



Chairman's message

Welcome everyone - established members, returning members and new members - to Autumn.

A lovely season, or at least it *can* be, and the time to tidy up and prepare for the year ahead – but not only if you are a gardener. Your committee has already been busy, and we have some plans in place, but we could always do with ideas. Next year we enter our 30th year, an event worth celebrating! A time to enjoy our u3a, to reflect on the changes that have happened over time since that first meeting that brought 40 members of the local community together, and a chance to look to where we would like to be in the years to come.

I am mindful of the fact that we are part of a huge organisation, not only by welcoming other u3a'ers, who are reciprocal members through the Avalon Network, but by chance meetings. I was out with our Birdwatching Group last month and wandering along I came across a group of people, stood still, binoculars to their eyes, watching something close to where I was. As is natural, I too stopped and looked. I was able to photograph the bird they were studying and when the bird flew off, we got chatting. They were a Birdwatching Group from Norton & Radstock u3a! Immediately we were exchanging notes (and they were very impressed with the number of members we have) and spent a very pleasant time in each other's company.

By the way, it was a Willow Warbler.



Whatever the Groups and whatever the topic, whether it be social, academic, physical – or a mixture of all three, we have a common theme. That theme is enjoying, learning, sharing, friendship – and fun! May you continue to enjoy u3a and next year, let us celebrate those who got it going in Somerton. Remember, all this came about by people joining in.

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.

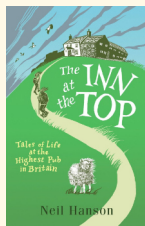
23rd October

Neil Hanson

Inn & Out at the Top

Neil Hanson is a successful author with 70 published books to his name.

His talk "Inn & Out at the Top" is a laugh-a-minute tour of the quirks and foibles, highs and lows of his time running Britain's highest inn back in the 1970s and 1980s, grappling with tight-fisted farmers, eccentric characters, bizarre local customs, naturist weekends, "lates and lock-ins", police raids, rats in the attic, close encounters with magistrates and planners, and the shooting of a famous double-glazing commercial



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

27th November

Alan Jenkins

"The Royal Visit that went wrong" (and it wasn't my fault!)

As an Inspector in the Dorset Police Alan was very much at the sharp end for any HRH events in the county.

We will learn all about the preparations required for these visits, and just how many spanners a certain (and much respected) Princess Royal could throw into the proverbial works. Alan even employed a tiny toy helicopter to help us envision her ever-changing landing sites – and follow up arrangements. If it was the plot of a comedy movie, I doubt you would believe it.

Happily, and despite some last-minute and very high-speed driving between Yeovilton and Dorchester, the Police on the ground were able (just about) to be in the right place at the right time and Princess Anne was able to wave graciously.

I suspect that this hard-working Royal probably knows exactly what goes on behind the scenes to make sure visits go smoothly (or appear to). Perhaps she should have a word with one of her younger brothers!

Watching the Royals in future will probably never be the same again now that we can imagine all the frantic activity going on just out of sight.



Christmas Lunch

Event type: Social
Date: 8th December 2026
Time: 12 noon - 4pm
Booking: Note that booking is required.

Following on from the wonderful meal we had last year, the Committee have decided to go, once again, to Long Sutton Golf Club.

Full details and menu choices will be shown at a later date.

Group News

Sunday Roasties

For our September meal Sunday Roasties group visited Castlebrook Inn at Compton Dundon.

A small but perfectly formed gang enjoyed their carvery, including new Roastie Alan. Apologies from Dru who wore her serviette to scare off an annoying dragonfly - it didn't work.

Our visit in October is to Quarry Inn at Keinton Mandeville.

John Day, Group Leader



Walking Group - September Walk

The Walking Group were led on a lovely walk around Ham Hill last Friday, by Mark and Theresa. The weather was perfect (despite the sky in the photo) , the hills were not too steep and those that stayed enjoyed a coffee/cake afterwards. It was also good to see new member Bill out with us for the first time.

