

Shepton Mallet u3a

Newsletter **September-October 2026**



Pam poses at Portland Bill with the famous lighthouse, during our outing in July.

Photo by Sylvia Ingham

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

Come inside.....

Useful Links

The Shepton Mallet u3a website can be accessed with this link,
<https://sheptonmalletu3a.org.uk/> or with this QR Code >.....>

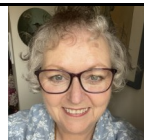
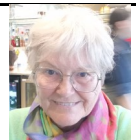


Past and current newsletters are available on the u3a webpage under
 SMu3aNews and can be accessed with this link,
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Printed copies of the newsletter can be purchased at
 speaker meetings.

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Reading whilst sunbathing makes you well red!

From the Chair



Well I have to say, no one is more surprised than I am to hear that I have the honour of serving as your Chair of the Shepton Mallet U3A.

I trust that I can be of service and help us take our groups from strength to strength. I have served on a number of committees, from the early days in my late teens for the British Sub Aqua Club, to community ones when I was in the Sussex Police Force and parent- teacher ones while I was teaching. Then finally, and most recently, I was a committee member for a local housing trust in Sussex. So I'm hoping that will all stand me in good stead and be useful!

I moved to Shepton early in 2021, from Brighton in Sussex where I was born. I have been visiting Somerset for over 45 years, but oddly never Shepton. I retired from teaching, when my school closed in the Summer of 2013 and was a full - time carer for my Mum for her last 8 years. After she passed I sold my house and moved here.

I have attended a number of groups from Creative Writing, to sewing and craft groups, and am currently enjoying the Monday Art Group. I find they are a great way to meet new people and get to know the area. The Creative Writing Group gave me the push to start writing a book that I have been planning for a long time. Most of my spare time is now spent on that and looking after my two-year- old grandson.

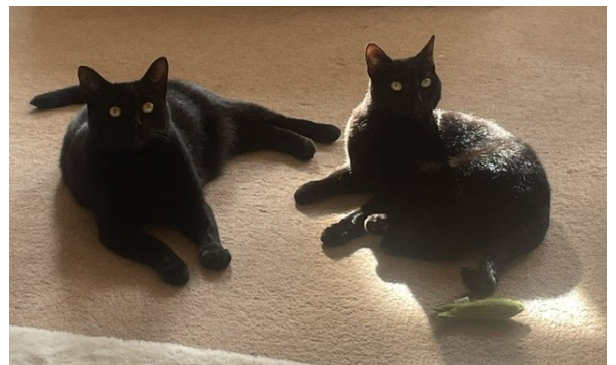


My dog, Luke (after Cool Hand Luke)

I have a passion for ancient history and archaeology, wildlife and the environment, and all things art & crafty, and as a science teacher, all things scientific. I am learning more about gardening, ably assisted my two beautiful black mini panthers.

I am looking forward to this new year, and where it will take us all. If you have any questions for me or any ideas on how we can improve our services, please do let me know.

Warmest of Wishes
Sue



My beautiful cats. Plenty of good luck there!

I try not to tell dad jokes. But when I do, he thinks they're really funny!



TRIP TO BENNETTS WATER GARDENS AND PORTLAND BILL

On 10th July, another hot morning, 13 of us gathered in Dobbie's car park before boarding the MCT bus for our trip down to Dorset. Unfortunately, Janet Sherwin was, at the last minute, unable to join us despite having organised the trip, and so yours truly was "in charge", armed with the entry money to the gardens and the list of members.

We had a very comfortable journey down, with aircon blasting and roof lights open so we could keep cool.

We arrived at Bennetts Water Gardens in Chickerell in good time for a coffee in the Cafe Monet before setting off around the gardens. Bennetts hold the National Plant Collection of Water Lilies and it was a delight to see so many different colours, shapes and sizes of this wonderful collection. There are seven ponds to walk around, even one called Pam's Pond! and benches beside each one provided a welcome sit down to take in the views, relax and watch all the dragon flies and damsel flies swooping around. You may have gathered from the name of the cafe that the gardens are somehow connected to Monet's garden in Normandy and the Japanese style Monet Bridge was commissioned in 1999 to commemorate 100 years since Claude Monet's painting Water Lily Pond in 1899.

The gardens themselves are located on the site of former clay pits and brickworks and there was a museum describing how the gardens came about.

The group enjoyed lovely lunches in the Cafe and then set off for Portland Bill. There was a chance to climb the lighthouse there but, as it was getting a bit too hot, we decided to spend just an hour there, to have a well earned ice cream, walk to the Bill, and then start the journey home.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day and thanks go to Janet for organising, but sadly missing out on, a really super outing.

Pam Mitchell



Photo by Janet Rundle

Why do aliens always spill their tea? Because they have flying saucers!



JULY SPEAKER MEETING - *Reiki with Sue Salt*

This was a fascinating talk. Reiki means “key to joy” or “key to the universe” and legend has it that Saint Germaine took the knowledge from Atlantis to Tibet, where it has been used for healing for hundreds of years.

