



Chairman's message

With the news in August that the co-founder of u3a, Eric Midwinter, had died I was reminded of just how far we have come as an organisation, even in the 20 years that I have been a member. Established in 1982 with the vision that life can not only go on into older age – but flourish, u3a began to grow. Under the basis that the Organisation is member led and what we do, in our own u3as, is what is decided by it's members, the number of u3as nationally has steadily grown and now exceeds 1000!

In 1997, thanks to an initiative by Sherrie Briggs, a meeting was held in Somerton and 40 people stepped up and joined. How grateful we are that they did! Since that time our own

u3a has developed and grown and, following a brilliant Open Day last month, where so many people were involved beforehand, during, afterwards and behind the scenes, our membership has now gone beyond 500 for the first time since the pandemic. It was a wonderful occasion, and a true reflection of what cooperation and teamwork can achieve - and Sherry Briggs (Member No. 1162), is now a Group Leader!

Let us continue to grow, learn, laugh, support each other and have fun.

Steve

Open Day

22 August 2025

A terrific morning was our Open Day, with around 50 new members signing up and a chance for everyone to join any of the 50+ Interest Groups that we have on offer.



More pictures on page 8



Monthly meetings and talks 2025

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 26th September

"The Women Who Went Round The World"

by Sally Smith

Sally's entertaining talk covers the extraordinary journeys of the women featured in her latest book, "The Women Who Went Round the World" – the women who were the very first to achieve a full circumnavigation by sea, land and finally by air. Starting with the incredible story of Jeanne Baret, who faced real drama when she discovered an exciting plant in Brazil in 1767, Sally's talk gives a fascinating glimpse into not just the personal lives and journeys of these groundbreaking women, but also offers a wonderful insight into society at very different times in history.

Friday 24th October

"A Schoolgirl's War"

A presentation by Mary Smith

A Schoolgirl's War tells the story of school life during WW2, using a fascinating and recently discovered set of paintings. These were created by a young wartime art teacher who set out to document in paint and pencil the lives of school children and their teachers as the war unfolded, creating a unique and intriguing record. Her work features in paint the disrupted schooling, air-raids, doodlebugs, and underground lessons in shelters which were experienced by so many children.

Friday 28th November

Berlin 1963

An illustrated talk by

Ian Munrow

This PowerPoint presentation can be best described as part recollections and a travelogue by a young 18-year-old on my weeklong visit to Berlin in 1963, plus some short details on the Cold War including escapes to the West.

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

Early morning ride to Watchet for Coffee 24th August.

Dave Slocombe



Group News

A u3a day out in Sherbourne

In the morning we visited the abbey which was once a Saxon Catholic Cathedral, became a Benedictine Abbey and is now a Church of England church.

We followed this with a very interesting tour of the museum, and then we lunched in some of the many nice cafes.

After lunch the afternoon was spent with Richard Warren who explained the history of the castle and how it was besieged twice by the parliamentarians during the 17th century civil war.



Local History Saxons Group at Sherbourne Abbey

Dave Munns



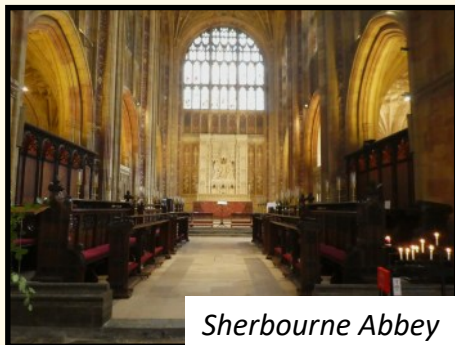
Sherbourne Old Castle—the Entrance



Sherbourne Old Castle inside



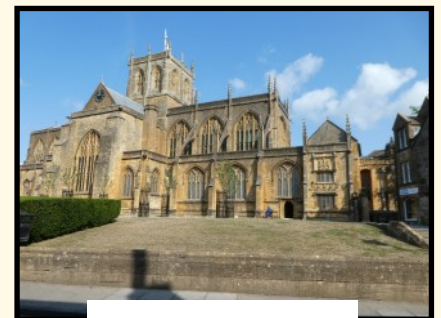
Local History Saxons Group at Sherbourne Old Castle



Sherbourne Abbey choir and alter



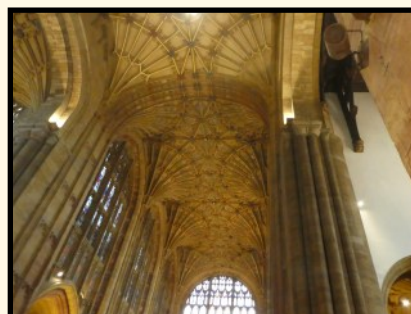
Sherbourne Abbey alter



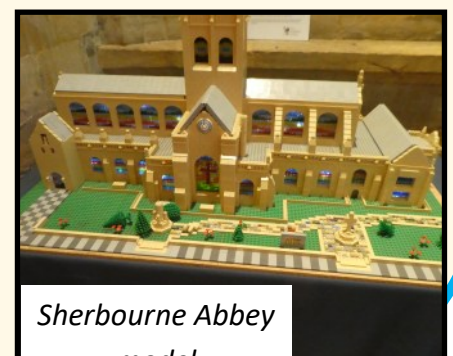
Sherbourne Abbey on a sunny day



Sherbourne Old Castle—where are those Roundheads?



