



Chairman's message

I was very pleased to see so many members attend the AGM at our May Monthly Meeting. It was a chance to show our appreciation to *all* members of the Committee who, over the past year, have dedicated a lot of their time to making sure that we can not only carry on, but develop our interests, expand our social groups, learn new things which, in turn, "keeps the mind bright, agile and curious". (Iain Cassidy, CEO Third Age Trust). It also gives us the opportunity to volunteer, get involved, and experience the joys that running our u3a can bring.

It is inevitable that, under our constitution, Committee Members will step down, and we were sorry that Laurence and Mike have done so – but pleased that they are carrying on their respective roles *off* of the committee. It was also sad to see Jane Redgrove step down who, like me, came back on to the Committee 4 years ago and took on the Vice Chairmanship. Jane has spent the majority of her many years in Su3a, on the committee, in about every role possible. I hope you were able to read the heartfelt email she sent out recently to all members, detailing this? It was a testament to what can be done and, I hope, the personal satisfaction that volunteering brings.

We welcomed, and voted, 3 new members onto the Committee and, I'm very pleased to say, that I had a couple of enquiries from members before the meeting started, as well.

All those leaving the Committee were given, on your behalf, small tokens of our appreciation for their service over the years with Jane also receiving a bouquet of flowers.

Our u3a continues to grow - we have 577 members at the time of writing this. There were 92 members at the AGM. We had about 15 apologies? So, for the 470 *other* members, please don't leave it to the few. It needs everyone to take part.

Let's continue having fun.

Steve



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.

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.



28th August

Open and Enrolment Day

Our Annual Open Day and Enrolment Day is always a hugely popular event. A time to welcome visitors and members, alike. A chance for the Groups to showcase their various activities and a chance for you to ask yourselves - "When would I have had the time to do all these things if I was still working"?

Come and make friends, meet friends and join the fun!

25th September

Fred Finn

The World's Most Travelled Man!

Fred Finn has been recognised as the official Guinness World Record Holder of the Most Travelled Man since 1983, and his talks take you on a swashbuckling journey through the very history of commercial flight.

...more details on the Somerton u3a web site....details p10

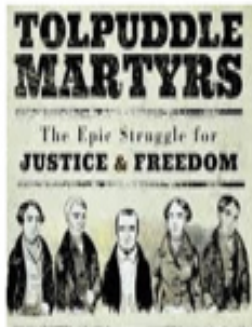
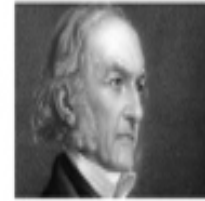


Don't forget to bring your stamps and coins for the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance to Friday meetings

Group News

History Group

In May we continued our examination of the franchise, and looked at some positive contributions through two centuries



Identifying the seeds of trade unionism



The impact of the first World War on social justice particularly for women



And...some not so positive contributions



At our next meeting we shall cover the role of key foods in world history. MMM!

Why not join us?

John Emerson,
Group Leader



Jazz Appreciation Group

The group continues to flourish with 23 members and attendances around the mid- teens.

We continue to meet once a month on the first Friday afternoon, usually in Curry Rivel but on occasion in Somerton, and try to give all types of jazz an airing including jazz from all eras.

The group's tastes vary considerably and we try to cater for all genres including very early jazz, "trad" from the late 50s and 60s, middle of the road covering a large time span (neither trad or modern), big band jazz from the 30s until

today, be-bop or early modern jazz from the 40s and 50s and more modern jazz up until today.

We try to split the afternoon into four sessions each presenting a different genre, some presented by the leader and some by others with their own particular tastes.

We do invite members to bring along their favourite music on CD or DVD.

Occasionally live jazz venues are visited.

I look forward to our next meeting on Friday 5th June.

