



Chairman's message

It was a privilege for my wife and I to attend the funeral of Leslie Clarke (Leo), who had joined our u3a in 2014 and who died on 1st January, aged 99. It was a celebration of a life well lived, and a life surrounded by the love of his family and supported by his many friends. Leo had come to u3a as a widower and joined in Groups with a passion – especially the Ukulele Group. Here he met Denise and, within 6 months they were married. It was within u3a that Leo developed his talent for writing and it was wonderful that two of his poems were read at the service by members of his family.

Another thing that was obvious was the support for Denise by members of the S.U.B.S and other u3a friends. It showed, in a very obvious way, the care and friendships that are made by being involved with an organisation that is based on living, learning and having fun. Leo will be missed but his memory will live on, and he will be remembered by all who had the pleasure to have known him.

u3a really can make a difference to peoples lives and, being a 'member led' organisation, it depends on its members to sustain it. At our last Committee Meeting in January, we again talked about the need for volunteers to join the Committee. Some of us will be standing down and, while we look for people with enthusiasm and fresh ideas to carry us forward, we need certain skills for some of the roles involved. One of these roles is the Secretary. If you think that this is something that you could do (and with 550 members, surely there is someone out there with experience?) then please get in touch with me or any of the Committee. I can't stress enough just how important this is.

Let us continue to make friends, take on new challenges, learn new skills, support each other – and, of course, have fun.

Steve.

This Month

- *Chairman's message*
- *Friday meetings/talks*
- *Group News/pictures*
- *Information how to avoid Scams.*
- *Crossword*
- *Jokes*
- *Web links*
- *Any requests for next month???*

Monthly meetings/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.

27th February

2 Steps Behind - it all began with a camel

A presentation by Dawn Lawrence

Dawn Lawrence from Dorset whose talk has the intriguing title- "2 steps behind- it all began with a camel" Her subject, conservation of the world's endangered wildlife and prevention of extinction. Her involvement with the charity, "Born Free Foundation" founded by Virginia McKenna is through her literary work.

Dawn has written and illustrated many books. One in particular, written in verse with each wild animal describing the facts about itself and its habitat and environment. Some of these, Dawn will read to us with passion and humour.

Books and cute toy animals will be on sale for us to purchase with all proceeds going to her charity. This will be a most interesting and educational talk



27th March

Child Gambler Wins Life Back



A presentation by Paul Isherwood

Paul Isherwood is a speaker who shares his personal journey in his talk, "**Child Gambler Wins Life Back**". He recounts his experience as a young boy who struggled with gambling addiction but had a turning point that led him to seek help. Now, well into his fifties, he hasn't gambled since.

His talk is described as **inspiring, entertaining, and a story of overcoming adversity**

24th April

Working with the Military *Presenters Under Stress*

A presentation by Alex Leger, Television Producer, Director and Cameraman

Alex found many ways to test the presenters whilst filming with the military. Household names like John Leslie, Tim Vincent and Matt Baker found humour in their discomfort while surviving in a snow hole on top of a Norwegian mountain in the dead of Winter - and taking part in the fabled tests that the Paras must pass to get their 'wings'. Lifting landmines in Angola caused surprise and alarm and free falling parachuting exploits nearly broke the will of one presenter and the pelvis of another, leading to gripping stories of courage and determination.

Alex last came and spoke to us in July 2024 when he talked about, and showed films about, his time working on the children's programme, 'Blue Peter'. His talk was very well received and we look forward to welcoming Alex back with us.

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

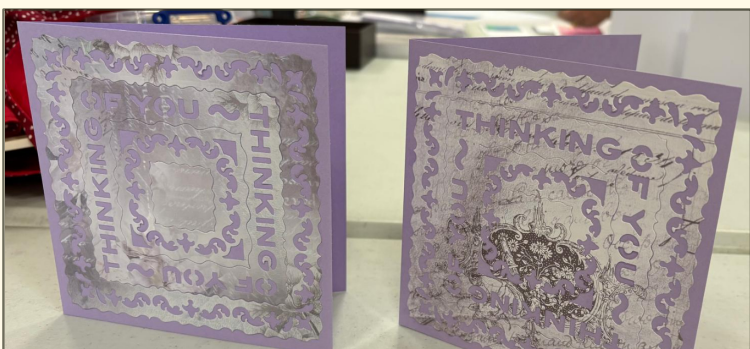
☺ *Everyone in u3a should be an involved member, not a customer being served* ☺

Craft Group 1st Friday

Group News

Ann Hunt

The Craft Group met on 5th January and had fun making cards, a new craft for some members.



