



Chairman's message

Listening to Word of Mouth, on Radio 4 the other week, I heard a conversation between Michael Rosen and the lexicographer, writer and broadcaster Susie Dent. Susie Dent comes up with a lot of words that I have never heard before (and probably never likely to hear again!) and almost *all* of the time I forget them. However, on this occasion I remembered it, prompted by my wife who said she could visualise me portraying it. The word was documented, only once, in the early 16th century and Susie Dent thinks we ought to bring it back. And I agree! So, what is this word? The word is 'apricity'.

The word was defined as 'the warmth of the sun on your back on a chilly winter's day'.

Perhaps we won't succeed in bringing the word back but, hopefully, we can begin to look forward to the sense of it as the days begin to lengthen? Snowdrops are out, spring bulbs are coming through and the new year is ahead of us. Let's enjoy the time, enjoy our friendships within u3a, support each other, get involved – and learn new words.

Steve

The Promise of Spring

February holds a secret charm,
As winter's grip begins to disarm.
Hints of green beneath the white,
Promise of spring, a delightful sight.

Birds return with cheerful songs,
In February's days, where they
belong.

Sunshine peeks through cloudy skies,
Warming hearts, opening eyes.

Buds awaken in sleepy groves,
Telling tales of springtime's troves.
In February's subtle shift,
The promise of spring, nature's gift.

Monthly meetings and talks

Friday 28th February

'Wildlife Photography'

Ben Pulletz

Ben is a local, very talented young photographer, specialising in wildlife.

He has exhibited his work on several occasions at No1 West Street, Somerton - most recently in November 2024.

Friday 28th March

'How Running Influenced My Life Choices'

A talk by **Keith Brackstone**. Local Resident Keith's talk, will explain how he went from a football mad eight year old to take up running at age 11 when passing the 11 plus.

Friday 25th April

"Psalms and palms; passions and politics".

A seasonal reflection

Rev Canon Brian Pearson

Once again Brian swaps his seat in the audience to stand at the lectern and offer some fresh and possibly surprising insights into a familiar narrative. Members may recall his revealing historical account of the Christmas Story and in his latest presentation he takes us 'behind the scenes' of a dramatic week, the impact of which has resonated around the globe and across two millennia.

With a helping of history, a portion of politics, a carafe of culture, a hint of hysteria and a taste of turbulence and tension - delivered with his familiar light touch - Brian hopes to both inform and entertain.

Friday 23rd May

Annual General Meeting

The AGM is an important and necessary part of our Organisation. It also gives the members a chance to hear what we have done, what is planned and to show their appreciation to the Committee and to all those other members who have helped, throughout the year, to make our u3a a success!

Please come and support them.

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

Sunday Roasties Group enjoyed

the hospitality of the The Drayton Crown, Drayton this month.

Main courses chosen were duck, beef or turkey followed by various desserts or coffee.

As always, the banter and conversation were continuous – pausing only briefly when the food was served.

My apologies for being so excited by the arrival of my roast turkey that I completely forgot to take pictures of us all tucking in. Here's a photo of 11 empty plates and satiated diners!

Next month Sunday Roasties meet at The White Hart.

Thank you John for organising us all.

Sarah

Group News



Group News

Birdwatching Group

A good start to the year for the Birdwatching Group at Greylake. The highlights were - the Merlin, the Bullfinch - and seeing you lot of course.

Steve



Friday meeting/coffee morning

Owl Obsession

Anna Reed delighted 150 u3a Members and Visitors with a fascinating presentation on owls on 24th January.

The Owls were carried around the Hall on Anna's arm so that we were able to see their markings, feathers and eye colour. A Raptor named Fudge, an Indian Scots Owl is the smallest and had amazing markings.

We were then shown "Dusty who looks like a Hawk, a Barn Owl, and an African spotted Eagle Owl named Splat. An Asian Brown Owl, is a very secretive bird, highly nocturnal and loves lights. The European Eagle Owl is the largest Owl and hunts from Dawn to Dusk; a very powerful bird and can take down a Deer fawn as its Prey.