Dave Munns

Group News

Walking Group - May

Edwina and Lin led us on a wonderful walk from Ilchester yesterday. We followed the River Yeo to the 17th Century Pill Bridge (yes Edwina I was listening). There has been a bridge on this site since the 13th Century. Along the way we saw 2 Kingfishers (well some of us did) and a hare. We then headed back to the Ilchester Arms for coffee and cake in the sunny courtyard.

Paul Redman



Tuesday Reading Group

For this month's meeting, to discuss 'Diva' by Daisy Goodwin, the Tuesday Reading Group met in Sherborne. After a lively discussion over a pub lunch, we headed to The Sherborne which at one stage was rented by theatre actor-manager William Charles Macready. Some of his famous friends who came to visit included Charles Dickens, Robert Browning and William Makepeace Thackeray.

It is a stunning, recently restored, 18th Century Georgian mansion which was last used as Digby School for Girls. As part of the restoration they have built a beautifully designed café where we all enjoyed a welcome cup of tea. If you haven't visited, it is strongly recommended: even if you don't enjoy the art exhibitions, the house is magnificent and the loos exceptional!

Mary Beth Greenop



Group News

Opera Appreciation groups 1 and 2...

.... meet on the first Monday and Thursday of each month. In May opera group 1 watched The Pearl Fishers by Georges Bizet. This opera is set in old Sri Lanka (Ceylon). Nadir and Zurga meet again after some years. Nadir has been travelling and Zurga has been elected leader of the village. They sing the famous duet where they discover that they both love the temple maiden Leïla. They decide not to pursue the maiden in the interest of their friendship. A new priestess is brought to the village. She must remain pure. It is Leïla. Nadir sees her and they meet and confess their love. However, they are seen and denounced to Zurga and the priest Nourabad. Both are condemned to death. As Leïla takes off her necklace for it to be given to her mother after her death, Zurga recognises it as the one he gave to a young maiden who saved his life some years before. At this he causes a diversion by setting a fire and while the villages run off to save their homes, he sets Leïla and Nadir free. Happy ending for a change! This performance was from La Fenice in Venice.

Opera group 2 watched Tosca by the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini. This performance was a film version set in the actual places in Rome that the action takes place and at the same time of day. We began during the day in the church of San' Andrea della Valle where the artist Mario Cavaradossi is painting a Magdalene. An escaped prisoner enters and hides in a side chapel. Tosca comes in to leave flowers, sees the painting and thinks that Cavaradossi and the model are lovers. (Very jealous is Tosca!) After she leaves, Cavaradossi takes the escaped prisoner to his villa to hide him. The chief of police, Scarpia, enters looking for the prisoner. He is interrupted by the news of the victory of Napoleon at the battle of Marengo and a Te Deum is sung. We then move to the Farnese Palace in the evening. Tosca is singing in a celebration. Scarpia receives news that the prisoner has escaped but Cavaradossi has been arrested. He orders torture to discover the prisoner's whereabouts and instructs Tosca to be brought so that she can overhear the torture. She breaks and tells Scarpia where the prisoner is hiding. Eventually she gives in to Scarpia's demands that she become his lover, providing that he allows Cavaradossi to escape. He arranges a false execution and Tosca, in desperation, kills Scarpia. Dawn the next day sees us at the Castle Sant Angelo for the false execution. However, it is a true execution. Cavaradossi is shot and Tosca throws herself off the battlements.

Enid Thresher

Practical Photography Group *April*

April was a busy month for the Practical Photography Group.

First we went to the "Don McCullin" exhibition at Hauser and Wirth in Bruton. We were treated to a collection of Don's photographs from throughout his career. From war to the Somerset landscape near his home. All in black and white. As usual it was combined with a coffee, chat and lunch.

Later in the month we had a morning out to Taunton for some Urban Photography. The sun was shining and an enjoyable couple of hours wandering around and seeing what caught our eye followed.

Then finally, we went to Bristol to the Martin Parr Foundation. Martin passed away in December last year and the Foundation was exhibiting his "Last Resort" project 40 years on. How things have changed! Contrasting to the Don McCullin exhibition this was all about the colour! A trip down memory lane on what our seaside used to be like.



