

# SOMERTON u3a

Newsletter 72 April 2026



## Chairman's message

March was a slightly busier time for me, and some others from our Committee, as there was a South West Region Workshop Day on the 4th, our committee meeting on the morning of the 12th, and an Avalon Network meeting on the afternoon of the 12th.

The South West Region Workshop was held at Taunton Racecourse. It was introduced by our two Regional Reps and led by two very competent staff from the Third Age Trust. About 70 members attended, from numerous u3as around the region, with various topics discussed but with the main theme being 'Encouraging and supporting volunteers within your u3a'. This included recruiting members to committees, encouraging those outside of the Trustee role to get involved, and enabling our members to volunteer as Group Leaders, and explore the benefits of being engaged with their u3a. I was very pleased that Peter Taylor, a new member to Su3a committee, was able to join me. We both found it an interesting and useful day and a great opportunity to meet with other u3a'ers and find out, (to no great surprise), that there are a lot of shared experiences with the problem of recruiting 'willing hands'.

On the morning of the 12th, the committee met. We were delighted that a visitor joined us for the meeting and even *more* delighted when, at the end, she offered to join! Very exciting but more on that another time. Along with the usual matters on the agenda, we had a presentation by our Treasurer, Barrie, supported by Sue Burton – our Independent Financial Examiner (and u3a member!), on the advantages of transferring to a new accounting system. With our growing membership and growing numbers within some of the large Groups, it will hopefully reduce the time that has to be spent by the Treasurer entering each and every transaction and, at the same time, give Group Leaders easy access to their Group's funds. Again, more of this to follow.

From this, Jane Redgrove and I went off to the Avalon meeting hosted on this occasion by Chard, Ilminster & District u3a. All member u3as sent two representatives, and it was lovely to welcome David Newick, Chairman of Street and Glastonbury u3a, as they are keen to join the Avalon Network! We also welcomed Marian Luck, our Regional Rep and Paul Ward, who will join her in April, to the meeting and I thank them for their support.

So, a busy time and more to come as we move towards our AGM in May. There are not many opportunities left for me to say just how important it is that you, the members, get involved. There will be changes happening, let us make them the right ones.

Happy Easter.

Steve

### 28th April [Coach Trip to Salisbury](#)

Cost: £15.00 per person

Booking Required

## Special Events

Details on web site:

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

### 22nd May [Annual General Meeting](#)

Yes, it's that time of year again! Come and support your u3a, show your appreciation for the work done by your Committee on your behalf.

Venue: [Edgar Hall](#)

# 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.

## 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.

## 26th June

### Guide Dogs Puppy Raiser

*A talk by Iris Chapple - accompanied by her puppy*



Iris Chapple is a Puppy Raiser for Guide Dogs, and has worked with puppies for many years. She has spent over half her life encouraging young dogs, introducing them to the 'big wide world,' helping them to take everyday situations in their stride -- anything from noisy schoolchildren to even noisier tractors, from buses to brass bands, from smoke alarms to steam engines... In fact anything that the dog is likely to encounter in its adult working life.

When the pups leave her, they go on to be trained in the skills of guiding a blind person safely and confidently through life., whatever it brings.

Iris is a Speaker and fundraiser for Guide Dogs, shaking a bucket at collection days, wearing a silly costume, or even abseiling down tall buildings ... it's all part of putting the "fun" into fundraising.

So get ready to ask some questions: about pups, puddles, people or parachutes, and she'll be glad to talk about them.

## 24th July

### Dracula

The Man Behind the Myth

An illustrated talk by Ashley Jones.



Dracula: The Man Behind the Myth explores the remarkable true story of Prince Vlad III of Wallachia, the real historical figure who inspired Bram Stoker's legendary Count Dracula.

This engaging presentation examines Vlad's life, reputation, and brutal times, and traces how history and folklore transformed a 15th-century ruler into the iconic vampire of modern popular culture. Featuring video and sound elements, the talk separates myth from reality while revealing how the Dracula legend came to be

Ash has spoken to our u3a on a number of occasions now - and on a wide range of subjects. He is always informative, knowledgeable and humorous and this talk is no exception



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



# Group News

## Art for Fun

The **Art for Fun** had a demonstration from two of our members on how to achieve the best results using pastels.