We also learned that training an Owl requires a good deal of patience - from a young age the Owl needs to be in the home to be with people, cats, dogs and to hear noise and music. Anna then takes the Owl out into the Village in an "Owl Pram"; a cage in a wheel barrow, to introduce them to people and traffic sounds.

At the end of the talk we were invited to view the Owls in their boxes.

A very big thank you to Anna and her Team for such an enjoyable and informative talk.

Janet



Group News

Art Appreciation Group

This is the fourth time I've tried to write this - the other attempts have all disappeared just as I got to the end!

The Art Appreciation group met last Monday to discuss book illustrations/illustrators. We began with a very interesting subject - apart from the person concerned - Jackie Morris (b. 1960) has illustrated a book called The Lost Words. This is a book (available on Amazon for £15+) about words which have been deleted from the Children's Dictionary. Words like bluebell and willow, which are being replaced by techno words on the grounds that children don't know about bluebells or willows. A worrying trend I think. From Jackie we proceeded to Arthur Rackham (1867-

1939) who was responsible for some of the scary pictures in the fairy tale books of our youth. I remember being scared to death of one of his which had a raven in it. Next came American Bessie Pease Gutman, (1876-1960) an illustrator of children's books, then Edward Ardizzone (1900-1979) who brought to life the stories of Tim, another children's book series. Gustave Dore's (1832-1883) illustrations of Dante's Divine Comedy, came next and we finished up with Queen Margrethe of Denmark who was responsible for the illustrations in the Danish and British versions of Tolkien's Lord of the Rings and the Hobbit. Next month, naive art. Phew, got there without it disappearing!!!

Enid Thresher

Ballroom and Latin Dance Group

Here is a chance to start a new Group.

It would need someone to be the Group Leader but you don't have to do it alone. If you know others who may be interested have a get-together and see what develops.

If you do decide to take the next step (do you like the pun?) let us know and we'll do what we can to help.

groups@somertonu3a.uk

Our names are Harley Nelson and Thomas Purdy, and we are professional ballroom dancers. We are currently working with a few u3a groups hosting ballroom and Latin classes and would like to offer them to your group! If you would be interested, we would love to have a call or be happy to have a meeting to set up any arrangements or answer any questions you may have! We are also happy to provide a free taster session to gauge the interest of your group.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Harley and Thomas

Choral music appreciation Group

Choral music appreciation Group listened to three masses. Firstly, the Mass of the Americas which was written in 2019 by Frank La Rocca. The mass is sung in Latin, Spanish and the language of the Aztecs. New to all of us, it's a beautiful piece lasting 50 minutes. Next was the Missa Criolla by Mexican composer Ariel Ramirez.

We listened to the solo parts which were sung by Spanish tenor Jose Carreras; just as well, as this mass was also written in Spanish. This one was just over 20 minutes. We finished up with A Little Jazz Mass by Bob Chilcott, an ex Kings Singer, at 11 minutes long. Some of our number had actually sung the latter two. Next month, secular songs by Sir Charles Villiers Stanford.

Enid Thresher

Would you like to know more about?.....

TAM (Third Age Matters)

The u3a central office produces a magazine which comes out five times a year. Advertising pays for the printing but postage has to be paid to receive it.

Note: The postage is currently £4 for the year, which should be added to the yearly subscription of Somerton u3a, if you wish to receive the magazine.



Avalon

The Avalon Network is a group of u3a organizations that have a reciprocal arrangement. The seven organizations in the Avalon Network are: Chard and Ilminster u3a, Crewkerne & District u3a, Somerton u3a, Martock & District u3a, and Camelot Area u3a, Yeovil u3a, Street & Glastonbury u3a

More information on our website:

<https://somerton.u3asite.uk/news/>

Beacon

u3a Beacon is a secure online system that helps u3a associations manage their membership, groups, finances, and mailing lists:

Membership: Manage membership records, statistics, and online applications and renewals

Groups: Confirm that group members are u3a members, and track members

Finances: Manage the u3a's finances

Mailing: Manage mailing lists

Beacon is available to all u3as in the UK that want to use it. It's accessible on most computers, tablets, and smartphones.