Paul Redman



Group News

Practical Photography Group

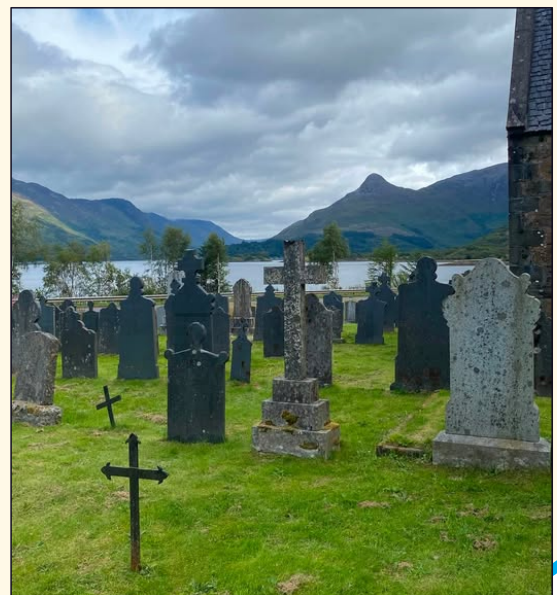
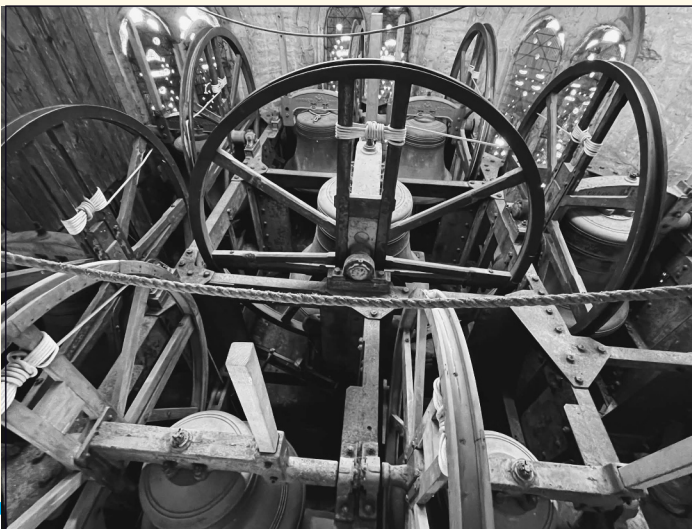
Each month the Practical Photography Group has a theme. August was Churches and Churchyards. It seemed to really engage members and we saw more photo's than ever submitted to the Groups Facebook Page. Here are a couple of photos taken by Pauline Blake and Steve Davis.

September theme is Red, White and Blue. If you would like to join our group then please get in contact.

We also had a very successful Open Day signing up 12 new members, whom we look forward to meeting soon. Pauline, Jane and Sue did a wonderful job.



Paul Redman



- When's the best time to cut down a tree? Sep-timber.
- How do trees use the internet? They have a log-in.
- Why did the scarecrow go to bed? It was time to hit the hay.
- Where's the best place to find bad apples? In the seedy part of town.
- Why did the tree laugh? It heard acorn-y joke.
- Why shouldn't you gossip in a corn field? Too many ears.
- What kind of cars do scarecrows drive? Autumn-mobiles.
- What should you wear to keep warm in autumn? A har-vest.
- What do scarecrows snack on? Straw-berries.
- Why was the scarecrow awarded first place? It was outstanding in its field.
- How do books keep warm in the fall? They wear jackets.
- Where do squirrels watch movies? On Nut-flix.
- Why do birds fly south in the fall? Because it's too far to walk.
- What do you call a dude who loves autumn? A fall guy.
- What's the cutest season of the year? Aww-tumn.



Group News

"Walk About" Group'sfirst walk is on Friday 16th Oct.

Langport to Muchelney via the old (disused) railway line returning via the River Parrett trail. A very level easy walk on a generally good surface of about 3.5 miles.

PLEASE don't just turn up - contact the Group Leader. Thank you!

