

WELCOME EVERYONE

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and also enjoyed the New Year festivities.

With the start of Sidmouth u3a in 2025, I echo Janet's plea in her message for her urgent replacement as your u3a could fold completely. Without a Chair we cannot continue. No previous experience is necessary as Janet and the committee will give as much support as may be wanted for as long as it is needed. A new focus, a new project for someone, and whoever you are, you will be very welcomed.

A reminder that any articles for the newsletter must be received by 23rd of each month.

Group news should be sent via the Group Coordinators in plenty of time:

A-L groups to Angie at groupsal@sidmouthu3a.org and M-Z groups to Amanda at groupsmz@sidmouthu3a.org

Thank You and Kind Regards. Francetta Bridle - newslettereditor@sidmouthu3a.org

Chairman's Message

This is my penultimate Chairman's Message for the newsletter as I'm due to stand down at the AGM in March this year. At that time someone else should be taking over as Chairman. However, NO ONE has come forward as Vice Chair while they have plenty of time to get to know how everything works, even though I've been talking about this for months now.

We are now in the situation that we still need a new Chair but now there is much less time. Sidmouth u3a cannot run without a Chair. To have to close the organisation after all we've done will be heart-breaking, not only for me but for so many members who love being part of the whole thing.

Many people help in lots of ways, and the help, whatever it is, is appreciated. But someone must take over the lead! Why will no-one step forward? Contact me, not saying why you can't do it, I've had lots of those, but offering to take over. Best Wishes. Janet. chairman@sidmouthu3a.org

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Open Meeting - 11 February 2025: An Armchair London Walk - Neil Morley.

Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30-3.30pm. Refreshments served until 2pm.

Annual General Meeting - 11 March 2025

The Annual General Meeting of Sidmouth u3a will take place at 2pm, which will include various reports and the election of members to vacant Committee positions.

To be followed by this month's talk by Graham Short: "My life as a micro artist". For 35 years, Graham was the Royal Engraver and is the world's smallest micro hand engraver. From the delicate curves of a gold pin to the sharp edge of a razor blade, Graham has engraved some of the most extraordinary pieces of art imaginable. Using only the finest hand-crafted tools, he brings each piece to life - a testament to the power of human creativity and the beauty that can be found in the smallest details.

SOCIAL EVENTS

BSO Last Night of the Christmas Proms

On Thursday 19th December the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra provided us with a musical performance to celebrate Christmas in a slightly unexpected manner. Joe Stilgo, the jazz singer who played at Sidmouth's first jazz concert just after Lockdown ended, compèred the evening and sang a medley of his usual Christmas jazz tunes. The BSO in the second half provided a more classic style of classical music.

The coach (Stamps) and the pre-concert meal were both good and everything worked to plan.

Many thanks to all who attended and joined in the celebration.

Events are now being planned for 2025

If you would like to join the social committee please contact Jackie on social.jackie@sidmouthu3a.org

18 February: Evening Social. A Drink & Chat

7-9pm, 3rd Tuesday of the month.

We meet at different venues each month, and the February meeting will be at the Blue Ball Inn on 18th February. Suggestions for March welcomed.

All are welcome and it would be great if you could email confirming attendance please. If you'd like to be added to the group mailing list, please contact me at secretary@sidmouthu3a.org

4 March: Free Event - Energy From Waste Centre, Marsh Barton, Exeter

The Energy from the Waste Centre operates under a partnership with Devon County Council and safely diverts about 60,000 tonnes of non-recyclable waste away from landfill from households within Exeter.

There is no cost for this trip, which includes Tea/Coffee and a Health & Safety briefing upon arrival. There is a strict criteria for attendance and members need to arrange their own transport. There is free car parking on site.

This event is now fully booked but to go on the waiting list contact: social.jackie@sidmouthu3a.org.

10 April: Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Orchestral Pictures: Debussy, Berlioz, Mussorgsky at Exeter University Great Hall, Exeter

Works include Mussorgsky's 'Pictures in an Exhibition' and Debussy's 'Prelude a l'apres midi d'un faune'. The BSO description of the works: Debussy's seductive painting of a languid, sun-drenched Sicilian afternoon. Mussorgsky's musical wanders through a fictitious gallery of works. Ravel's genius for scoring. Picturing outdoor scenes drawn from the most vivid experiences of Berlioz' Italian stay.

Prices include coach to/from Exeter, pre-concert meal and tickets (various options):

Central Balcony: £56 | Side Balcony: £43 | Main Hall: £43 | Rear Stalls: £38

Enquiries to: social.jackie@sidmouthu3a.org

11 April: National Trust Greenway

Discover the holiday home of Agatha Christie and her family. Find out more about the favourite rooms used by the family and the treasures they collected, Agatha's personal collection of books in the Library and first edition novels. The price of the trip includes coach travel and entry to Greenway, and there is an optional talk.

National Trust Members: £17 | Non-National Trust Members: £34 | Optional garden talk: £2

This event is now fully booked but to go on the waiting list contact: social.veronica@sidmouthu3a.org

9 May: National Trust Tyntesfield & Cadbury Shopping Village

National Trust Tyntesfield is an ornate Victorian Gothic Revival house with extensive garden and parkland. A Gothic Revival masterpiece, richly decorated and furnished with a collection of over 72,000 objects, the house is surrounded by 540 acres of historic land.

Cadbury Garden Centre & Shopping Village is an expansive store with a wide range of products. The shopping village has multiple concessions, such as Lakeland, Cotton Traders, Jollyes Pet store and Maidenhead Aquatics.

