

University of the Third Age
Newsletter February 2020
sheptonmalletu3a.org.uk



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1. Chat from the Chair

It is back to business as usual across the land and our U3A is no exception. We have met for our first committee meeting of 2020 and apart from the monthly catch up on outings, groups and finances we have made a start on deciding dates of the AGM, enrolment days and plans for our U3A into 2021. We have decided to move the enrolment days to May this year to mitigate the problems of carrying monies across two financial years. This should make life a lot easier for Jane our treasurer. So, the good news is you have an extra two months membership for free this year! I hope everyone will take advantage of this and will make good use of the opportunity to try something different. Exact dates for enrolment will be notified when arrangements are agreed, so please do not send any renewal fees for 2020-2021 until dates are confirmed.

Derek Hiller and I stood on a 'joint ticket' as chair and vice chair in order to ensure the continuance of our U3A in June 2018, due to Malcolm and Lesley's departure. Derek, who also holds the publicity brief, has decided to leave the committee after dedicated service in these roles. Likewise, I would like to stand down as chair. Maggie Hardy, who has served as secretary since June 2018 has indicated that other responsibilities may also preclude her from continuing and Pete Norman, who organises our speaker meetings, would like to stand aside in the near future too. However, I am pleased to say that Jane, our treasurer, will be staying put, having as she says 'just got the hang' of the accounts.

So, the plea goes out to one and all, to consider what you can do to ensure the future of our very own SMU3A. The only requirements to join committee are time to commit to the monthly meetings and enthusiasm for the groups and activities that are so enjoyable and



View from the Tor
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successful. All knowledge and skills are picked up along the way, due in no small part to the help and support of fellow committee members (I should know!).

Please do contact any of us on the back page if you have a question, would like to sit in on a committee meeting or just to find out more. We shall all be wearing our identification lanyards at the next speaker meeting on Thursday 13 February (note change of date) so do please take this opportunity to come forward.

Liz

2. What's On SPEAKER MEETINGS

Speaker Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month from 10.00 until 11.45. in the Council Chamber, Mendip District Council Offices

FREE tea and coffee is available at every meeting. Entrance fee £1.50 for U3A members, £2.50 for guests. To avoid delays at the door, please have the correct money ready for collection, thank you.

PLEASE NOTE Change of Meeting Date from 6 February to 13 February
The council chamber is not available on Thursday 6 February

13 February

Christopher Forrester: The story of the West Country Mail Coach system London to Exeter via Wincanton

5 March

Tim Bruce: 'Changing things one pedal at a time' an epic cycle journey of over 3500 miles from Seattle to Washington DC in aid of charity

January Speaker Meeting by Derek Hiller

On 2 January, our first speaker meeting of 2020, we were pleased to welcome Dave Hooker together with his wife Pam, to talk to us about his family experiences in East London during the bombing raids of WW2. In particular, the devastating effect of the V2 rockets that fell on London between 8 September 1944 and the day that Dave was born 27 March 1945.

In 1939 Adolf Hitler had boasted that he could soon be using unknown weapons for which there would be no retaliation. These 'unknown weapons' were the V1 flying bomb and V2 rocket. Hitler called them his terror weapons. In terms of destruction they were small when

compared with the bombing of Dresden or the atomic bombs on Japan in 1945. It is a fact, that when the V2 rockets fell more people turned against Hitler.

The devastating V2 rocket was fourteen metres high, had a one ton warhead and an impact speed of over two thousand mph. Dave felt it was important for him, that his family and others who had a direct connection to the V2 rocket and experienced Hitler's terror



weapons, should have their story told together with the telling of the genius that had developed the first ballistic missile to fly into space; the same technology that took men to the moon in 1969.

When Dave was eleven years old his mother told him in a matter of fact sort of way, about a bombing on Monday 6 November 1944. She was coming down the stairs of their semi-detached house when the ceiling came down on top of her; the front door was blown in and ended up in the kitchen. The door must have passed her as she fell, semi-conscious onto the staircase. This was just one incident of many that his family, his neighbours and others had endured in the four years of bombings since the start of the war.

Turning the clock back to the early 1930s, Dave gave us his account of how the concept and manufacture of the V2 rocket came about,

The German engineer Walter Dornberger, son of a pharmacist with interests in rockets and space flight, was appointed to the German army weapons department. He later met with Wernher von Braun, a member of the Nazi party and a leading figure in rocket technology in Germany and later the pioneer of rocket and space technology in the USA. They, together with German engineer Walter Riedel, worked on ballistic rocket development at Kummersdorf, south of Berlin, and later at Peenemunde on the Baltic coast.

