

SOMERTON u3a

Newsletter 60

April 2025



Chairman's message

Last month I talked about the Avalon Network meeting that Somerton was organising for the end of March. I would like to say how well it went, with representatives from 5 of the other u3a's present, a plan for the way forward put in place and the re-establishment of cooperation, information sharing and mutual learning – and fun, forged. However, as I write my opening message *before* the end of March, I'm taking a chance! What I *can* tell you is that if it doesn't succeed, it won't be for the want of trying on our behalf. I will tell all in the May Newsletter.

I *can* tell you that I visited the Martock & District u3a's Open Day last month and some good information was gained and exchanged. One of the common factors among the Avalon u3a's, which I discovered when I visited Martock and when I wrote to the others, is the problem with recruitment to the Committee. The Committee not only provides the

opportunity for growth, development and new ideas to be explored, but is a legal requirement. Without the Officers and Committee members we cannot exist – and this is the same statement that is on at least 2 other u3a's' websites, within our Network.

With our own AGM in May, and knowing that some of the Committee will be stepping down, can I ask each and everyone of you to think about volunteering? We are grateful that we have 3 new members - but we need more. We would welcome members to bring fresh ideas and, at the same time, spend a bit of time learning what u3a is about. We are an organisation made up of people with a lifetime of varied experiences and skills, please think about using those talents to help secure our future.

Steve Davis

April

April is a rainbow month,
Of sudden springtime showers.
Bright with golden daffodils,
And lots of pretty flowers.



Monthly meetings and talks

Monthly meetings are held on the fourth Friday of the month at the Edgar Community Hall, Somerton.

We are open from 9.30am for refreshments and the chance for members to meet and chat.

The refreshments will finish at 10.20 in order to clear away before the meeting.

The meeting starts at 10.30 with notices, announcements and any

other business and will be followed by our guest speaker.

The meeting closes at 12 noon.

Please join us. Visitors are always welcome at our meetings for a small charge of £2 so please come along and see who we are and what we are about. If you are visiting for the first time then please just make yourself known to one of our Committee members or 'Welcomers' who will be happy to tell you a little bit about us and help you feel at home.

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.

Friday 26th June

Fit for a King

Danny Johnson

In this talk Danny discusses his journey exploring the iconography of past Coronation Services, their symbolism and what their visual language lends to the storytelling and understanding of a Coronation, as well as the monarchy today.

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

'How Running Influenced My Life Choices'

Keith Brackstone, a local resident, gave a most informative and interesting talk on Friday 28th March 2025, on his career in sport and also being a sports coach.

Having been football crazy, at Grammar School, he had to play rugby until there was the opportunity for cross country running instead.

After applying for a Royal Airforce Cadetship, Keith joined The RAF at Cranwell in 1972.

Reading law at university, running and being a member of the RAF life became a little easier.

Keith was posted to many RAF Bases around the country but had to give up competitive running due to a heart condition for which he had surgery in 2018. He still enjoyed running for pleasure.

At age 45 he decided to leave the RAF and became manager of The Students Union in Bristol where he was asked to

coach the Athletics and Cross Country Team which he chose to do as a volunteer.

Keith won many awards for his work as a coach.

In 2012 The Kenyan Olympic team came to Bristol, prior to The London Olympics. He coached Ezekiel Kemboi who won Gold in the Olympics. He realized during that year how much running had influenced his life and how he could help children of poor families who had no income. He helped with coaching and financial support. Keith also went to India where his role was very similar to that in Kenya.

Since moving to Somerton, Keith has started The Somerton Runners - recently getting a Buzz as Charlotte Preece has asked him to coach her.

Thank you Keith and every good wish for the Future.

Janet Holden

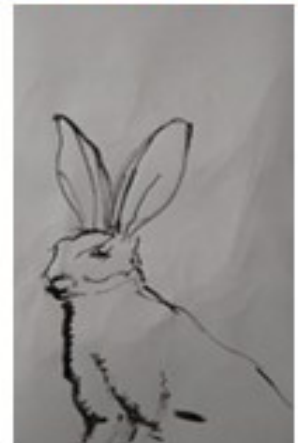
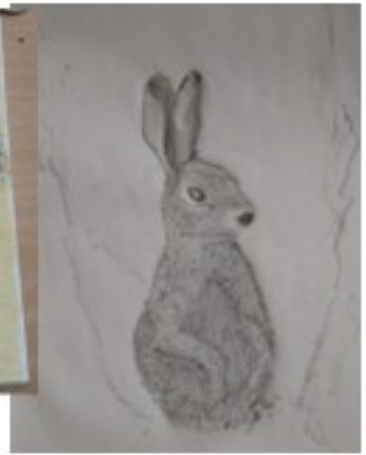
Art for Fun

Art for Fun's theme this month was "Springtime".

