

Newsletter March 2020

sheptonmalletu3a.org.uk



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1. Chat from the Chair

Storm Dennis is meeting expectations as I write, so I really hope that the sun will have found its way back to us by the time you read this March newsletter. We all need a dose of hopefulness and confidence that Spring will arrive soon, in other words 'optimism'.

My positive thinking has been rewarded by hearing that Gill Wetherall will be giving a helping hand to Janet with all the organisation that goes into arranging our very successful Outings. Read all about the latest one to the BBC studios in Bristol in this issue.

Job sharing and the splitting of responsibilities within an existing role is, I think, an excellent idea. It lightens the load for those concerned and offers flexibility which accommodates unexpected appointments and holidays. As I

mentioned in last month's newsletter, we are looking to replace committee members who are standing down at the AGM. There is no good reason why roles and tasks cannot be split between friends or partners and with goodwill from all concerned could work very well. Something for everyone to think about. Just a reminder that we are looking for a new Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Publicity person and Speaker Meeting organiser. Don't be shy about coming forward, everyone has a talent or skill and can offer something to ensure the continuation of SMU3A. Pete Norman has written a comprehensive account of his current role as speaker meeting organiser which you can read in this issue. It is not a requirement to sit on the committee to take on the roles of publicity or speaker meeting organiser, so whether you are a bit of a whizz at graphic design for posters, can wander around Shepton delivering newsletters or can take notes at speaker meetings and can then manage to decipher them for a Shepton Mallet Journal report do come and speak to us please. Many hands make light work and there is always lots of help, support and tea and biscuits available!

Liz



BBC visit
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Speaker Meeting Organiser

My name is Pete Norman and I organise our monthly speaker meetings.

I am now starting my fourth calendar year in this role and give notice that I shall be standing down from this responsibility at the end of 2020.

I have enjoyed this role but after nearly four years I feel now is the time for a change and for someone else to take over the responsibility for organising the speakers from 2021 onwards. Therefore on behalf of our committee I'm appealing for a volunteer from our membership to step forward. In order to enable a smooth changeover, I have booked speakers until December 2020 and ideally I would look to hand over responsibility in July or August this year. I

would be prepared to work alongside my successor for a handover period until the end of the year enabling them to take over fully from January 2021. However I am afraid I will not be continuing beyond that date.

The role involves:

- Researching speakers on the internet or through local advertisements, posters, leaflets etc, pursuing recommendations from other organisations and following up suggestions from members. Occasionally speakers make themselves known through the U3A Beacon system. Many of our speakers have a variety of subjects which provide a fruitful source of topics
- Contacting potential speakers by email, letter or telephone to agree dates, requirements for their talk (eg PowerPoint, microphones etc) and fees or donations within an agreed budget. Directions to venue and parking and any assistance with equipment also needs to be clarified
- We hold our meetings at the Council Chambers of Mendip District Council on the first Thursday of each month and have use of the rooms from 10.00am until 11.45am. This requires a booking to be made 12 months in advance at the end of the previous year and in the event of the room being unavailable, suitable alternative accommodation will need to be arranged (eg Peter Street Rooms)
- On the day of the event the speaker will need to be met, assisted with setting up equipment including PowerPoint if required, provided with refreshments, and introduced. Any fees or donations due will need arranging through the U3A treasurer.

The role of speaker organiser is both challenging and rewarding and develops contacts with a wide variety of people. There is great satisfaction to be gained from arranging and providing a successful and enjoyable monthly event for our members.

Anyone interested in this role please contact the committee chair, currently Liz Nash, or me.



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.