Following a period of development work and several launch failures, the first successful test of the V2 was carried out in October 1942 and witnessed by Hitler himself. It was around this time that RAF reconnaissance aircraft had spotted strange domed buildings being built across Nazi occupied Europe. These buildings were eventually identified as V2 rocket launch sites. Soon after, in November 1943, operation Crossbow began and the V2 rocket launch sites, close to the coast in northern France, were being bombed heavily by the allies together with sustained bombing of the manufacturing facility at Peenemunde. Following these attacks, rocket development and production was moved to a location inside a mountain at Blizna in South Eastern Poland, where the Nazis employed up to sixty thousand Jewish slave workers who were forced to work on building the V2's in terrible conditions.

At home, Dave's family had to endure continual bombings. During this time his father continued to work in a reserved occupation as a toolmaker engaged in the manufacture of parts for the Spitfire while his brothers and brothers' in-law were all serving in the forces. When Dave was about twenty he was talking to his Father about the war and he told him about a house nearby that had taken a direct hit. A child's hand was sticking out of the wreckage. Dave asked his Father if he had pulled the child out of the wreckage? His Father replied no, just the hand. His Father never mentioned this again and spoke very little about the war but when he did it was tinged with humour, Dave felt that this was his Dad's way of dealing with it.

Going back to the manufacture of ballistic weapons, it was clear that during the 1930's and 1940's Britain had no idea how to build a ballistic missile. The use of high energy liquid fuel for rocket propulsion was not conceived by anyone in Great Britain despite growing military requirements.

In September 1939 a young government scientist, twenty eight year old Dr R. V. Jones was appointed to search files of the secret intelligence service for clues about Hitler's boast of an unknown weapon. He had an unerring instinct for the truth irrespective of how ludicrous it appeared to his bosses and the entrenched establishment led by Lord Cherwell the chief scientific advisor to Winston Churchill.

Lord Cherwell took the stance that no rocket could possibly fly into the stratosphere and reach England, a weapon of fantasy, we can't do it so they can't do it, was his attitude.

In Germany V2 rocket production had been stepped up. The bully-boy management methods and use of slave labour merely resulted in production of parts that didn't work properly no matter what terrible reprisals were threatened to the workforce. Those threats were made and carried out mercilessly. It was suggested that V2 production was delayed by Nazi ignorance and very bad judgement. This poor Nazi management led to wild and exaggerated claims to Hitler about the speed and volume of production they had instigated. Exaggerations increased as each new manager took control; they were only interested in volume at all cost to impress the Fuhrer. This is borne out by the fact that approx half of the V2's that were fired on London never reached their target but, Dave said, half was more than enough. This Nazi mis-management of the V2 rocket programme by self-seeking and ignorance must have contributed to the allies winning the Second World War earlier and saved the lives of millions of Londoners.

Dornberger, who was leader at the beginning and throughout the creative stages, had said that it was better to have five V2s that worked than a hundred that don't, and that right up until the last one was fired the V2 was only a prototype. If the bully-boy managers had left Dornberger and Von Braun alone, they would have got there quicker by using a relatively small part of the state wealth the corrupt Nazis had available, thereby financing good engineering practice with decent management of the V2 project.

By the end of 1944 fixed launch sites were being heavily bombed so the Nazis took to launching V2s from Meillerwagens, the trailers used for rocket transport. RAF pilot Raymond



Baxter, later a BBC commentator, was flying his spitfire over a town in northern France and watched aghast as a V2 rose up from between houses in a normal street. He attacked it to no avail and watched it disappear above him.

Things could have been very much worse. If the Nazis had used the Meillerwagen from the start, together with efficient V2 production inside the

mountain at Blizna and employed good engineers in reasonable working conditions, instead of slave labour, they could have made V2s unstoppable, wrecking most of London.

There was no defence then, as now, against a V2 rocket. If one were fired today, just as it was then, and with the V2 travelling at over two thousand miles an hour. It would be almost impossible to stop, even using all our modern technology.

After D day and the Germans were at last driven back, the allies were able to destroy all the V2 sites. The V2 rocket was, as Hitler had predicted in 1939, an unknown weapon for which there was no retaliation.