Hares and rabbits, daffodils and flowers were in abundance.

Linda Worth

Group News



Craft Group

For our March meeting we enjoyed a relaxing morning doing Zentangle
Thanks to Dru for introducing us to this relaxing pastime.

Ann Hunt

Group News



Mahjong Trip 2025

Kingsbridge



Group News

Amblers

Tony Sparks

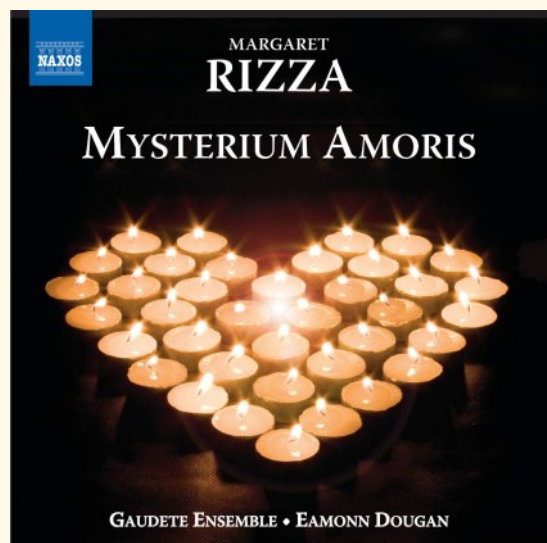
We had a lovely walk from the Castlebrook Inn to go around Lollover hill under blue skies. On our way back we were lucky enough to see emus!



Choral music appreciation met on

Monday 24th March and listened to a CD entitled *Mysterium Amoris*. A collection of texts, old and new, set to music by Margaret Rizza, who is still alive at 96. We decided that we enjoyed all the pieces except one - which isn't bad for the standard size CD.

Next month we'll be hearing the Monteverdi Choir singing pieces put together by John Eliot Gardiner to support a play his mother wrote to celebrate Easter. It includes traditional melodies and pieces by composers such as Gesualdo, Morley, Tallis and Britten.



Group News

Music Appreciation

Enid Thresher

Music Appreciation Group met Saturday 8th March morning

Birthday boy
Ravel (He was born 150 years ago on 7th March)



and listened to another mixed bag.

From a CD entitled Sensual Classics we heard excerpts from: Rachmaninov (Brief Encounter) Bizet (Carmen) Vivaldi, Borodin (Kismet), Beethoven, Albinoni, Khachaturian (Onedin Line) Mahler (Death in Venice) Saint-Saens, Chopin, Stravinsky, Schumann, Ravel again (Torvil and Dean).

We finished up with Bach (Hamlet cigars) Air on a G String.



Sunday Roasties

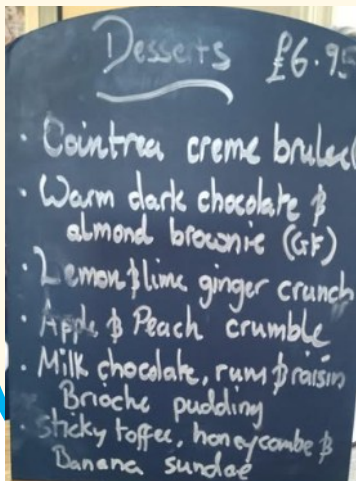
enjoyed their roast dinners at The White Hart, Martock on 2nd March.

This is a popular, busy, friendly coaching inn. Those who had not been there before said that they planned to go back there again.

Next month's rendezvous is The Lime Kiln.

Thank you John for organising us!

Sarah



Yum!

Group News

Opera Appreciation

We were a couple of members short in Opera Appreciation Group 1 so I will offer the loan of the DVD when they return. The DVD in question was Rossini's comic opera Le Comte Ory from the NY Met.