The picture shows the results.

*Linda Worth*



## Roasties

For our March meal Sunday Roasties group paid a visit to Drayton Crown, we enjoyed our choices of various roast meals from the menu.

Our next outing is to Old Pound Inn at Aller, on Sunday 11th April - a week later than usual because of Easter.

*John Day  
Group Leader*

## Short mat bowls

The group has enjoyed an influx of new members this year and regularly fills three mats with enthusiastic players. While skills may vary, enjoyment coupled with healthy competition is always evident and the convivial atmosphere created ensures Thursday mornings at Long Sutton Village Hall are a must.

The attached picture was taken February 2026

*Brian Pearson*



# Group News

## Craft Group

A select few members of the Craft Group met on 6th March and made boxes to hold serviettes, ably let by group member Dru.

*Ann Hunt*



## Practical Photography Group

Mid March we met at a chilly and damp Stockhill Wood, for some woodland photography.

It was wonderful to see members sharing advice on subjects, composition and on their camera. These photos were taken.

Paul Redman



# Group News

## The Local History Group

...welcomed the return of speaker, Andrew Powell Thomas, for the meeting on Wednesday 18th March in the Parish Rooms.

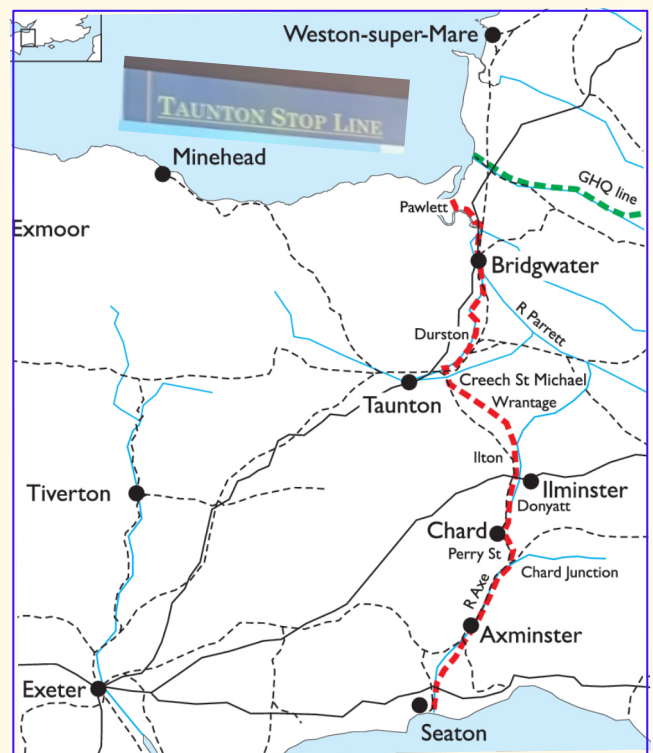
His talk was about the **Taunton Stop Line**. This "wall", stretching 50 miles across Somerset, Devon and Dorset, was built as a defensive measure against the imminent threat of a German invasion during 1939 and early 1940.

Much of its legacy can still be traced today and there will be a follow up guided walk with Andrew on Wednesday 1st April near Creech St Michael to explore what is still visible today of these old fortifications.

I think everyone learnt something – I only wish school history lessons had been so enjoyable!

Thank you to Kay and Judi.

Sarah



# April Moods

by Lenore Hetrick

April changes her sweet mind  
Every other second.  
With her many moods and minds,  
Nothing can be reckoned.  
I always carry an umbrella,  
It serves for rain and sun!  
I take my boots and out I go  
To share in April's fun.



*I'm looking  
forward to your  
articles for May  
Newsletter*

*Editor*

## *Chaffinch*



*Taken from a Photo  
on Facebook by  
Steve Davis*

## **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*

**pubsu3a@gmail.com**

**Deadline for the May edition....20th April**

*Pictures welcome, but keep the script brief*

*Minimum formatting please*