The spoils of war allowed the Russians and Americans to split V2 technology between them in 1945. Ever since then the intercontinental ballistic missile remains unstoppable, thus the expression has grown that major war has been averted by the sure knowledge of mutually assured destruction, 'destroy me and I will destroy you without fail'.

In total 13,058 V2s fell on London alone. The last two fell on 27 March 1945, one on Whitechapel and one on Orpington where one lady died, the last British civilian casualty of WW2.

Thursday Coffee Mornings

Dobbies Restaurant, Shepton Mallet 10.30-12

All members and non-members are welcome every Thursday mornings. **Unusually this month we are meeting for coffee on the first Thursday in February the 6th as the Speaker Meeting has been changed this month to 13 February. Consequently there will be no coffee morning on 13th. Back to normal for 20 and 27 February.**

Outings

Places on Janet's February outing to the BBC Studios in Bristol were snapped up immediately but she is looking into another trip there later in the year.

Watch this space and look out for Janet's emails on upcoming outings. There's talk of a trip to include the London Eye-exciting!

Please contact Janet if you have any ideas for future outings.

3. Members' Corner

Welcome to all new members.

If this is your first newsletter we hope you enjoy reading it and find it informative and useful. Your ideas for future editions are always welcome. If you would like to contribute to Members' Corner please send your items of interest, letters, Castaway choices, articles, reminiscences, local history, photographs, events etc to the editor by 20th of the month.



Get well soon wishes

Very best wishes are sent to Maggie Fowle, our Membership Secretary who is recuperating at home following a short stay in hospital in January.

We wish Maggie a speedy recovery and really look forward to seeing out and about as soon as possible.

Derek Fowlds

With the news of the death of Derek Fowlds, Peter Howell wonder how many members recall the January 2012 Speaker Meeting when he was our guest speaker. He was well-known for his roles in Heartbeat, Yes Minister and Yes Prime Minister as well as Basil Brush's sidekick, Mr Derek. It took the form of a question and answer session and was organised by two of the then committee, Carol Cox (no longer a member of SMU3A) and Suzanne Everson (sadly deceased).



How are those New Year resolutions? Barry Holmes offers encouragement.

Christmas Woes

So that's it then, it's over
And Christmas has gone
The mince pies long finished
They didn't last long
The scales in the bathroom
Their sad tale will tell
YOU'VE PUT SEVEN POUNDS ON
I can't have ---- Ah well!!!!
I'll cut out potatoes
I'll cut out the bread
I'll cut out the chocolates
Might AS well be dead!!!!
I might last for five days
I might last a week
I might well be tempted
Oh God I'm so weak
Well ... just one more chocolate
Well two and that's plenty
Thank goodness it's NOT long
To Christmas 2020!!!!

Lend a helping hand at your local charity shop

Have you thought about using your spare-time volunteering? Shepton has numerous charity shops that would welcome any help you can offer. Volunteering is the perfect way to meet people, gain new skills, take on a new challenge or just have fun...and raise money for charity. Call in at any of our local charity shops to find out more. You may even find one of our members behind the desk.

Castaway

This month we have castaway our very own 'in house' poet, Barry Holmes.

Barry can often be seen at Speaker Meetings and sporting Christmassy attire at Singing for Pleasure in December.

1. **The Grand March from Aida** - in my younger days I belonged to a small opera group and I took part in Aida as a Nubian slave and I had my bare upper half covered in cocoa powder for the seven nights run. Not too keen on cocoa now!
2. The incomparable Bowly singing **Goodnight but not Goodbye** just before the last war. I live in the past as regards music and Al Bowly's singing and music transport me back to my era
3. **1812 Overture** by Tchaikovsky - marvellous, but I can assure you that contrary to some rumours I was not around for Napoleon or Tchaikovsky



4. **Duet from the Pearl Fishers** sung by Bjorling and Merrill sets the hairs at the back of my neck a quiver
5. **O Fortuna from Carmina Burana** makes me want to put the volume up full blast.
6. **Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata** is such a complete contrast to O Fortuna
7. I suppose that for my last piece I should be patriotic and choose Ilkley Moor Baht 'at but I shall cast aside my patriotism and select Vera Lynn singing **White Cliffs of Dover**. It still can bring a little tear to my eye as I lived through that time and well remember her singing it.

