan Beaumont."

So apologies for unintentionally spreading false news; it just shows the power and extent of social media.

This month we have another lockdown poem and it really is by our own Julie Hopkins.

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

Deadline for the July edition...15th June

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>