There are three levels in Reiki, physical, mental and spiritual. The most important figure in Reiki is Dr Usui, who was born in 1865, became a Buddhist monk, studied ancient practice in Tibet, then worked with very poor people in Kyoto, Japan, running healing sessions. The spiritual aspect is most important for healing.



Members listen intently to Sue

There are 5 principles in Reiki:

Just for today:

I will let go of anger

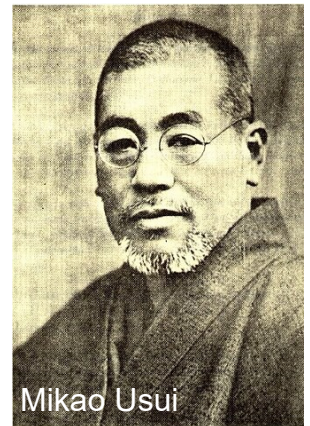
I will let go of worry

I will receive gratefully

I will work honestly

I will be kind to all.

Healing sessions use music but not scent. No clothing is removed. The practitioner may touch the person's head, shoulder or foot, working through their aura, a band of energy surrounding the body. The aim is to restore calm and balance so that the body can heal.



Mikao Usui



Looking for the elusive aura...

Members were intrigued and Sue encouraged us to discover our own aura by rubbing our hands together energetically, then looking for the aura around our fingers. Some could see it, others couldn't. Sue has kindly offered u3a members a free 30-minute reiki session. Her email address is: suesalt@hotmail.com
Reiki is a complementary relaxation practice and not a substitute for professional medical care.

Some of our artistic efforts



Shepton Mallet High Street by Lyn Manvill



The Creations Group photo frames decorated with paint and coloured glass



Flowers from paper cake cases

What do you call a moose with no name? Anonymoose!



CHICKEN FUN—A CAUTIONARY TALE

I had always wanted to keep hens. So romantic (but also practical!) to have a few amusing feathery creatures bustling around in the garden, producing lovely new-laid eggs! Circumstances never lent themselves to the realisation of this little dream, until the pandemic arrived in 2020, and I, along with many other people, decided to give it a go.

I bought a beautiful new, flatpack wooden henhouse, (no nasty plastic for me!) and enjoyed putting it together on my back lawn. I got the feeders, straw and food, plus a book on keeping hens, which I read with great interest. I wanted rescue hens and found someone in Buckland Dinham who gets hundreds from battery farms. I took a couple of cat carriers there and returned with four pathetic little travesties of poultry, purchased for a few pounds.



Me with my new pets

They had practically no feathers and looked dazed, confused and sickly. I put them in the henhouse overnight, then opened it for them the next morning. It was really exciting releasing them into the garden and watching their incredulous reaction. Are we really going to live in this paradise?? They gradually explored their terrain - I had made a little gate to keep them in the lower part of the garden, and put yards of wire netting around the perimeter and under the henhouse to keep the foxes out. So far I had spent a small fortune!

Their different personalities soon emerged and we gave them names. I was scared of touching them at first but soon got used to picking them up. They liked to be gently cuddled and stroked on my lap. What about the eggs, I hear you ask! Yes, they laid white eggs with very thin, fragile shells, not always in the nesting box. It



Still life with eggs

was very pleasurable to open the lid and find two or three beautiful, edible offerings, even if they were the most expensive eggs in the world.

Slowly my little friends grew feathers and regained their health. Their eggs became stronger and gained some colour. It was fun getting up early to let them out and feed them, though less fun cleaning the henhouse. Then winter arrived; going out in the snow or cold rain just after dawn every morning was definitely not great. One of my mini-flock died and another disappeared, presumably to a cat or fox.

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CHICKEN FUN (CONT.)

In the spring I bought another four hens. I should mention that by now my garden was a mess, as of course they scratch and dig everywhere! I tried to fence off my strawberry patch but there was one particular little varmint who often managed to get over and wreak havoc. She was very difficult to catch, in fact they all were!

I was a bit worried that the new hens wouldn't get on with the old ones, but in fact they just accepted each other without complaint. They seem to like plenty of company. By now I was adept at picking them up and dusting them with anti-mite powder. I had read that red mite is the nemesis of chicken farmers. The tiny grey parasites live in crevices in a wooden henhouse, coming out at night to feast on the chickens' blood and turning red in the process. They are extremely hard to get rid of.



Red mites on chicken skin

I got used to having the hens around. They were entertaining and the eggs were lovely, though not as numerous as I had hoped. When I went away for a few days I got someone to come and look after them twice a day, so I wasn't tied. However, it was quite hard work cleaning the henhouse every week, and the getting up at dawn, when they woke up and made a great deal of noise, every single day, soon lost its charm.