A very funny production with three star singers, Peruvian tenor Juan Diego

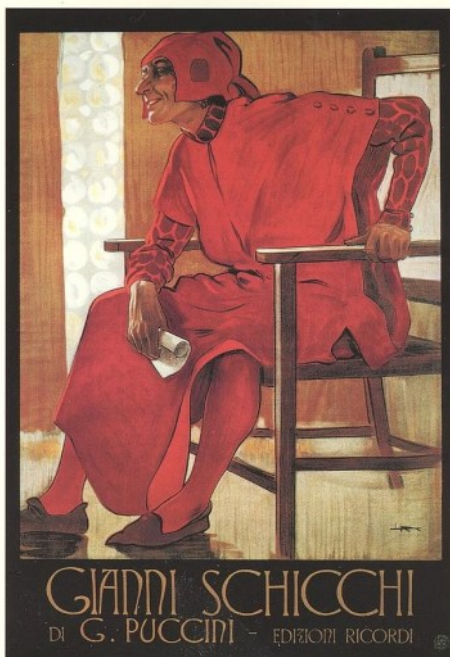


Florez, German soprano Diana Damrau and American mezzo Joyce di Donato, all in great voice. Especially funny was these three excellent singers sharing a three in a bed scene romp in the last act.

(Garsington Opera illustration)

Not many laughs next month: Beethoven's only opera, Fidelio.

Enid Thresher



Opera App Group 2 met on Thursday

6th March afternoon for the first time since December. We watched Gianni Schicchi, the comedy opera from Puccini's Il Trittico (The Triptych)

It was a 1983 production from Milan and actually set where it was intended to be: Florence in the time of Dante.

Next month, the passion of Samson et Delilah by Saint-Saens.

Enid Thresher

Group News

Reading Group 'Meet' at Taunton Races!

Each year this group aims to arrange a visit to tie in with one of the books we have read. At some stage we became aware that one of our group has had a life long interest in horse racing: enough said!

For a rather lighter read we chose 'Pulse' by Felix Francis (son of Dick Francis). Needless to say there was racing skulduggery involved, but it also focused on the medical side of racing. This included how doctors and vets are employed, and how jockeys are treated and restricted following a fall. We loved that the normal test of a head concussion is: "day of the week, year, Prime Minister" etc – but in racing it is: "which horse were you riding, name of the meet and who won the Grand National"!

The weather was glorious, the going 'good', a few hats had an airing and we were able to give Valerie Taylor a birthday to remember. Of course we had a flutter (some even came away with a small profit), lots of cheering, a delicious lunch and tea, and not one shouted the immortal words of Eliza Doolittle in My Fair Lady.

Not surprisingly this has given inspiration to future reads and visits: 'Murder on The Orient Express', 'No 1 Ladies Detective Agency', or 'Death in Venice' have been suggested.

Mary Beth Greenop



Group News

Play Reading Group

The Play Reading group could take a couple more people - we read the plays, no acting involved!.

We meet in a member's home in Somerton on the second Tuesday afternoon of the month.

We read through a play suitable for the size of the group and stop for a tea or coffee. If time allows we briefly discuss it after and say what sort of play we would like nextany suggestions are welcome.

There's a small annual charge to cover the hire of books

Amanda Hooper



v3a Committee Members 2025

Chairman	Steve Davis	Beacon Administrator	Laurence Reeves
Vice Chairman	Jane Redgrove	Groups Coordinator	Sarah Terry
Secretary	Annette Sparks	Speaker Co-ordinator	Chris Tite
Treasurer	Barrie Davies	Committee Member	Sally Tite
Membership Sec.	Fran Cook	Committee Member	Janet Holden
Newsletter Editor	Mike Davis		

Love your Hoverfly/Butterflies/Bees/pollinators

Hoverfly love to eat aphids



...by planting a variety of flowers, creating a pond, and providing habitats for larvae, such as log piles or shrubs and bug hotels.

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/savingbees>

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/invertebrates/butterflies>



Avoid pesticides.



Slinky Bus

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/slinky-services/>



Slinky is a special transport service funded by Somerset Council. It picks people up from their homes and takes them to where they need to go. This service is for those who cannot use regular buses or trains. All the vehicles are easy to get into and use.

You can use the Slinky service for many things. It can take you to health appointments or exercise classes, help you visit friends or family, go shopping, or attend social events. You can also use it to connect to other public transport options

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 May edition...20th April

Pictures welcome, but keep script brief

Minimum formatting please.