5 March

Tim Bruce: 'Changing things one pedal at a time' an epic cycle journey of over 3,500 miles from Seattle to Washington DC in aid of charity

2 April

Dr Francis Burroughes : " Seated One Day at the Organ" observations from the organ bench spanning sixty years

14 May please note change of date

Mr Dave Hartnell: A trip across California, Arizona and Utah

4 June

Mr Brian Wright: "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall" nursery Rhymes, a hidden history

February Speaker Meeting by Derek Hiller

The speaker for our February meeting was Mr Chris Forester with a talk, **The West Country's Mail Coach System from Exeter to London via Wincanton.**

As a teenager Chris had an interest in horses and managed to secure a job at the Watney Brewery in Mortlake looking after the drays. He later went on to join the mounted police force, a post he held for twenty-five years. He moved to Wincanton ten years ago and is curator of Wincanton Museum.

Before the mail coach system started mail was carried by riders, usually single men on a horse carrying mail. They rode between posts, hence the name for our current postal system. In 1784 John Palmer, who was in a theatre business in Bath, suggested that a mail coach system, based on the Post-Chaise carriage he used to move scenery and actors between theatres, would benefit the postal service. The Postmaster General William Pitt agreed on a trial run from London to Bristol at Palmer's expense. Following the success of this trial more routes were opened up across the country resulting in an improved postal service and an additional form of passenger transport.

The mail coach journeys consisted of stages of ten to fifteen miles. This led to the growth of inns along the routes where horses would be changed and stabled before their return journey. It therefore took over seventy horses to complete the journey from London to Exeter. As the coaches were vulnerable to highway robbery, guards were employed alongside the driver to protect the mail which was kept in a padlocked box at the rear of the coach. Guards were armed with weapons including pistols and blunderbusses, a crude but devastating weapon used primarily by the navy of the time. As the service grew, many of the coaches were privately owned and provided a lucrative business investment for the proprietors. One of the most successful proprietors was William Chaplin who owned numerous pubs in London. His coaching inns and business employed over 2,000 people, had



76 coaches and owned 1,800 horses. Another well-known coach and inn proprietor was Sarah Ann Mountain. She owned the famous Saracens Head in London, provided coach services on over 20 routes and built coaches for sale.

From about 1800 there were two types of coach services on the routes, subscription coaches for paying passengers and the mail coaches that would primarily be used for transporting mail and occasionally carried passengers which gave an undisclosed subsidy for the drivers' wages. Strict timetables had to be kept, particularly for overseas mail that needed to reach the port of Falmouth in time for the ships departing to countries in Europe. Many of the mail coaches were designated to transport mail to the main royal dockyards including Plymouth, Portsmouth Chatham and Bristol.

The design of mail coaches varied but the Vidler design, similar to the Western style mail coach, was particularly robust and suited the rough terrain and roads which were poorly maintained. The coaches did not afford a great deal of comfort. The coaches would carry up to 20 people in cramped conditions with some passengers seated on top, exposed to the weather and could fall off without the driver being aware. There were frequent deaths and injuries. Two fast mail coaches were introduced later from Exeter to London, the Quicksilver and Telegraph. They travelled generally at night so you had the added danger of not being able to see what was on the road. Both routes went in the same direction until they reached Amesbury where they split, with Quicksilver going via Yeovil and Salisbury and the Telegraph going via Deptford and Wylie.

The coach drivers were looked upon by young men as we might look on our modern day airline pilots. There was a lot of glamour attached to them as individuals but, to the contrary, they were generally overweight, rather smelly and foul-mouthed at times. They would be dressed in heavy woollen and leather coats and drank to keep the cold at bay; some were serious alcoholics so you would put your life in their hands travelling with them. The drivers came from varying backgrounds with ex-military officers, university educated men and retired clergyman among them. Their knowledge of the routes and terrain grew



over time and they knew where conditions were good enough to speed up or 'spring the horses'. Wincanton itself had 21 pubs at one time, now just a few remain the Greyhound, the White Horse, the Dolphin and the Bear Inn amongst them. These were some of the coaching inns of the period with stables and ostlers employed to care for and change the horses between stages. Mail coaches were slowly phased out during the 1840s and 1850s due to the development of the railways. It is thought that the last mail coach services to run were in the north of England and finished completely in 1847.