One by one my little girls died off; rescue hens don't last long as they have such a dreadful start in life. Then I noticed that they were reluctant to go into the henhouse at night. At first I just put them in, but then I realised—WE HAD RED MITE! Poor creatures! This was a truly awful experience. I tried everything—taking the henhouse to pieces and scrubbing it, spraying with special insecticide, even going over it with a blowtorch. I could see the mites coming out in hundreds, and they would somehow get on my hands and arms. The problem would appear to be solved, then back they came.

Finally I was down to just one, very feisty, hen. Not wanting her to be lonely, but unable to face more chicken problems, I decided to re-home her. Off she went, and I set about restoring my ruined garden. I sprayed the henhouse again, then left it for a year before selling it on. Hopefully, there were no more mites. Later on I discovered that mites can't live in plastic, which is why there are plastic henhouses!



Truly a learning experience!! At least I gave a few hens a better end of life. And I only ever buy free range eggs.

Janet Sherwin

My mother taught me logic: Because I say so, that's why!



Art Group



Sue Salt's pink rose



Graham Cooper with his "Winter Steam"

Observing the solar eclipse



Val Sherring, Keith Taylor and Mike Redwin in a parched Collett Park (photo by Kathy Phypers)



Mike's Seestar telescope image

Have you ever noticed that bills travel through the post at twice the speed of cheques?



Meet the People—Maggie Hardy



Maggie has contributed a great deal to our u3a. She used to run Munch Club, now runs Book Club with help from Liz Nash and was on the Committee for several years, including four and a half years as Secretary. I dragged her away from her allotment to do an interview, in the company of her new rescue border Collie, Flossie, who was very suspicious of me at first, but soon settled down, with the aid of a few treats!

Maggie has had quite a career. She was born in Ardrossan, North Ayrshire, but you wouldn't know it, thanks to elocution lessons! Aged 19 she got a job with BBC Scotland in Glasgow, as secretary to the head of religious broadcasting. She worked in Schools tv, then Music and Arts, including the Edinburgh Festival and the first ballet televised in Scotland - "Giselle". Her main job was as a script supervisor, which is to do with continuity. During this period she met stars such as Rowan Atkinson, Janes Galway and Jessie Norman.

She moved to London in 1977 and worked until fifteen years ago, often with famous actors including John Hannah, Peter Jeffrey, Gemma Jones, Anna Carteret, Kim Cattrall, John Nettles (Bergerac), Patrick Troughton, Wendy Craig (Nanny) and Jimmy Nail (Spender). Hugh Bonneville was a favourite!

Maggie met her husband, Jon working on a film. He was a runner and Maggie had to throw him a set of car keys. They landed on his broken toe! They have been together for 40 years, and have a daughter, Hannah, who is in banking. Shepton has been their home for nine years and Maggie joined u3a eight years ago. Those of us who know Maggie remember Tilly, the border collie she had for fourteen years, still much missed.

Maggie also volunteers in the Children's Hospice Shop, and at the Open Door Café once a month. Her favourite book is "Little Women", her favourite film "A Star is Born" with Judy Garland. She is very partial to a good macaroni cheese!

Maggie put out a large plateful of caramel biscuits with the coffee. I had one, and at the end of the interview Maggie took me out into the kitchen to show me her garden. When we returned to the sitting-room, the biscuits had disappeared and Flossie was looking rather guilty!



Janet Sherwin

Maggie with James Galway

Borrow money from pessimists - they don't expect to get it back.



July Short Walk



Just a little sit down.....

On Thursday 16th July, Sue and I led the monthly short walk from Doultling on a lovely sunny morning. Our easy 3.5 mile walk started from the Community Hall car park as we walked through the Glebe, down lanes across fields, and very quiet parts of Doultling and Bodden that some walkers had not walked before. We continued through a small hamlet, and across fields to Bodden, passing a farm with cows and calves. We then took the country lane from Bodden back to Doultling.

Coffee and cake was taken afterwards at the lovely East Cranmore Railway cafe.
Maggie Cooke

August Short Walk

Due to ill health, only 4 members of the Short Walks Group were able to take part in the August walk. Despite getting drenched in a downpour, the group enjoyed a nooks and crannies tour of Pilton which even surprised 2 members who are regular Pilton walkers. The walk passed Pilton House, The Tithe Barn (which the group were able to go in), St John The Baptist's church and a large wooden sculpture of a group of musicians carved from a tree trunk. The walk finished at The New Room cafe with wonderful views over Pilton.



Michele Exton

American motto: Wear short sleeves! Support the right to bare arms!



Obituary - Barry Holmes

By Jane Webber

Barry was born on 29 March 1933, to parents Stanley Holmes and Hilda May Verrill. He was born in the village of North Bierley, West Yorkshire. Before he became the life and soul of our Shepton Mallet group, he lived a fascinating life at the heart of great British industry. He was master of his trade as an engineer/designer during the golden age of manufacturing. He worked for Crofts Engineering in Yorkshire, followed by the "Holy Trinity" of the British motorbike industry, BSA, Triumph and Norton.