My book, probably is **HMS Ulysses by Alistair Maclean**. It really brings home what awful conditions our sailors worked in during the war doing the Arctic Run.

My luxury item - a lifeboat so that I can knock it to bits and build a raft or more seriously a **spare pair of unbreakable spectacles**.

Many thanks Barry, we won't leave you there too long (unless Barbara has other ideas!)

4. U3A Regional and National News

Regional	15 March	North Somerset Association (NSA) Workshop Burnham on Sea see below
	27 March	Inter U3A Quiz Wells Date for your diaries, details below
National	10-13 August	Science Network Aston University For full programme visit the Science network website
	7-10 September	Summer School Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester TBA
More U3A 2020 Summer Schools details here		

Full listings and details of all national events see What's On in Third Age Matters magazine, visit the website www.u3a.org.uk or sign up to the U3A email newsletter.

North Somerset Association (NSA) News

The Chair of North Somerset Association of U3As, (which at the moment is an informal grouping of 12 of our most local U3As plus SMU3A) has plans to enter into a formal, legally constituted association. The intention is to then form an affiliation with other similar associations across the country. These 70 or so associations will hope to have input and influence at board level. This will, in time enable the provision of more locally available workshops, study and training days for members to attend, as funding will then be accessible from the Trust. This has raised different points of view from the U3As represented and amongst our own committee also, with emails, correspondence and Charity Commission documents having to be considered.

Many of your committee feel this is an extra layer of 'officialdom' and responsibility that we are unwilling to shoulder, though we fully appreciate the need for the safeguarding and regulation of any funds received and the wider opportunities it may present.

We are still considering our position as to how we shall vote on this proposal at the next NSA meeting in February. Members of SMU3A will not be directly affected by whatever decision is made by the committee and ultimately the NSA, apart from having the chance to attend the events and share ideas.

To give a taste of what may be on offer in the future, should the proposal be accepted, the NSA has used existing funds to organise a **Workshop on Friday 15 March at Burnham on Sea** and any member is welcome to attend. If you are interested in taking part or finding out

more, do contact Liz Nash

Liz Nash, Maggie Hardy and Derek Hiller are our representatives at SMU3A NSA meetings

Inter U3A Quiz

The Northern Somerset Association of U3As is holding another quiz. It will be on **Friday 27 March 2020 at Wells Golf Club at 1.30**, for a prompt start at 2pm, until 5pm.

We have entered two teams of four, to include a cream tea.

Prizes provided by NSA of U3As.

If you would like to take part please give your name to

Maggie Hardy, Secretary as soon as possible

As the Quiz is not until the end of March, we will check with you nearer the time as to your availability. If more than eight members come forward, then it will be names out of the hat!



5. Group News

NEW

Family Story Group using Family Historian and W7 Story Teller by Alan Mitchell

For the last five years Keith Taylor and I have been developing a new computer App with the aim of simplifying the organization, recording and displaying family information. Keith has now stepped aside from being involved but I am glad to say that we have now reached the stage at which I can load the full package of Family Historian and W7 Story Teller on laptop computers which use the Windows 10 operating system. Some basic typing ability is essential to load in the data. Two fingers are quite enough.

The system has been designed and tested 'in house' but we would like to test it further in the hands of a small group of users. If you would like to be involved, you will learn, step by step, not only how to use this whole system but how to gather and verify the relevant information and record it. It is suitable for recording not only a small family but also one with 20,000 members. While you will learn how to do this you will automatically create reports which include family tree diagrams, CVs, family reports on ancestors and descendants by male and female lines and many others. Uniquely you will be able to see the histories of the various properties which have come up in your data gathering. Photographs and other media as well as scanned material are all integrated alongside the other information.

We can load your laptop with Family Historian (on which the system is built) and the W7 App in order to let you get on the way. All users will have to have a copy of Family Historian which at the moment costs just under £40. I have copies of the program if you want to buy one.

I propose that we have a setting up meeting at my home in **Prestleigh, at 2pm on Wednesday 5 February.**

If you think that this is for you do come along and see what it is all about.

Alan Mitchell.