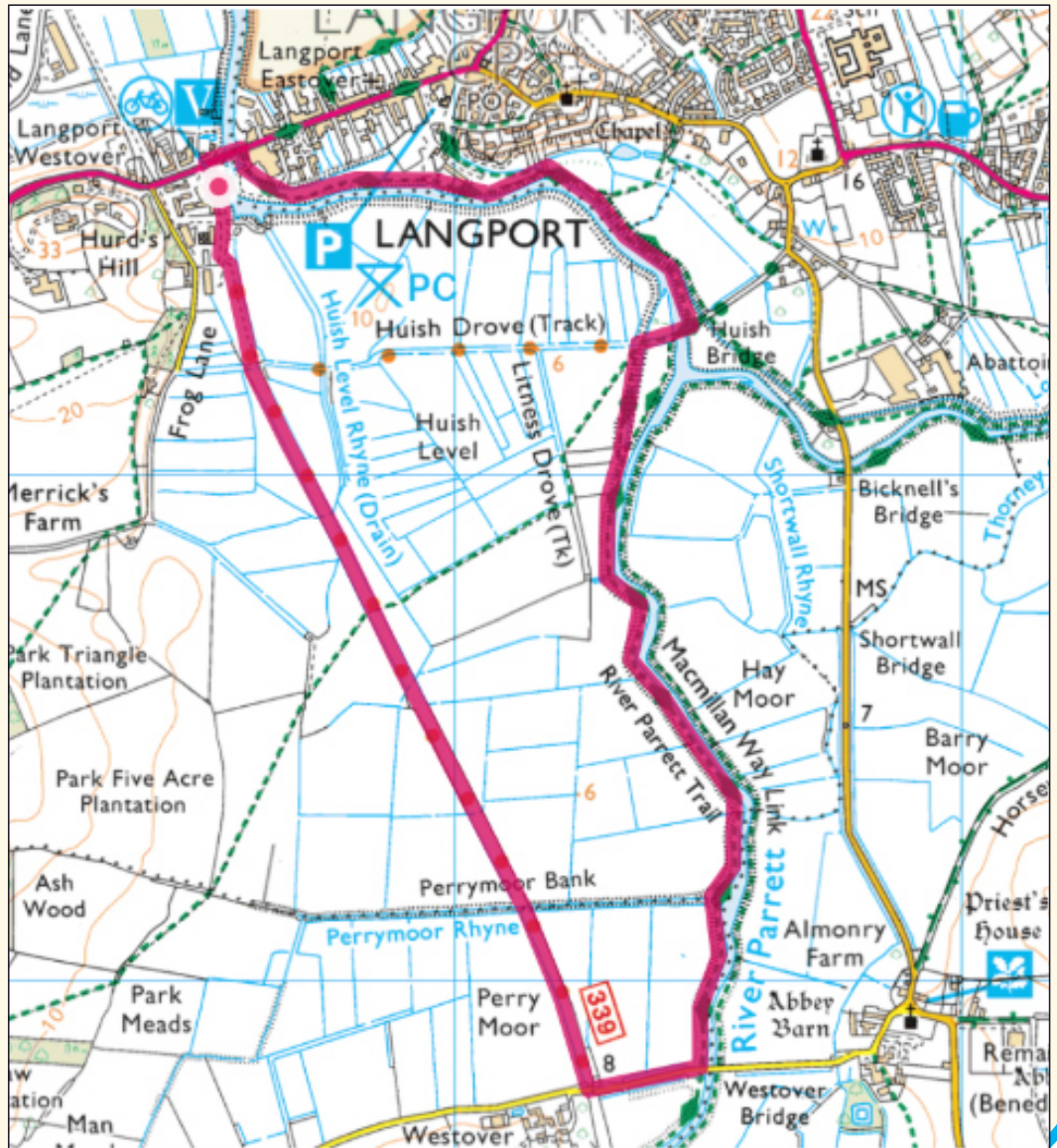
The Group's details are:
third Friday morning
10am-12ish monthly.
Not too fast but it won't be a dawdle.
Walks may have stiles, hills and mud! Although flat and dry is preferred.

Well behaved dogs welcome and most walks will end up with a cuppa.

Members will be expected to contribute to the Group - not just participate. This simply means members taking it in turns to lead the Group on their favourite walks.

And help each other with transport if needed.

If you are interested in joining the Group, it is "First come first served".
Contact Sarah Terry:
equibod@aol.com



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

Group News

Members of the Geology Group pose outside St Michael's Church in Yeovil during our building stones tour.

Somerton u3a Geology Group

Since my last report in May things have moved on for the Geology Group. With over 20 members (and the promise of more to come following on from Enrolment Day in August) it is really encouraging that so many are showing such an interest in what is often deemed a "Cinderella" subject in schools and in its media coverage.

The key is that Geology is everywhere and impacts all our lives. Themes we have covered over the summer include Venezuela Earthquake, The Geology of the Moon, Geology and landscape of the Dolomites (an excuse to show ski holiday photos!) Somerset Landscape, Coastal Erosion at Start Bay, Devon and – scarily – supervolcanic eruptions.