Barry at Christmas 2024

Photo by J Sherwin

Barry was a massive character, completely full of life and laughs. He was famous within the U3A for his magnificent monologues and jokes. He had an incredible memory, perfect comic timing, and could hold the entire room captive. He was one of a kind. He passed away on 27th August at home with his lovely, devoted wife Barbara, having lived a remarkable rich and full life. They had travelled the world together to many wonderful and distant lands.



Barry on the ukulele



B and B at a Whitstone's fish lunch

Photo by J Sherwin

What do you call a fake noodle? An impasta!



Barry Holmes (cont.)

Barry and Barbara had met later in life on the dance floor in Blackpool. They were a match made in heaven and made for each other, true soulmates. It would have been their 27th wedding anniversary this October. They both worked together raising thousands of pounds for a hospital they had personal connections with. Barry, who had always been keen on amateur dramatics, set up various fundraising "Old Music Hall Shows", and Barbara equally did the same setting up fundraising stalls making and selling thousands of cakes! A terrific team.



Barry and Barbara on their 25th wedding anniversary cruise



Barry as MC in 2015

He, naturally, was Master of Ceremonies! He was wonderful at roping members into his grand theatrical plans, creating unforgettable memories of camaraderie.

He will be greatly missed at the various groups he enjoyed, especially the play reading group.....

Jane Webber, former SMu3a member



October 2025 Photo by Jane Webber

Longer Walks

July

Monday 6th July , Maggie and Sue led their 5 mile walk starting from Radstock. It was a fairly hot day and with only a few of us, we found shade along the route, and the walk was a good one. We started along the Colliers way, passing a memorial to the serious train crash in August 1876 , when 13 people died. We continued across a field to the quiet village of Shoscombe, then across to White Wicket Farm, down to find a couple of ponds, then more fields , thru woods and a good wide track back down to Radstock. Lunch was at the Jolliffe Arms, which was enjoyed by all, and can be recommended. The brave few that went on the walk, all said they had had a good morning.



Photo by Jon Boston

Maggie

August

Monday 17 August brought welcome relief from the very hot weather and was pleasantly comfortable for walking. Seven of us set out from Stoke St Michael on a 4.7 mile circular walk. The route was varied and fairly easy with only one hill to climb. We followed footpaths, tracks and very quiet lanes through fields and woods. A short comfort break at Cookswood, a fairly small, modern housing development, introduced most of us to a cafe but we didn't have enough time to make it a coffee stop. We enjoyed lunch at the Waggon and Horses after a lovely walk.



Janis

Cookswood
*Photo from
Facebook*

"Someone said you sound like an owl."
"Who?"



It's All In The Genes Family History Group

A Story discovered about the two times great grandparent of group member Beryl.

Patrick Connell – From Trafalgar to Saffron Hill

Patrick Connell's life reads like a sweeping historical novel. Born in **County Cork in 1786**, he joined the Royal Navy as a young man and, at just **19 years old**, found himself aboard HMS *Temeraire* during the **Battle of Trafalgar**. Listed in the muster roll as an **Ordinary Seaman**, Patrick served on one of the most ferocious ships in Nelson's fleet – the vessel later immortalised as the "Fighting Temeraire."

During the battle on **21 October 1805**, Patrick witnessed scenes few men could forget. *Temeraire* followed HMS *Victory* into the Franco-Spanish line, enduring heavy fire before crashing into the French ship *Redoutable* to save Nelson's flagship from being boarded.

As the British fleet broke the enemy line, Patrick stood amid shrieking cannon fire and choking smoke. *Temeraire* smashed into the French *Redoutable* to save Nelson's flagship from being boarded. For over an hour, Patrick's world was a chaos of splintering timber, musket fire raining from the rigging, and the thunder of guns fired at point-blank range. Then came the impossible feat: *Temeraire* fought **two enemy ships at once**, the French *Redoutable* and the Spanish *Fougueux*, capturing both in a brutal, deck-to-deck struggle.

Patrick would have hauled ropes, manned sails, carried powder, or fought in the boarding parties that helped capture both enemy ships.

He survived not only the battle but also the violent storm that followed, and in **1809** received the Parliamentary Grant awarded to Trafalgar veterans. After the Napoleonic Wars, Patrick returned to Ireland, marrying **Mary Gibbon in Charleville** in 1830. The couple raised a large family, including the distinctively named **Morgan Connell**, whose later records help trace their movements.

Like many Irish families, the Connells were swept up in the hardship of the **Great Famine**, eventually migrating to London around 1850. By the **1851 Census**, Patrick – now **65** – was living in the crowded, working-class district of **Saffron Hill, Holborn**, surrounded by his Irish-born children. His household paints a vivid picture of mid-19th-century immigrant life: cramped rooms, dockside labour, and the struggle to rebuild a future far from home.