Walking by Malcolm and Liz

On Monday 6 January Malcolm and Liz led a five mile town walk around Frome visiting sites that have connections with well known people or people who have made a significant contributions to society. Here is just a sample of the plaques we visited:

- Christina Rossetti, poet and pre Raphaelite model,
- Alice Seeley (Lady Harris) who lived in Frome as a child, and, with her husband, had a huge impact on the cessation of cruelty to the local population in the Congo
- General Montgomery who had his divisional HQ in the town planning the El Alamein strategy
- Sir Benjamin Baker, an engineer who listed the design of the Forth Rail Bridge and the transportation and erection of Cleopatra's Needle amongst his many achievements was born in Frome
- Charles Oatley, father of the Scanning electron Microscope.
- We also visited the home of retired actress Lois Maxwell best known for her role as Miss Moneypenny in the James Bond films.



We avoided rain which poured down as we were at lunch in The George Hotel. For more details of the walk and a full list of buildings and places visited see [Discover Frome](#)

There are several other walks at this site which may be of interest to the walking groups or to individuals.

Walking on the Tor

Twelve of us had a memorable walk up Glastonbury Tor on our second walk in January. After weeks of rain and grey skies only the mist remained over the Levels as we climbed up into the sunshine and stunning views across Somerset. How lucky we were to be walking on such a



wonderful day. Bocabar in Glastonbury served us an excellent lunch to finish off a perfect day



Calling ALL groups

Please send in some photos of your group to brighten up the newsletter; even better send a photo and write a piece about your latest activities. We'd all like to hear what you've been getting up to. Send them to Julia Goddard by the 20th of the month. Thank you.



Monthly Activities

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Monday	Walking	Discussion 10.30am Bowls 11am Art 2-4pm	Walking Woolcraft 2.30pm	Bowls 11am Art 2-4pm
Tuesday	Book Group 10.15am French conversation 10.30 Bridge 1.30pm Table Tennis 2pm Flower Club 2pm	Collectables 11am Table Tennis 2pm Bridge 1.30pm Needlecraft 2pm Recorder Playing 2pm	French conversation 10.30 Bridge 1.30pm Table Tennis 2pm	Family History 10.30am Table Tennis 2pm Bridge 1.30pm Needlecraft 2pm Recorder Playing 2pm

Wednesday	Short Tennis 4-5pm	Music Appreciation 2pm Short Tennis 4-5pm	Short Tennis 4-5pm	Short Tennis 4-5pm
Thursday	Speaker Meeting 10.30am	Coffee 10.30am Scrabble 2pm	Shorter Walks Coffee 10.30am Strollers 1.30pm	Coffee 10.30am Scrabble 2pm
Friday	Table Tennis 2pm	Table Tennis 2pm	Munch Club Table Tennis 2pm	Singing for Pleasure 10.30-12 Table Tennis 2pm

The table above represents the usual meeting dates for groups. The actual dates may vary. Writing for Pleasure meets fortnightly at 2pm on a Thursday. Bus Pass Trippers travel on Saturdays. You should contact group leaders for confirmation of dates. For more information on any of our groups visit the website www.sheptonmalletu3a.org.uk or contact the individual group leader below.

Group Contacts

Art	Gill Davies
Books	Sue Dunne
Bowls	Frank Booth
Bridge	Graham McCartney
Bus Pass Trippers	Janet Murray
Collectables	Liz Nash
Discussion	Malcolm Weeks
Family History	Keith Taylor
Flowers	Freda Briars
French	Beatrice Thayer
conversation	
Munch Club	Maggie Fowle
Music	Catherine Wylie
Appreciation	Sandra Freeborn
Needlecraft	Di Gommo Liz Weeks
Recorders	Sandra Morris Julie Newman
Scrabble	Di Gommo
Singing for Pleasure	Val Sherring
Shorter Walks	Jenny Wehrfritz
Short Tennis	Eric Wehrfritz
Solos	Janet Murray
Strollers	Lyn Hook
Table Tennis	Peter Howell
1 and 2	
Walking	Liz Weeks
Woolcraft	Pam Mitchell
Writing for Pleasure	Catherine Wylie

6. Committee Members

Chair	Liz Nash
Vice Chair and Publicity	Derek Hiller
Secretary	Maggie Hardy
Treasurer	Jane Burman
Groups Coordinator	Sue Dunne
Membership Secretary	Maggie Fowle
Newsletter	Julia Goddard
Outings	Janet Murray
Speakers	Pete Norman
Website	Keith Taylor

Thank you to all our contributors this month. Please send your items for the newsletter by 20th of the month Julia Goddard, Editor.