Music Appreciation

1st Friday

Enid Thresher

Music Appreciation met and I had decided it would be a good idea start 2026 off in a peaceful manner. So we listened to a CD of tranquil music from Shostakovitch, Rodrigo, Debussy, Czibulka, Offenbach, Nielsen, Faure, Saint-Saens, Puccini, Mahler, Delius, Bizet, Massenet, Duparc and Rachmaninov.

We all agreed it was a good way to start the new year. Next month will not be so peaceful. Country music!

ClassicMoods

Over two hours of classical music to free the mind and touch the soul
Plus de deux heures de musique classique pour libérer l'esprit et toucher l'âme



Group News

Sunday Roasties

John Day

1st Sunday

Sunday Roasties met at The Lime Kiln for January's lunch meeting.

A lively lunch was enjoyed by all. John may have found a new member for the Group.



It only hurts when I laugh!!

1. Why don't they play poker in the jungle?
Too many cheetahs

2. What did the frustrated cat say?
Are you kitten me right meow

3. What kind of tea is hard to swallow?
Reality

4. What did the Buddhist say to the hot dog vendor?
Make me one with everything

5. How did the hamburger know he needed new pants?
His buns were showing

6. What do you call two monkeys that share an Amazon account?
Prime mates

7. What do you call a pile of cats?
A meow-tain

8. If you're American when you go into a bathroom and when you come out, what are you while you're inside?
European

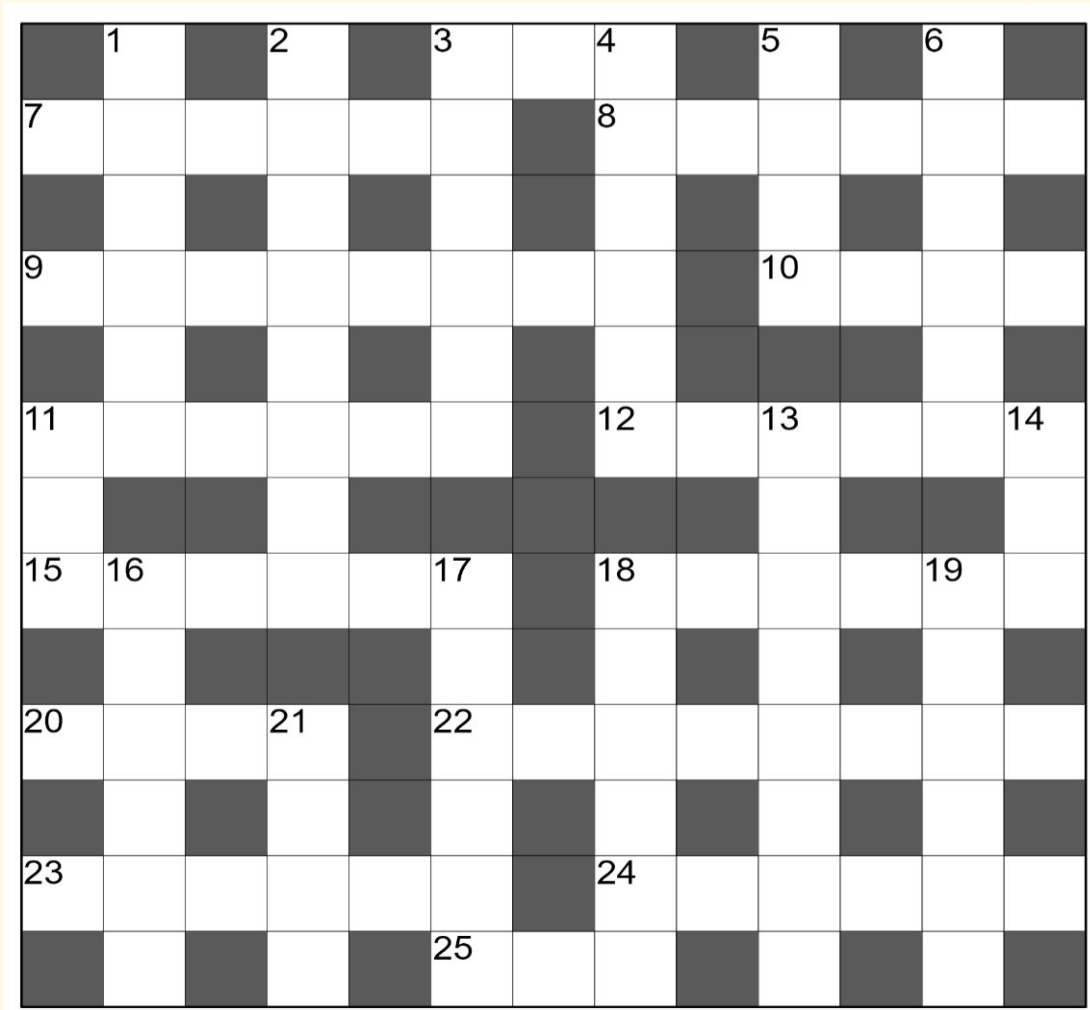
9. What's the leading cause of dry skin?
Towels