Patrick died sometime between **1851 and 1861**, after which Mary and the children moved south to the busy docks of **Rotherhithe**, where Morgan worked as a labourer. Though Patrick's final resting place is still to be confirmed, his story is now firmly anchored: an Irishman who fought at Trafalgar, survived the storm, raised a family through famine and migration, and ended his days in the heart of Victorian London.

Very few people can afford to be poor!



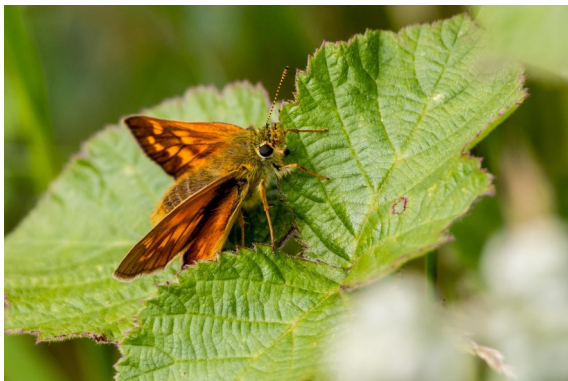
Photography Group - July and August



Donald Branch



Melvin Malone



Richard Wimbush



Cecilia Dargie



John Law



Jenny Short

Press any key to continue or any other key to quit.



Meet the people....

John Robert Smith Born. 5th Dec. 1947 St. Asaph, N. Wales



I was born in N.Wales but cannot claim any Welsh blood whatsoever! My father was a Yorkshireman and my mother Northumbrian. Our life was destined to be that of a gypsy nature for my first six years as Britain readjusted to normality after the war.

We never, to my recollection, lived anywhere for more than six months at a time travelling from Wales to London then onwards to Lancashire, Northumberland and finally Midlothian in Scotland. We were quite poor and life was a struggle learning to make do and mend. Accommodation was grim in the post war years for a service family and in some cases not available at all. I can vividly remember a harsh Scottish winter in a converted double decker bus with pot bellied stove burning old wooden pallets all day and night.!

We settled in Mussleburgh, some 11 miles south of Edinburgh. Sadly at the age of six I contracted poliomyelitis and lost out on a year's schooling whilst learning to walk with leg calipers and then intensive periods of physiotherapy to aid my recovery. Despite that I did well at school, passing my 11 plus exam.

My father's career in the military was coming to an end however and once again we were on the move, firstly to Tynemouth on the Northumberland coast and then to Gosforth near Newcastle. I was lucky to secure a place in a Grammar School in Newcastle but coming from the Scottish education system to the English one meant that I was a year older than all the other pupils in my class, I had already lost all my childhood friends and struggled to fit in with my new friends.

My interests were always centred on the natural sciences and I was particularly drawn towards natural history, especially entomology and ornithology. A fairly unhappy time at Grammar school saw me leave at the age of 16. Luckily a science teacher helped me to secure a position as a trainee Laboratory Assistant at the pathology labs at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne. After less than a year spent staring through the lens of various microscopes I came to a life changing decision. My interests were almost exclusively of an active and investigative nature. I loved hiking and camping, cycling and bird watching and insect studies on the side. So, one lunchtime I walked into the Royal Navy recruiting Office downtown and declared my interest in joining up. The travel and adventure appealed to me and the recruiting officer decided that with my lab experience, I would be ideally suited to the Medical Branch. And so I set off for Plymouth to do my basic training!

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If everything is going well, you have obviously overlooked something!



JOHN SMITH (cont.)

After completing the basic seamanship training, the next three years were spent training as a Sick Berth Attendant (Later changed to Medical Assistant) 18 months of that time was spent in Royal Naval Hospitals both in Portsmouth and Plymouth followed by time at the RN Air Station at Culdrose where I opted to specialise in aviation medicine and air -sea rescue work.



From there it was a short hop to the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle, bound for a world cruise and a time patrolling the Gulf of Aden during the troubles there in the early 60's. For a young lad it was a great life but quite strict at times. Life in the lower decks depended on a form of rough justice which many youngsters would not tolerate nowadays. But it seemed to work and I thoroughly enjoyed my time in South Africa, the Med, Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore and other ports in the Far East.

Sadly however things were changing in the world and Britain's sea power was being pared down in drastic defence cuts. My time as an Aero Medic came to an abrupt halt! That particular specialisation was considered unnecessary and costly and was scrapped. Time for a change!

They were looking for RN Medics to train as commandos with the Royal Marines and this sounded just up my street. Off then to Lymington in Devon for some tough but enjoyable training with the Marines. I loved it and on completion of the course was awarded the prestigious Commando medal, of which I was (and am still) very proud. The military threat in Europe at that time centred on NATO's northern flank and I was posted to 45 Cdo R.M. who were preparing to move their base from Plymouth to Scotland where they would specialise in mountain and Arctic warfare.