Date for your diary

SMU3A RENEWAL MEETINGS

This year's renewal meetings will be held on 6 and 7 May in the Shrubbery from 10-12.30

THURSDAY COFFEE MORNINGS

Dobbies Restaurant, Shepton Mallet 10.30-12

All members and non-members are welcome every Thursday morning, except on the first Thursday when we have a Speaker Meeting. Join in for a coffee and friendly chat on **March 12, 19 and 26**

OUTINGS

Wednesday 11 March

Cadbury Garden Centre

Car share from Dobbies at 11.30. Lunch available

Wednesday 25th March

Sheppy's House of Cider

Bradford on Tone, Taunton

Minibus from Dobbies at 11am, pre-ordered lunch in the restaurant. Cost £24.70 includes cider tasting

For forms and details see Janet's emails. Please contact Janet if you have any ideas for future outings.

Outing to the BBC Radio and TV Studios, Bristol on 5 February 2020 by Janet Murray

Fourteen of us travelled by minibus, arriving at the Whiteladies Road Studios at 12.30pm ready for our tour which started at 12.45pm. Our security IDs were checked and we were given lanyards to wear throughout our visit. We were greeted by two very lovely and helpful tour guides. Firstly we were taken up onto the roof garden, where Ian Fergusson reads the weather from at the end of the Points West News. There is a shed with a camera and all the equipment needed, with weather maps etc. Even his umbrella!



In the studio



On the roof



Ian's shed



We were given a tour of all the different studios, and saw lots of interesting rooms, which are used for producing the news and local programs. Also we went into the Natural History Department. All produced at Whiteladies Road. We spent some time in a studio making a video of the news and weather, Betty and Eddie presented the programme and a lady from outside our group read the weather. When it was all finished we watched the programme we had just made. It was brilliant. Well worth the visit!

I am going to be planning another visit in the autumn.

Further details of when and forms will be sent out when ready.

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.

Give it a Thought by Barry Holmes

How on earth do bankruptcy lawyers expect to be paid?

What happens if you get half scared to death twice?

Love may be blind but marriage is a real eye opener

If you HAVE to borrow money, borrow it from a pessimist – they don't even expect to get it back

Is there a future in time travel?

If at first you don't succeed then skydiving definitely isn't for you

For Sale: parachute only used once, never opened, small stain

I'd give my left arm to be ambidextrous

Is a person who jumps off a bridge into the river in Paris really inSeine?
Is a shotgun wedding really a matter of wife or death?

Castaway

This month's castaway is Beryl Julian. Beryl goes to Music appreciation and Collectables and also attends Speaker Meetings.

I am just 'an ordinary girl' you see, but would love to be shipwrecked on a desert island and would, hopefully be rescued in a week!

Here is a selection of music, which I have enjoyed in the past, and has given me happy memories. First I will tell you a little about myself. I was born in Chelmsford, Essex in 1937 of north country parents who came from the Durham area. My mother used to play the piano for me and kept me enthralled with music.

My choice of music is:

- 1 Blue Danube by Johann Strauss, played by Andre Rieu.
- 2 Come fly with me, Frank Sinatra.
- 3 Did you not hear my lady, Aled Jones.
- 4 We'll gather lilacs, Katherine Jenkins.
- 5 The Shepton Mallet Matador, Adge Cutler.
- 6 Rondo (Allegro spiritoso) Concerto No 1 with Sarah Chang violinist by Niccolo Paganini (1782 -1840).
- 7 Love me tender, Elvis Presley.

Never a dull moment on a desert island! The book I would take is 'One hundred favourite Poems' (Classic FM).

Luxury item would be a bottle of de Kuyper-Creme de Cassis.

I would also need a pair of stout shoes and a knife and toothbrush.

Well, I make that four luxury items Beryl. Not sure if we could allow you all of them!