Sherbourne Abbey roof



Sherbourne Abbey model

Group News

Birdwatching Group

Out with the Duchess of Cocklemoor (no, that's not any of the ladies present!), but the lovely electric boat operating on the River Parrett. A quiet and tranquil morning for the Birdwatching Group followed by lunch at Bow Wharf.

Continued learning with u3a can be very rewarding!

Steve Davis 18th August



Choral Music Appreciation listened

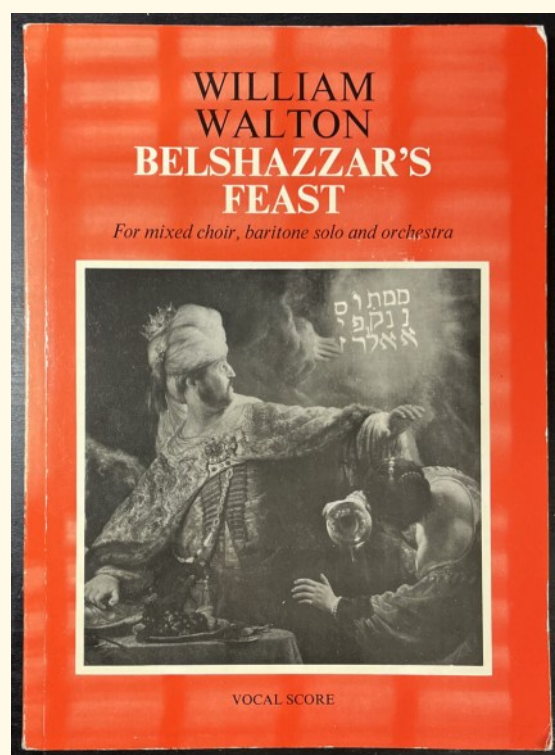
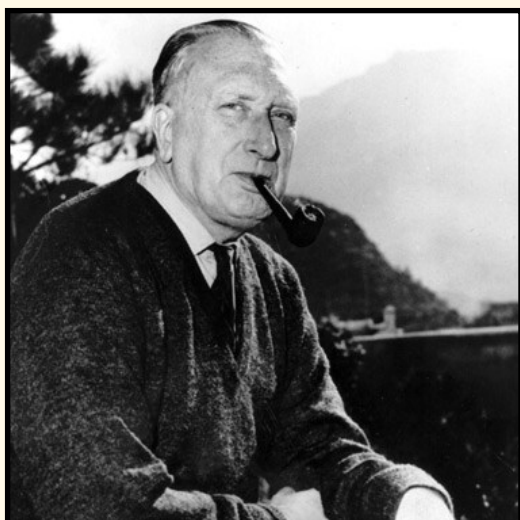
to several pieces by William Walton (1902-1983).

We began with his only setting of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis which he wrote to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the founding of Chichester cathedral. He also set the Cantico del Sol, words by St Francis of Assisi. A few other short pieces, including his first published piece written when he was 15, and we finished with Belshazzar's Feast.

September's subject will be music from the Sistine Chapel Choir.

Enid Thresher

28th July



Group News



The Gardens

Visit Group

had a very interesting visit to Caisson Gardens in Combe Hay on the 31st July. Jane organised the trip and also the weather!

The garden only opened to the public 2 years ago. It is built among the ruins of the Somerset Coal Canal which was never fully completed. It's an organic garden with lots of wildlife. There was a red kite circling the wildflower meadow as well. Thank you Jane.



Annette Sparks



A group who drifted in and out of the birdwatchers view (page 4)

Pictures on page 6

- 1 *A nice old engine in the loco shed*
- 2 *Cranmore major locomotive overhaul*
- 3 *A coachload of u3a-ers*
- 4 *Loco running round Mendip Vale*
- 5 *The lone train spotter*
- 6 *Some u3a-ers—will they ever finish*
- 7 *Reconstruction of a carriage*
- 8 *Loco tender for overhaul*
- 9 *Signal box*
- 10 *Station platform*
- 11 *u3a rail fans restrained at Mendip Vale*

Local History Group trip Cranmore Station

Group News

The day was a great success. ESR treated us very well and the guides were extremely helpful and informative with the timings working a treat. Lunch both in the cafe and the surrounding patio area proved to be very popular.

We certainly learned a lot about the workings of the various workshops and the restoration work to locos and rolling stock.