This entailed four winter months every year spent in the Norwegian Arctic perfecting skills in skiing and mountaineering as well as survival in the intense cold. The summer months in Scotland were spent mainly in the highlands and the Isle of Skye, practising rock climbing and casualty evacuation. Occasionally we would venture to mountainous northern Italy.

I spent five tours of duty as a medic in Northern Ireland, which is where I met my wife, Perpetua (Pet) in Bangor. She was a chef and we tied the knot in 1970. That was 56 years and two full grown sons ago! We moved backwards and forwards as military families do - mainly between Scotland and Devon. Twice I was selected to take part in Arctic scientific expeditions as Medic / Entomologist, to eastern Greenland and Ellesmere Island, Canada. My interest in Natural History paid off!

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Why do gorilla have big nostrils? Because they have big fingers!



JOHN SMITH (cont.)

After collecting many specimens for both the British Museum and the National Museum of Canada I was delighted to accept membership of the Royal Geographical Society here in London.

I found time to train as a Royal Naval Diver, something I had longed to do for many years but if honest must confess that the experience wasn't exactly as expected. I never got to dive in the crystal clear waters of the Med or the Indian Ocean like many others I met. My experiences were limited to the murky depths of Rosyth and Plymouth dockyards and the rather foreboding lakes of Fermanagh, N.Ireland in search of guns and bodies!

Towards the end of my time in the Navy and literally just less than a year before my release, the Argentinians decided to invade the Falkland Islands. By this time I was gearing down a little and was Quartermaster of the Commando Logistics Medical Squadron - a unit designed for rapid response to anywhere in the world. It came as no surprise then that I found myself, along with a great deal of medical stores, steaming southwards on HMS Sir Galahad.



Falklands war—bombing of the Sir Galahad, 8th June 1982

The rest is, as they say, history. We set up a Field Hospital in Ajax Bay (the famous Red and Green Life Machine) where along with the Parachute Regiments medics we formed the main Surgical Unit for front line casualties, both British and Argentinian. We were bombed twice despite the Geneva Conventions Red Cross and lost some good friends at that time. Casualties were relatively high and a constant shuttle of helicopters moved patients and para medics from

the battlefields to the field hospital and onwards to the hospital ship at sea.

A smaller unit of Commando Medics was dispatched forward to a place called Teal Inlet to establish a front casualty station nearer to the advancing British troops and I accompanied them as both quartermaster and to deal with the expected fatalities from both sides - not a task I would wish to repeat. Meanwhile, the ship I had sailed down on had received a major bombardment and suffered high casualties in the aftermath. It was eventually towed out to sea and scuttled, forming one of many sea graves in the area. Safely back in UK, life continued as normal. Reunited with my family we counted our blessings and got on with life. Leaving the Royal Navy was quite a wrench, a problem most ex servicemen find when away from the relative security blanket of military life. I tried various jobs but finally joined the Prison Service as a Health Care Officer.

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JOHN SMITH (cont.)

My first and only posting was to Shepton Mallet Prison. It meant a major upheaval for us as a family. Moving home from Ivybridge in Devon, taking our sons out of school at a critical time etc almost saw me 'jacking it all in' but move we did and have now lived here for 38 years!

I have found time to learn stained glass window making, shepherd's crook making, Irish goatskin drum making, Landrover trailing to name a few. For many years both Pet and I were keen cavers, spending much time underground on the Mendips and Friday evenings in the bar at the Hunters Lodge! Both of us also enjoy walking and travelling in general so have, until very recently, backpacked our way around the world.

Our first major backpacking trip was to Peru, closely followed by India, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Nepal, Turkey, Egypt, Israel and Syria. Many of these countries we loved so much that we made multiple visits especially Nepal and India whose cultures continue to fascinate us! It's a bit of a love/hate relationship with India I must admit and there are times when patience and understanding wear very thin. The magic of the country however always wins over and India remains one of the few countries which I find hypnotically appealing.

Other hobbies include reading, short story writing, lawn bowls and playing the ukulele and harmonica. My favourite film is hard to pinpoint but if pushed I would opt for Mel Brook's comedy 'Young Frankenstein' or for total bang for your bucks, then 'Dr Zhivago'.

As for reading it's almost 100% fiction! Though not particularly a fan of sci-fi I really enjoyed Arthur C Clarke's 'Rama' series. Another novel which ticked the box was a murder mystery by the Danish author Peter Hoeg called 'Miss Smilla's feeling for Snow'

When it comes to music, Irish folk is probably my favourite genre but I am happy with most classical pieces, jazz, blues and a little country now and then. I even seek out some of the newer talent on YouTube etc.!

There is little in life in 2026 I would seek to change. My personal view, limited as it may be, is that all change is ultimately for our betterment.

John is a member of the Longer Walks and Play-reading groups (Ed.)



John and Pet on a windy walk near Priddy

If it's zero degrees today and it's going to be twice as cold tomorrow, what temperature will it be?