4. U3A Regional and National News

Regional	13 March	North Somerset Association (NSA) Workshop Burnham on Sea If you are interested in taking part or finding out more, do contact Liz Nash
	27 March	Inter U3A Quiz, Wells
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

Outcome of NSA meeting

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, Maggie Hardy and I attended the NSA meeting on February 14 in Burnham-on-Sea. The decision to adopt a formal network constitution, agree a Small Network Charity Commission status and affiliate with other networks was carried on a majority vote of those U3As present. SMU3A abstained following a discussion at our last committee meeting where there was no support amongst us for entering into any formal agreements; we therefore decided to abstain from all votes. Bristol also abstained and decided to leave the NSA to pursue closer links with neighbouring U3As.

We will continue to remain part of the NSA and it will be for the new committee to agree on how they wish to proceed following the AGM in June.

Meanwhile, we will continue to support and publicise the events already organised: the Quiz, the Photo competition and Workshop.

Liz

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 with 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.



5. Group News

NEW Photography

The group will meet monthly on the first Tuesday of the month from **2 - 4pm at the Leisure Centre, Shepton Mallet in the Conference Room** and will be led by **John Law.**

The cost will be **£3.00 per session** with tea and coffee included. The first meeting will be on **Tuesday 3 March**, cameras, digital cameras and phones at the ready!



John has sent an item along with a stunning photo of the cathedral introducing himself and his hopes for the group here:

I am looking forward to meeting you and better understanding your aspirations, however modest or grand, to improve your photography. Whether you take pictures with a compact camera, mobile phone, film camera or Digital SLR camera, I hope that we can all benefit from sharing our knowledge

across the group.

I would like to use the first meeting to allow the group to get to know each other and to better understand your needs as photographers. We can then agree how best to structure our meetings for the benefit of everyone in the group.

It would be great if you could bring along 5 or 6 photographs that you have taken to share with the group. These can be as digital files on a memory stick or as prints. If you do not have a memory stick, you can e-mail the photographs to me ahead of the meeting and I will bring them along for you. I am looking forward to meeting you all and sharing our journey together to improve our photography. If you are interested in joining or have any questions please contact John.

Short tennis



The Short Tennis group has now been meeting on a Wednesday afternoon since last September, at the Leisure Centre during the winter moving to the Tennis Club in the Spring.

We all seem to enjoy chasing a ball about, although not always catching up with it! Several players started as complete beginners and are now playing competitive doubles; everyone is improving and enjoying the exercise. At the moment we have twelve players on our list and would welcome other U3A members to join us. Roger Federer qualifies for the U3A in about twelve years, who knows?

Solo group birthday meal

We all enjoyed the birthday celebrations for our two birthday boys. Bill and Barry almost share a birthday, but Bill's is the 20 January and Barry's is 22 January, so we chose the 21 at the La Tavola D'Oro Italian restaurant in Shepton. There were 16 of the group there to enjoy good food, service and good company. We put together a hamper each with cheese, biscuits, a can of cider, some fruit, grapes and After Eight mints. Birthday cards and a 'Birthday Boy' balloon each. They were both pleased with their gifts and all the cards they received.



Strollers

Strollers are back on the road. The new season of leisurely walks in pursuit of cake starts Thursday 19 March (destination TBA). Lyn Hook leads the group that meets in the afternoon of the third Thursday of the month. Contact Lyn if you would like to join in.

Walking



Janis and Harry guided 18 of us on a five mile walk through lanes and fields across the Mendips, east of Shepton. There were beautiful views to the north and south as we followed the Fosse Way Roman Road into Beacon Woods onto the hamlet of Bodden and back to the Waggon & Horses for lunch.



Our second February walk, Janet led a local 7+ mile walk from Shepton onto West Compton, Pilton and East Compton along lanes, tracks and fields, a route that surprisingly few of us knew. Along the way we had wonderful views and passed large gardens, some covered with snowdrops. Fortunately we missed most of the recent wet weather apart from a brief hail shower and having to wade across a flooded lane.



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 Photography 2-4pm	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 conversation	Beatrice Thayer
Munch Club	Maggie Fowle
Music	Catherine Wylie
Appreciation	Sandra Freeborn
Needlecraft	Di Gommo Liz Weeks
Photography	John Law
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 1 and 2	Peter Howell
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