Paul Redman

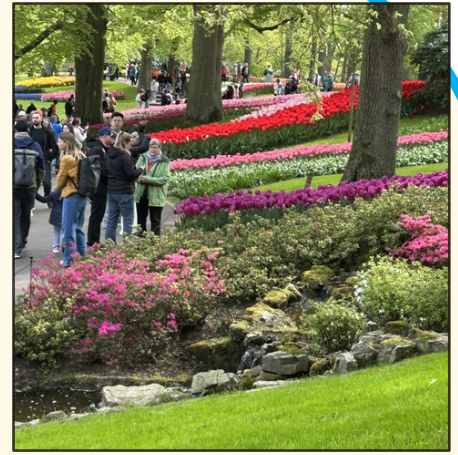
Group News

Travel Group

Holland, The Dutch Masters & Keukenhof

At the end of April the Travel Group set their alarms and set off at 6am from Somerton to The Hague. We travelled to Folkestone for our Euro tunnel crossing to Calais. The next three days were amazing ! Our first visit was to the Keukenhof Flower Festival, 77 acres of woodlands with tulips and tulips and tulips ! Then a cruise through the tulip fields - I dreamt about daffodils ! No, its was a wonderful experience and one to remember as was the rest of our visits to Delft and The Hague to the Mauritshuis Museum, Girl with the Pearl Earring. Our last day was spent in Amsterdam enjoying a canal cruise and the Rijksmuseum, The Night Watchman. Thank you Jane for organising a memorable holiday with great company. Here's to the next one

Judi Powell



Group News

Local History Group

At the beginning of May one of the Local History groups travelled to Athelhampton House in Dorset. We first had coffee and Owen, the Estate Manager, give an extensive and humorous history of the various owners of this wonderful country house. Owen then took us into the house for a tour of the ground floor rooms. We had lunch in the Orangery, assisted by Gemma. Some of us then returned to the house for a tour of the upstairs rooms guided by Tiger Lily. Others enjoyed the gardens before travelling home to digest all we had seen.



Judi Powell

On Wednesday 6th May Brian and I arrived at Athelhampton House near Dorchester to learn about this interesting building and its long history. I am not going to include names or dates as I wish to convey the feelings I had during the visit rather than statistics.

The building, going back many generations to Tudor times, had the same component parts as any building of that era but it was the atmosphere which was different. This still felt like a living building not a museum exhibit. The warmth of the stonework was not the only warmth. Why did the great hall feel so cosy? Admittedly there was a log fire at one end but that alone would not have heated the vast space. All became clear when the person who drew us into the history of the place told us the most recent inhabitant had made it his mission to restore the building up to the most modern standard (without any unsightly, obvious technology.) To get answers to what has been done you will have to visit yourself.

Naturally there were many stories of the past inhabitants, and those alleged to still be roaming in search of 'what?' Later during the visit a young woman was on hand to unfold the life of the rooms above the Great Hall. It was in 'The Wedding Room' that two facts became clear. This was not the 'Wedding Room' as most of us would have imagined. It was the room where an expectant mother was nurtured, encouraged to rest for months, and fed the best food available. The description of the existence of the mother-to-be was contrary to everything we now know to be wrong. The image I had was of geese being fed to enlarge their livers. It was supposed in

those days that the mother-to-be had to rest and have lots of food to help the baby grow strong. As she put on more and more weight the process of giving birth became - well you can imagine.

No wonder the odds of survival of the babies was 7:4 against. No figure was given for the health of the mother but adjacent to the 'Wedding Room' was a chapel for any baby to be baptised as soon as born.

I had always wondered why beds used to be so short in length.

Apparently in times gone by wealthy people had many pillows because they wanted to be as upright in bed as possible. The thought of lying almost flat was something to be avoided as it brought to mind being dead.