10. When does Snoop Dogg use an umbrella?
For drizzle

11. What kind of cereal do dads like?
Corn flakes

12. When does a joke become a dad joke?
When it becomes apparent

Crosswordanswers on page 10



Across

- 3 Section of an atlas (3)
 7 Yet, all the same (4,2)
 8 Desktop container (2-4)
 9 Very rapid decline (4,4)
 10 Cowl (4)
 11 ___ Meg, astrologer (6)
 12 Desire (6)
 15 Lower in status (6)
 18 Harmful (6)
 20 Heroic poem (4)
 22 Recount (8)
 23 OT book of the Bible (6)
 24 To hand (6)
 25 Floor cleaner (3)

Down

- 1 Inordinately (6)
 2 Disturb (8)
 3 Picture made from fragments (6)
 4 Sow's baby (6)
 5 Score (metal) with acid (4)
 6 Celebrated, eminent (6)
 11 Soft wet earth (3)
 13 Hurt, physically or mentally (3-5)
 14 Go brown in the sun (3)
 16 Place in the open (6)
 17 Practice of wearing nothing (6)
 18 Make a hash of (4,2)
 19 Eat greedily (6)
 21 Part of a battery (4)

Group News

Birdwatching Group

Monday 5th January

Route - Avalon Marshes Car park to Noahs Hide and 70 acre Hide towards Ham Wall. Mid Somerset Bird Reserves.

Time 10am - 12.20pm

Weather - Cold (- 2 degrees C), FROSTY, Sunny,

Wind strength Beaufort 3 from the W/SW.

These are my observations.

24 SPECIES seen

- Mute Swan (14)
- Northern Shoveller (4)
- Eurasian Wigeon (200)
- Mallard (30)
- Common Wood Pigeon (4)
- Eurasian Coot (30)
- Great Cormorant (5)
- Great White Egret (3)
- Gray Heron (3)
- Western Marsh Harrier (1)
- Eurasian Magpie (1)
- Carrion Crow (1)
- Eurasian Blue Tit (1)
- Great Tit (2)
- Long tailed Tit (10)
- Goldcrest (1)
- Eurasian Wren (1)
- Eurasian Blackbird (1)
- Eurasian Robin (2)
- Reed Bunting (3)
- SISKIN (flock , maybe 10 or 12)
- Treecreeper (2)
- Kingfisher (1)
- Black headed Gull in winter plumage (1).
- Water Rail HEARD several times but not seen .
- There may have been other species present on the lake at Noahs but I did not have sufficient magnification to see them.The Lake was frozen over for almost 3/4 of its surface. The birds were in the sun on the far side of the lake in the open water.
- We identified the siskin and reed bunting as a group collaboration by sightings.
- My Merlin Bird App confirmed Siskin, Long Tailed Tits, Goldcrest , Wigeon, robin and blackbird.
- One of the cormorants had a dirty white front and was perched in a tree. This was an immature/ juvenile bird.
- There was a Grey Heron hunkered down on the grassy bank near the bridge for Noahs. This flew as we approached. However there was a Cormorant hunkered down on the river bank which we saw on the way back which did not move. This may be atypical behaviour and suggest the bird may be ill. There is Avian Flu on this reserve. Footwear should be disinfected before and after visits. At least one Hide is closed at Ham Wall due to deaths attributed to Bird Flu..
- The Kingfisher was a glimpse as it gave a fly past to those of us lucky enough to be the first ones in Noahs Hide.

On eBird Website (<https://ebird.org/home>) there is a report for Ham Wall 5th Jan 2026 12.51pm Checklist S292593411 which lists 32 species observed.

My total number of birds for each species are estimates only.

Overall a good number of sightings and total number of birds on a clear winters morning to get moving again after the Christmas break.

Heather Champion

(Pictures on page 7)

Group News

Birdwatching Group

Liz Maxwell & Kay Williamson

1st & 3rd Mondays

Birdwatching at Shapwick - Steve Davis

The first outing of the year was on a glorious winter's day, to Shapwick Heath. 9 members of the newly combined Group braved the weather.