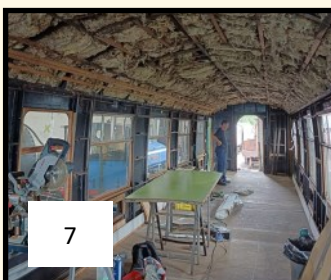
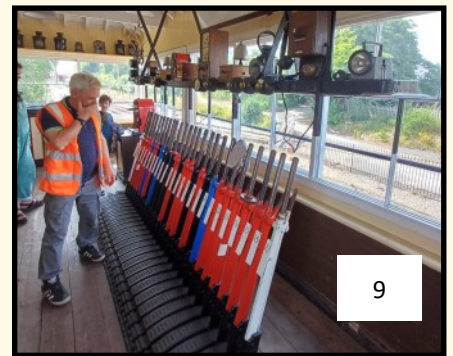
We also visited the David Shepherd exhibition, the museum,

the signal box and shop.

Our lead guide gave us a talk about the history of the railway, Cranmore station and the overall site.

All together a very popular visit including the steam engine hauled journey to Mendip Vale with many managing the trip more than once

Dave Munns



Group News

Walking Group 8th August (2nd Friday monthly)

Today's walk in lovely weather was just under 4 miles around the Castle Cary area; we walked up lodge hill with far reaching views across to Hinckley Point & Minehead. We crossed the Cary hill road towards Higher Hadspen then on to the village of Hadspen to follow the Knapp's hollow track to Solomons lane to Higher Ansford then back into Castle Cary for a well-earned cold drink at the George Hotel.

Peter Taylor



“ Everyone in u3a should be an involved member, not a customer being served ”

More Open Day....



...pictures



Group News

Local History Group

Waiting for our cream tea after a very informative tour of this interesting Manor House .



A message from Iain Cassidy CEO of the Third Age Trust

It is with great sadness that I share the news of the death of Eric Midwinter, one of the visionary co-founders of the u3a movement in the UK.

Eric, alongside Peter Laslett and Michael Young, established u3a in 1982 with the belief that later life should be a time of continued learning, connection, and contribution. Eric's commitment to challenging negative stereotypes of ageing, and to creating spaces for older adults to share skills, knowledge, and friendship, has shaped the lives of hundreds of thousands of u3a members over four decades.

Eric's vision has flourished over the years and we know that his legacy will continue to inspire new generations to embrace lifelong learning and positive ageing.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Eric's family and friends at this time.

You can watch a conversation between Eric and Liz Thackray about the movement, recorded in 2022 for our 40th Anniversary, on our YouTube Channel.

Best wishes,

Iain Cassidy

CEO of the Third Age Trust



Amblers Group

Third Tuesday Monthly

Amblers walk in Martock. We set off from Yandles and walked along the river bank and passed a field of ripe maize. After crossing the main road we walked along a track that led past some allotments and past a field with two donkeys. We headed towards Bower Hinton and then through the recreation ground and back to Yandles for coffee and cake.

Tony Sparks 19th August



Group News



Somerton Street Party

A lovely afternoon 24th August at the Somerton Street Party promoting Su3a. A huge thanks to the many u3a members who turned up to help, chat, support, encourage, smile, laugh, enjoy the day - and buy me a pint!

You were terrific!

Sarah



Oh No!

1. What does a storm cloud wear under his raincoat?

Thunderwear.

2. What do kids play when their mom is using the phone? Bored games.

3. What do you call an ant who fights crime? A vigilANTE!

4. Why are snails slow? Because they're carrying a house on their back.

5. What's the smartest insect? A spelling bee!

6. What is fast, loud and crunchy? A rocket chip.

7. How does the ocean say hi? It waves!

8. What do you call a couple of chimpanzees sharing an Amazon account? PRIME-mates.

9. Why did the teddy bear say no to dessert? Because she was stuffed.

10. Why did the soccer player take so long to eat dinner? Because he thought he couldn't use his hands.

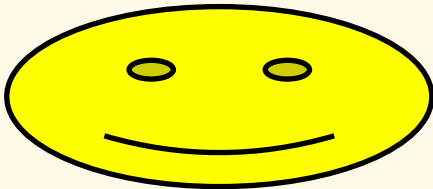
11. Name the kind of tree you can hold in your hand? A palm tree!

12. What do birds give out on Halloween? Tweets.

13. What has ears but cannot hear? A cornfield.

14. What's a cat's favorite dessert? A bowl full of mice-cream.

15. Where did the music teacher leave her keys? In the piano!



Wanted!

Your u3a needs you!

At the recent open/enrolment day, there was a lot of interest shown by members for the following:

Golf
Tai Chi
Italian
Current Affairs

For a group to be set up we need:

- People who are interested in the activity
- Someone who is willing to give it a go!

**Interested in these activities? Or think you can help,
please let Sarah Terry know.**

The heat of autumn
is different from the heat
of summer.
One ripens apples, the
other turns them to cider.

August Newsletter

Quiz Answers

- 1 = 3
2 = Adam Ant
3 = British
4 = Zinfandel

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.

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

Please send articles for the Newsletter to the editor

mike.davis@silchester.org

Deadline for the October edition...20th September

Pictures welcome, but keep script brief

Minimum formatting please.