Prices to be announced. **Preliminary enquiries to:** social.jackie@sidmouthu3a.org

18-23 May: Gardens of Ireland

6 days/5 nights - from £1292 per person (based on a minimum 26 members).

A single supplement will apply.

For full details download the [Leaflet & Booking Form](#)

Free Online Courses

u3a National Learning offers on-line courses on many varied subjects.

Please see the link for details: u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events

GROUPS NEWS

Our groups are going strong, with two new groups started in January and another with vacancies opening up. Please contact the group leaders directly to find out more details.

The full groups list (with group leaders' details) can be accessed here tinyurl.com/ytjpzu4p or details of all groups, with group leader contact details, are on the website: sidmouth.u3asite.uk/groups

New Group: Exotic Flavours

1st Tuesday (starting April with a limit of 10). Each month will have a theme and each member of the group will prepare some food from that country or region to share at lunch with the rest of the group. Each member of the group will take turns to host.

For more information contact [Janet Bailey](mailto:Janet.Bailey@sidmouth.u3asite.uk)

New Group: Hand and Foot

Hand and Foot is a variation on the game of Canasta. Is Hand and Foot harder than Canasta? No, but it is different! Open to Canasta players and newcomers. However, there is currently a waiting list.

Please contact Hilary Parker to go on the waiting list: hilpar100@gmail.com

New Group: Short Tennis

This is an indoor sport, played on a badminton court with short tennis racquets and foam balls.

If you're interested, please contact Sharon Young on young5727@gmail.com

New Group: Ukuleles

Ukuleles are very cheap to buy, very portable and lots of fun. You don't need to be able to read music as long as you can count!

If you're interested, please contact Liz sidu3aukes@gmail.com

Music Appreciation

This is one of our longest-running groups and meets at the URC Hall in Primley Rd on the 4th Thursday to listen to and discuss a programme of recorded music. Contact Amanda at groupsmz@sidmouthu3a.org

Yoga Groups now have vacancies

Seated Yoga (1st Friday of the month)

There are many yoga movements that can be practiced on chairs - especially beneficial for those of us with knee or hip problems. I always include relaxation and meditation with some readings, which helps us to understand and experience yoga on a deeper level, physically, mentally and emotionally. This also helps us to meet the daily challenges of our lives with a calmer, peaceful and more positive frame of mind.

Mat Yoga Session (3rd Friday of the month)

In this class we practice breathing, relaxation and meditation techniques as well as postures so that we can take time out from our busy lives to explore our bodies, mind, emotions and soul. We develop more flexibility and suppleness physically but also a calmer, peaceful and positive state of mind so that the benefits of yoga can be taken away from our yoga mat, back into our lives.

Both classes are held at Stowford community centre 11.30-12.30.

Please feel free to contact Helen Goodman-Payne for more information on goodmanpaynehelen@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS 2025-2026

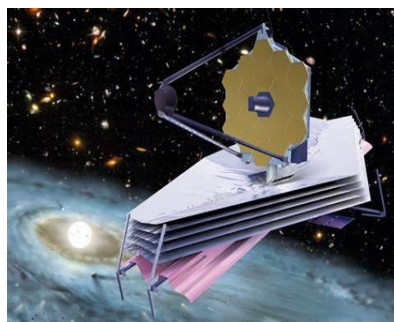
You should all have received a membership renewal email or letter. If not, contact the Membership Secretary on membershipu3asidmouth@outlook.com

If you are only able to pay by cheque, as an alternative to posting it you can give it to the Membership Secretary at the next Open Meeting on 11 February at Stowford.

We can also accept payment by contactless 'Tap and Pay' credit or debit cards.

The James Webb Space Telescope

In a departure from my usual tech tips stuff, I thought I'd pop into Astronomy for a change. This is about - [The James Webb Space Telescope](#) and the impossible things it has found.



I've got an idea, said a NASA scientist called Alan Dressler, with his 18 strong team: Let's pop a very large telescope out in space, park it a million miles from the earth, see how far back we can look.

Launched a few years ago by NASA, Canadian and European space agencies, it automatically unfurled itself in hundreds of precision operations. It's now stuck in a static position beyond the earth (Lagrange Point), looking away from the sun. This little beauty follows us round our star, pointing out into space and looking for other bits and pieces that emerged three hundred million years after the Big Bang, when the show had just got going and things started to light up.

Here's what it absolutely could not possibly find out there, just as the lights were coming on: Large mature galaxies of trillions of stars that take hundreds of millions of years to get to that size. Ginormous black holes, billions of times the size of our sun, inside ultra bright balls (called quasars), in parts of space where there simply isn't the material to create one and in any case, there hasn't been time to do it. The universe expands at different rates to what has been measured, obtaining different numbers depending on which gold standard method is used. Galaxies with swirling arms, like our Milky Way, because there hasn't been enough time for them to form. And yet, find them it did. You've just got to be careful what you wish for when launching these incredible instruments out there.

The sound of fingernails scraping across heads in NASA, CSA and ESA is deafening. Astrophysicists wander round muttering its impossible and technicians are frantically checking perfectly working instruments. That might be a bit of an exaggeration!

One thing is clear though, this is turning a lot of previously understood principles on their heads and some very excited and clever people are having to re-think established science to work out what on earth, or rather, what off earth, is going on, so watch this space!

Erratum: December Newsletter

Unfortunately, owing to the wonders of technology, in December's newsletter the verses of 'In Flanders Fields' became jumbled. Thank you Chris for pointing this out. To read the correct version go to:

britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/about-remembrance/in-flanders-field

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