'Rooted & Rural - The Home of The Wessex

Wanderer'

- in collaboration with ACEarts Gallery – is pleased to present this very special event coming this March – a fascinating talk celebrating the life and work of **Hope Bourne**, the much-loved Exmoor writer and artist known for her deep connection to the landscape and remarkable self-sufficient way of living.

This talk, which will be given by **Lisa Eden**, who is Vice-Chair of The Exmoor Society and Lead Trustee for the Society's Resource Centre; will explore Hope's philosophy, writing and art and we will hear where this sits in the enduring legacy she left on Exmoor and beyond.

Whether you're already familiar with her work and publications or simply curious about one of the moor's most intriguing figures, this promises to be an inspiring and thought-provoking evening.

In addition - the evening will not only raise funds for ACEarts, but also for the small but growing Somerset based Charity 'Farmerados' - which provides friendly, supportive spaces for members of the farming community to connect, listen without judgement, and share life's experiences and challenges.

If you have any questions or required further information, please contact

jo@rootedandrural.co.uk



THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF HOPE BOURNE

An illustrated Presentation by

Lisa Eden

Trustee & Vice Chair of The Exmoor Society

Friday, 27th March 7.00pm – 9.00pm

Doors open 6.30pm for Wine & Nibbles

The Parish Rooms

Market Place Somerton

Tickets £12

Available on-line from acearts.co.uk - or in person from ACEarts Gallery

All profits will be shared equally between local charities: ACEarts and Farmerados

Promoted by Rooted & Rural – The Home of The Wessex Wanderer - in conjunction with ACEarts Gallery



LANGPORT

SILENT READING GROUP

It is NEW and it is FREE, it's informal, EVERYONE is welcome and it's all about COMMUNITY.

Come and join us for a couple of hours in quiet companionship with friendly, likeminded people.

No assigned reading material - so BYO - book, newspaper, kindle, magazine etc etc.

Starting in February, we will be meeting on the LAST Tuesday of the Month

at The Art-Tea-Zen Café, Cheapside, Langport

1.30 p.m. – 3.30 p.m

For further information email: silentreadinggroup@gmail.com

24th February * 31st March * 28th April * 26th May * 30th June * 28th July * 25th August * 29th September * 27th October * 24th November

For sale:

Canon TS5150 printer/copier/scanner and spare cartridges - £50.

Bought April 2025, only used once.

I've always used Epson before and found I couldn't adapt to the Canon.

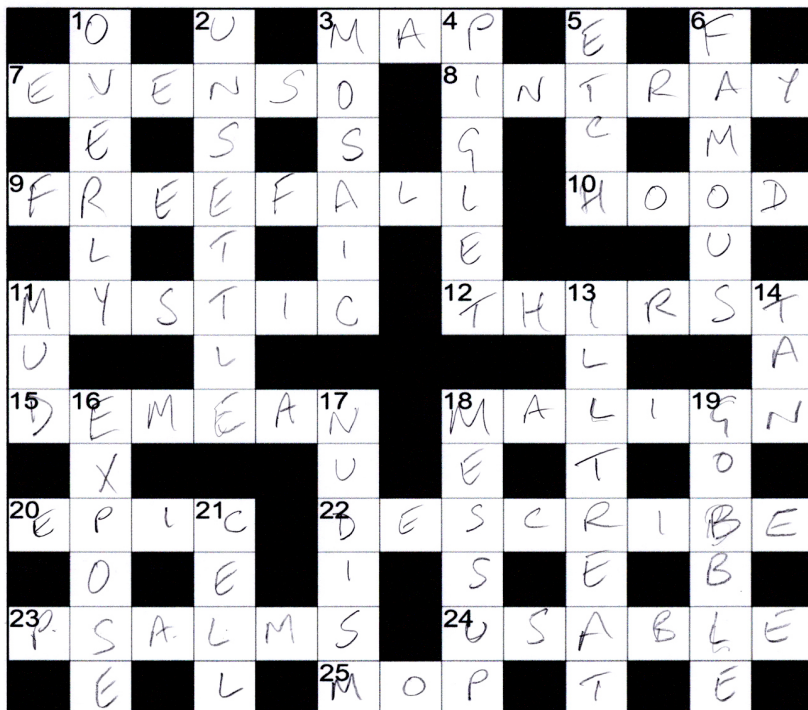
Also available is the invoice.

Contact Enid Thresher email: cnethresher@sky.com

tel: 01458 272915



Crossword Answers



Who has seen the wind?

Who has seen the wind?

Neither I nor you:

But the leaves hang trembling,

The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?

Neither you nor I:

But when the trees bow down their heads,

The wind is passing by.

Christina Rossetti

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 March edition...20th February

Pictures welcome, but keep the script brief

Minimum formatting please