Presumably being a peasant had some advantages - no inactivity during pregnancy and no overeating or sleeping almost upright.

The third and last fact which was interesting was that after the birth the mother was still in need of bed rest, to the point that she had a piece of cord or thin rope attached to the crib on the floor at the foot end of the bed which was draped across the bed to her hand. When the child was crying the mother would tweak the cord to rock the crib. She would also ask the

servants to make sure the webbing of rope on the bottom of the crib was pulled **tight** so the baby could not fall through to the floor. Hence the saying "sleep tight" - this apparently had nothing to do with the saying, "Hope the bugs don't bite."

Life is like a jigsaw, we can only put some pieces together as they become available. That is what makes history and visits arranged by those who give their time to the Somerton Local History Group so interesting.

If this has given you an 'itch you need to scratch' visit Athelhampton you will not be disappointed.

Ann Oldham



Group News

History Group

20 members of the Local History Group drove to Tiverton to visit the Castle and the Church. Alison was our host and gave us an entertaining talk about her home, even allowing some to try on the items of interest ! She kindly supplied a good lunch and refreshments before the group went on to visit Tiverton.

Judi Powell



Group News

The day we went to Swanage

On Wednesday the 20th May, fairly early in the morning, a large fleet of cars left from various locations in the Somerton area heading towards South Dorset.

Arrival was around 10:00 at Norden where we collected our train tickets. We had hoped for a coffee from Norden Station coffee shop, advertised to open at 10:00.

Unfortunately, we were unlucky and found the coffee shop closed. It did open eventually but not until 10:40, just as our train left the station. That was not a great start to the day.

Our train had left on time pulled by a lovely streamlined steam locomotive number 34072.

This is one of the "Battle of Britain" class of Southern Railway locomotives named "257 Squadron".

We called at Corfe Castle Station with great views of the Castle en route. We continued through the beautiful countryside and stopped again at the very pretty station of Harmon's Cross. Arrival at Swanage was on time at 11:02.

Here we assembled outside the station for a photograph before dashing off for much needed coffees in the many local cafes.

Our next port of call was the Swanage museum which was full of memorabilia from times gone by.

The museum is not usually open on Wednesdays but they had opened up specially for us.

Our group members then had time to trail around Swanage town and sea front with its pier, the views across the bay and other attractions.

Some ate lunch in the many lovely fish and chip restaurants in and around the front.

At least one intrepid adventurer visited the bridge over the railway just outside the station with its views of the locomotive shed, locomotives and turntable.

We all had individual tickets to travel back to Norden allowing us to stop off at Corfe Castle Station with its very interesting railway museum.

Corfe Castle village is very "picture post card" and has great views of the historic castle.

It also boasts a spectacular model of the village including a model of the castle as it used to be before it was devastated by wars. The model is in the grounds of a very nice cafe with very nice coffee.

It was time to head home and many caught the last train from Corfe Castle Station to Norden (a 2 minute journey). Then to the car park and onwards for the car journey home.

I must thank Pete Taylor for his help in preparation and on the day. Also thanks to Terry Wright for meeting us at Swanage Station during his holiday break and taking the group photograph.

Dave Munns

Lots more pictures next month



Hedgehog Highways

We can make hedgehogs life a little easier by removing the barriers within our control – for example, by making holes in or under our garden fences and walls for them to pass through.

13cm by 13cm square is sufficient for any hedgehog to pass through. This will be too small for nearly all pets.



June

“Far up in the deep blue sky,
Great white clouds are floating by;
All the world is dressed in green;
Many happy birds are seen,
Roses bright and sunshine clear
Show that lovely June is here.”

F. G. SANDERS

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/>

Many thanks you for your articles in this Newsletter...Editor

Please send articles for the Newsletter to the editor, Mike Davis

pubsu3a@gmail.com

Deadline for the July edition....20th June

Pictures welcome, but keep the script brief

Minimum formatting please