The group have also made two excursions this summer; we were treated to a tour of Yeovil building stones (much more varied than you might assume) by Andy Gordon of Yeovil u3a. We also paid a fascinating and informative visit to Somerset Earth Science Centre which included a tour of Whatley Quarry (see photos)

The Geology Group usually meets on the first Thursday of the month either at 2 pm in the main hall in the Parish Rooms or on a visit or field trip, especially in the summer months – please contact me for more details. (rydert36@hotmail.co.uk)

Trevor Ryder



*Two views of
the impressive
hole in the
ground that is
Whatley
Quarry*





Open Day Photos



Group News

Scrabble *(that's 14 points!)*

.....is another group that is so popular it is always full!

Luckily for Su3a Scrabblers, Wendy has stepped up to start another Scrabble Group but be warned! it is first come, first served!

The group meets monthly on a Monday afternoon, 2-4pm. Wendy says, "We have a maximum of 8 people so we can have 2 games going at once. We host at our house in Curry Rivel and happy to rotate round other people's houses if they were willing/able to take turns."

Sarah Terry



Macmillan Coffee Morning Friday 23rd October



Somerton u3a are pleased to announce that they will be holding a **Macmillan Coffee & Cake Morning** at the monthly meeting in the Edgar Hall on Friday 23rd October.

As per usual, drinks will be served, between 9.30am - 10.30am before the scheduled speaker at 10.30am.

On this special morning, there will be a variety of cakes available as well, to either eat or to take away.

There is no charge but donations to Macmillan Cancer Support, will be very much appreciated.

Now to make this morning a success, we need you.

First of all, we need you to come along and support us. As well as enjoying eating cakes, there will be some competitions and games to play for £1 donations, such as Name the Rabbit, Count the Coffee Cups, a word search and a raffle so please make sure you bring some loose change.

Secondly, we also need all you cake bakers out there to provide us with some tasty treats, be it sponges, fruit cakes, muffins, scones, tarts, even savoury items would be very welcome.

If it is a little too early to be eating cake, you may wish to take a cake home or just a portion; we will have suitable containers available for that specific purpose.

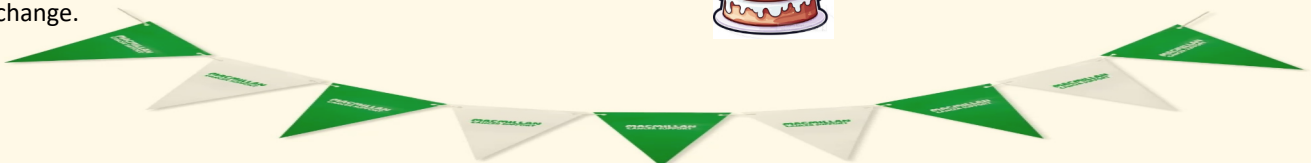
Thank you to all of you who have already got in touch with us about cake making and we've added your names to the list.

If you would like to make a cake, please can you contact the cake coordinators, Judi or Rachel and let them know what you are planning. We would be very grateful if you could let them know fairly soon, so we have some idea of what to expect.

Judi Powell, [07872 555812](tel:07872555812), email, judimp@icloud.com

Rachel Garrett, [01458 274101](tel:01458274101), email, rgrtt417@btinternet.com

Thanks,
The RUGs team



Wildlife News...*Endangered Bees and Hedgehogs*

The Domestic Honeybee vs. Wild Bee Conflict

A common misconception is that keeping domestic honeybee hives "saves the bees". In reality, domesticated honeybees are managed livestock and are not endangered. High densities of urban or rural honeybee hives can actually harm wild bees by creating intense competition for nectar and pollen, often pushing native species out of their natural habitats.

How to Support Wild Bees

A third of the UK's wild bee species have faced population declines since the 1980s. You can easily support them in your garden:

- **Plant native flora:** Grow wild bee open structure favourites like dandelions, English bluebells and cowslips.
- **Leave bare soil & deadwood:** Many solitary species need exposed patches of earth or decaying logs to burrow.
- **Install a quality bee hotel:** Hang a wooden shelter packed with hollow stems or clean deep drilled wood holes in a sunny, south-facing spot for mason and leafcutter bees.
- **Mow less often:** Allowing your lawn to grow lets clover, dandelions, and other vital foraging flowers bloom.