Here are some features of Beacon:

Access control

Only certain people have access to the entire database, such as committee members and group leaders. Members can see and edit their own records.

Support

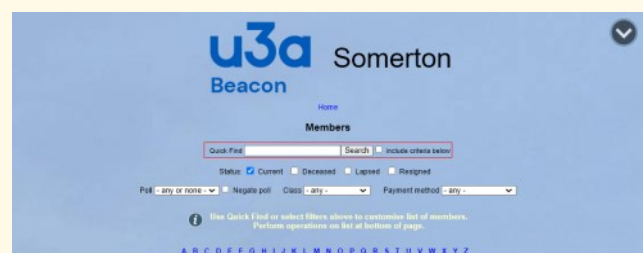
Beacon offers support through a national team of experienced users who provide advice and assistance, an online user forum, and a website with documentation, news, and newsletters.

Security

Beacon is a secure system that uses a username and password for access. Each u3a has a different encryption key for sensitive data fields.

If you wish to update Beacon here is your Members Portal giving you access:

<https://u3abeacon.org.uk/u3aportal.php?u3a=465&sc=XVIV>



I am pleased to hear Laurence, our Beacon Guru is safely out of hospital after a few scary days in Musgrove hospital, Taunton....editor

Norfolk Holiday

Historic houses and Heritage of Norfolk & the Sandringham Estate.

5 days from £894. 21st – 25th September 2025.



This is a coach trip to Norfolk. We will be staying in a 3* boutique hotel, 15 minutes from the centre of Norwich.

We will visit Anglesey Abbey, garden and Lode mill near Cambridge en route to Norwich.

We will be accompanied by a local Blue Guide on days 2,3, and 4 who will help us enjoy visits to Blickling Hall, garden and park, Felbrigg Hall, the Sandringham Estate.

There will also be a cruise on the Norfolk Broads, and a scenic drive along the North Norfolk coast road.

On the way home, we will visit Bletchley Park.

This holiday will cost £894 with a single supplement of £59 per person

Brochures and booking forms are available from Jane Redgrove

Email: redgrove@btinternet.com or phone: 01458 899962

Completed booking forms and deposits must be sent to Jane by 28th February

Final payment will be due by 27th July.

You can also view full details online at <https://www.tailored-travel.co.uk/somertonu3a> select View Your Tour, and enter online reference sstu251 and Download Brochure.

But please note, you cannot book online.

Group News

Art for Fun Group

Art for Funs Christmas and New Year celebration buffet at The Globe on 14th January. We all enjoyed the very fresh buffet and lots of chat plus there was a very welcoming fire to keep us warm. The only drawback was there was no time for musical chairs!

Linda Worth

Letter to the Editor

"I no longer have a car, and getting to meetings in the morning is difficult. BUT, I am quite enjoying the u3a Sessions online. It is free and they have some excellent speakers. I discover the sessions on the u3a National Email which comes every month. Have a look, you may find a new interest!"

Best wishes,

Nina



<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events#Events>

u3a members can access a wide range of free online talks, workshops, and courses through their membership. Most sessions are led by fellow members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organizations.

All events are bookable via Eventbrite. Please ensure you can attend when booking and cancel if you're unable to make it so others can participate. Events are exclusively for u3a members.

Somerton u3a website

If you require more information concerning entries in this newsletter or other points of interest, take a look at the Somerton u3a Website address below.

NEW Website: <https://www.somerton.u3asite.uk/>

Please send articles for the Newsletter to the editor

mike.davis@silchester.org

Deadline for the March edition...20th February

Pictures welcome, but keep script brief

Minimum formatting please.