AUGUST SPEAKER MEETING –

All about DNA with John Sinclair Robson

We were delighted to welcome back John Robson, who gave us a fascinating talk on forensic dentistry a few years ago. This time he told us the story of DNA, which is short for deoxyribonucleic acid – the basic building block of life as we know it!



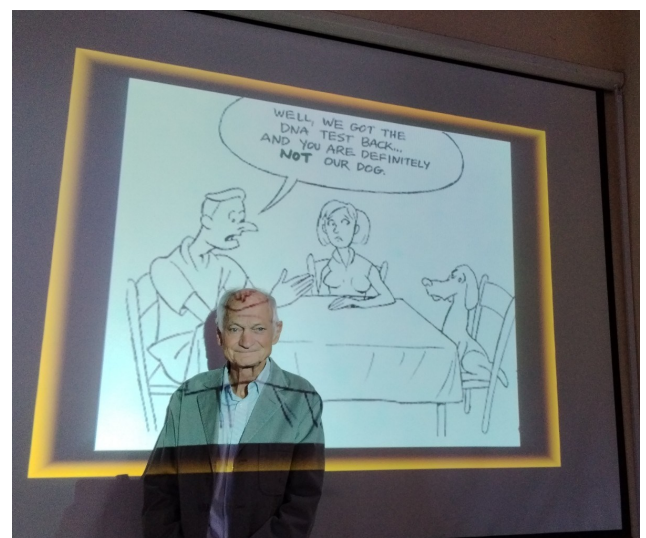
The wonderful double helix structure of DNA

Many of us remember the murder in 1984 of a girl called Melanie, in Bath. No-one was charged at the time, but in 2015 one Christopher Hampton was convicted, using DNA evidence. The first US case to get a DNA-based conviction was in 1996, in Tennessee.

DNA is found in every cell in a living organism, mostly in the cell nuclei, on structures called chromosomes. Human beings have 23 pairs of chromosomes. Chimpanzees have 24! 99% of our DNA is identical in all of us. Common sources are mouth cells, hair, blood and teeth, which may be the only thing left after a fire.

Uses of DNA testing are many – criminal cases, identification of bodies in mass fatalities, family history, genetic disease, studying evolution, genetic engineering and modification, paternity disputes, proof of innocence, etc. John described several cases where people have been convicted and locked up for years before DNA tests finally proved them innocent.

In 1995 a national DNA databank was set up, storing information on everyone with a criminal conviction. Most samples taken by the police are destroyed (or should be!). There are limitations to what DNA analysis can do—samples can be contaminated, destroyed by fire, or inadvertently mixed with other samples. Sometimes there is over-reliance on DNA, as in the case of Amanda Knox, who was convicted and released twice in Italy, all because of a kitchen knife.



John and one of his funny slides. The husband is saying “We’ve got the results of the DNA test, and you are definitely NOT our dog!”

Honk if you love peace and quiet.



Article by J Sherwin

U3a Speaker Meetings

First Thursday of each month at the Salvation Army Hall*, Shepton Mallet.
10 am till 12 noon.
£3 members and £4 non members

Why not come along to your u3a's monthly meeting for some fascinating presentations over the coming months. A good way to make a new friend or two! See you there!

3rd September - Alan Jenkins (ex police inspector) - Policing Royal Visits.

I discuss the complex and at times frustrating planning behind policing a Royal Visit. I then discuss a visit I commanded and planned where everything that could go wrong did!! It's very funny.

1st October- Found Poetry with Polly Hall.

Found Poetry is a form of poetry art that uses existing text or 'found' words to create new poems. An environmentally conscious form of word recycling! We will use existing texts from books, newspapers and other printed materials in this fun, experimental workshop led by Polly Hall. You will learn how to create your own 'found' poetry from printed words using different techniques such as redaction or cut-out.

5th November - Ian Morton from the SS Great Britain

Ian's talk tells the remarkable story of the ship's journey from an original idea of a "seamless steam powered journey from London to New York" through the ship's design, construction, led by Isambard Kingdom Brunel and the different phases of her working life. It also describes her remarkable salvage, return to Bristol in 1970, and finally restoration and preservation.

3rd December - Annual Christmas singalong and festivities!

Jane Morrison

I'm not a complete idiot. Some parts are
just missing!



A Reminder of The Three Principles of u3a

The Third Age Principle

- a) Membership of a U3A is open to all in their third age, which is defined not by a particular age but by a period in life in which full time employment has ceased.
- b) Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a U3A.
- c) Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a U3A can do so.

The Self-help Learning Principle

- a) Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire; by the members, for the members.
- b) No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.
- c) There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; they are all U3A members.