Hedgehog Shelters

In the wild and in suburban gardens, hedgehogs prefer to sleep in dark, quiet, and well-sheltered spaces that protect them from predators and weather extremes. Because they are nocturnal, they seek out areas where they can build insulated nests, known as hibernacula, using dry leaves, moss, and grass.

Natural Garden Shelters

- **Leaf piles and brushwood heaps:** These are ideal natural shelters that provide immediate warmth, insulation, and excellent camouflaging from predators.
- **Compost heaps:** Because decomposing organic matter generates natural heat, compost piles are highly sought-after, warm sleeping spots.
- **Dense hedges and thick shrubs:** Brambles, dense bushes, and thick evergreen shrubs offer excellent structural overhead protection for day-to-day sleeping and nesting.
- **Long grass or wildflower meadows:** Hedgehogs frequently use patches of undisturbed long grass for summer daytime "sleepovers".

To the River Parrett

Each morning from my favourite place,
The River Parrett keeps its pace
Past garden edge and willow shade,
Along the quiet course it's made.

Some days it glides as smooth as glass,
Reflecting clouds that slowly pass,
A ribbon silver, calm and deep,
Beneath the sky's unhurried sweep.

Some days it hurries, brown and strong,
As winter rains push it along,
Recalling floods of years before,
When fields became an inland shore.

I've watched the seasons in its face,
The summer's ease, the autumn's grace,
The frost that silvers reed and bough,
The daffodils that line it now.

The tides creep in from distant seas,
Bending rushes in the breeze,
A silent pulse from far away
That marks the turning of the day.

And as the years drift gently by,
Like swallows crossing evening sky,
The Parrett keeps its patient flow,
Carrying secrets I will never know.

Yet from my house beside its stream,
It feels a neighbour, more than scene,
A faithful presence, old and wise,
Beneath the Somerset skies.

Inspired by the River Parrett, Somerset

*Poem by Nina
Ayres with a little
help from AI*



Smartphone Parking

The best parking app depends on where you are parking, but PayByPhone is used locally by Somerset Council, while **RingGo** and **JustPark** are the most popular choices across the rest of the UK.

Top UK Parking Apps

- **PayByPhone:**
According to Somerset Council, “The **PayByPhone** app is available for free on iPhone and Android.”
 - o Use the **PayByPhone** app to pay for council-run car parks in the local Somerset region without needing coins or paper tickets.
- **RingGo:**
 - o Widely adopted by local authorities across the UK.
 - o Use the **RingGo App** to manage sessions and extend parking time remotely at over 12,000 locations.
- **JustPark:**
 - o Ranked as a top choice for finding and pre-booking spaces in advance.
 - o Use the **JustPark App** to book public lots, private driveways, or local EV charging spots

Key Methods for Garden Water Conservation

- **Water at the right time:** Water your garden early in the morning or late in the evening when temperatures are cool and the sun is low, which significantly reduces water loss from evaporation.
- **Target the roots:** Apply water directly to the base of plants using soaker hoses or drip irrigation instead of spraying foliage overhead.
- **Apply mulch:** Cover garden beds with a 2-to-3-inch layer of organic mulch like wood chips, straw, or bark to shade the soil and lock in moisture.
- **Improve your soil:** Mix compost and organic matter into your soil regularly to enhance its structure so it acts like a sponge and holds water longer.
- **Group thirsty plants:** Organize your garden layout by placing drought-tolerant varieties away from heavy drinkers, or group plants with similar moisture needs together.
- **Harvest rainwater:** Install a water butt or rain barrel connected to your shed or house gutter downpipe to collect free, natural water for dry spells.
- **Remove weeds promptly:** Pull weeds as soon as they appear so they do not steal vital moisture and nutrients from your desired plants.

Community Project for Somerton

We are looking for local people to suggest community projects that we can help fund a Rotary community projects so all of us can make a difference.

We will be holding an event to discuss and choose the projects you want so please come along.

Send your ideas to

<https://www.rotarylangportandsomerton.org/events/>

Thurs 29th

**October
7.30pm**

**At Parish Rooms
Somerton**

Regards , Adrian Carter,
Rotary Community Project Co-ordinator,
0759 934 9967



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 November edition....20th October

Pictures welcome, but keep the script brief