The Mutual Aid Principle

- a) Each U3A is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of The Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the U3A Movement.
- b) No payments are made to members for services rendered to any U3A.
- c) Each U3A is self-funded with membership subscriptions and costs kept as low as possible.
- d) Outside financial assistance should only be sought if it does not imperil the integrity of the U3A movement



SHEPTON MALLET u3a TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

All members **must**:

- Abide by the principles of the U3A movement.
- Act in the best interests of the U3A.
- Not behave in such a way as to bring the U3A into disrepute.
- Abide by the terms and conditions of the constitution of the U3A, and of the branch which they are joining.
- Treat fellow members with respect and courtesy.
- Comply with and support the decisions of the elected committee.
- Advise the Membership Secretary of any changes to their personal details.

"To be yourself in a world that's constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment." - Ralph Waldo Emerson



SHEPTON MALLET u3a MONTHLY ACTIVITIES TABLE 2026

	1 st Week	2 nd Week	3 rd Week	4 th Week
Mon	<u>Walking</u> - 10am – 1pm approx. Various locations Jon & Mary Boston	<u>Art</u> - 2 - 4pm Doulting Village Hall. Graham Cooper	<u>Walking</u> - 10am – 1pm approx. Various locations Jon & Mary Boston <u>Woolcraft</u> – 2pm - Coordinator's Home. Pam Mitchell	<u>Art</u> - 2 - 4pm Doulting Village Hall. Graham Cooper <u>Writing For Fun</u> 10.30 am Una McKillen home
Tues	<u>Bridge</u> - 2-4:30pm Doulting village hall Ian Jarmaine Linda Dytham <u>Book Group</u> 10.30am - The Shrubbery Janis Thomson <u>Photography</u> 2pm—Binegar Me- morial Hall or Zoom. John Law <u>Creations</u> 2pm - Craft projects Tina King's house	<u>Bridge</u> - 2-4:30pm Doulting village hall Ian Jarmaine Linda Dytham <u>Needlecraft</u> - 2pm Liz Weeks' home <u>Collectables</u> 10.30 am The Shrubbery Liz Nash	<u>Bridge</u> - 2-4:30pm Doulting village hall Ian Jarmaine Linda Dytham <u>Creations</u> 2pm Tina's House	<u>Bridge</u> - 2-4:30pm Doulting village hall Ian Jarmaine Linda Dytham <u>Needlecraft</u> - 2pm Liz Weeks' home
Wed	<u>Short Tennis</u> 3.30 – 4.30 pm Wells Leisure Centre Eric Wehrfritz	<u>Short Tennis</u> 3.30 – 4.30 pm Wells Leisure Centre Eric Wehrfritz <u>Play-reading</u> 10-12 am Janet Sher- win's home	<u>Short Tennis</u> 3.30 – 4.30 pm Wells Leisure Centre Eric Wehrfritz	<u>Short Tennis</u> 3.30 – 4.30 pm Wells Leisure Centre Eric Wehrfritz
Thur	<u>Coffee/Speaker</u> <u>Meeting</u> - 10 till 12 Salvation Army Hall Jane Morrison <u>En Francais</u> 2pm Jane Burman's home	<u>Coffee at</u> <u>Dobbies</u> 10.30 am	<u>Coffee at</u> <u>Dobbies</u> 10.30 am <u>Shorter Walks</u> – Various Jenny Wehrfritz <u>Strollers</u> – Various. Josh Hartley <u>En Francais</u> 2pm Jane Burman's home	<u>Coffee at</u> <u>The Brasserie</u> 10.30 am
Fri	<u>Table Tennis</u> 2pm Binegar Memorial Hall Carole Mullender <u>Quiz Group</u> Barbie Bradbury	<u>Table Tennis</u> 2pm Binegar Memorial Hall Carole Mullender	<u>Table Tennis</u> as before 2pm Carole Mullender <u>Munch Club</u> - Various Sue Dickerson	<u>Table Tennis</u> as before 2pm Carole Mullender <u>Singing for Pleas- ure</u> 10.30-12.00 Salvation Army Hall Tina King

Additional Groups/Events with variable timings/locations:-

<u>Railway Group</u> -	Paul Roberts	- various meetings and outings
<u>It's All In The Genes</u> -	Jane Morrison	- ancestry for all
<u>Skittles</u> -	Jane Morrison	- food and fun - look out for an email invitation
<u>Solos Group</u> -	Janet Murray	- events for those on their own.

All groups & activities are organised & run by Shepton Mallet u3a members.
Please see our website for details. www.sheptonmalletu3a.org.uk

u3a

learn, laugh, live



Shepton Mallet u3a gives you
the chance to make new friends,
develop your interests and enjoy yourself.

**No longer working full-time?
Now is the time to make
the most of life!**

**Find out more at
sheptonmalletu3a.org.uk**

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Insurance Reminder

Members of Shepton Mallet u3a are reminded that the Trust arranges Third Party Liability and Product Liability Insurance on behalf of the affiliated u3as. The cost of this is included in the annual subscription fee that SMu3a pays to the Trust. It should be noted that there is no personal accident insurance included in this arrangement. Members of SMu3a join in activities at their own risk and, should they feel they wish to be covered for personal accidents or personal property, it is necessary for them to make their own private arrangements.