

Welcome to our new Chairman

We now have a new Chairman voted in at the March AGM, so a warm welcome to Gail Richmond from the Sidmouth u3a committee members and we look forward to working with her for the next three years. We also welcome our new Treasurer, Lesley Tuck.

However, other roles that are needed are Vice-Chair and joint Groups Coordinator, working with Angie to help and assist our Group Leaders. It looks as though we may have a candidate for Front of House but there is still a very important role that needs to be filled which is Speaker Finder, working to find speakers for our monthly meetings from 2026 onwards, as we are fully booked for the remainder of 2025.

Please come forward to help run our u3a smoothly. Help and assistance is always on hand.

A big thank you must be said to Janet Bailey for her commitment to the organisation and who has led us so competently for the past 4 years.

Newsletter Articles

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 groupsmz@sidmouthu3a.org

Thank You and Kind Regards.

Francetta Bridle - newslettereditor@sidmouthu3a.org

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Hello and here I am, your new Chairman

I really didn't expect to be holding this post, but I couldn't bear to see such a thriving u3a, as is Sidmouth, closing. Apparently 20 u3as closed over Covid.

I am passionate about the u3a; it is a marvellous institution, especially for those on their own or who have just moved to the area and know very few people. It's also an opportunity to learn new skills and hone in on old ones. So, if you can think of a topic that is not currently covered and would like to start up a new group, do! There will be plenty of support for you.

Finally, I am reiterating Janet's plea for a few more committee members, especially a Speaker Finder; my husband and I have both done this job and it is really fun and interesting. I live in hope that someone considering this, will finally come forward.

We also have a candidate for Front of House who will be voted on by the committee. So that leaves the Vice Chairman.....any offers? I am very easy to work with!

Until next month.....enjoy the spring sunshine!

Gail Richmond - chairman@sidmouthu3a.org

REMINDER FOR ANY MEMBERS WHO HAVE NOT YET RENEWED THEIR MEMBERSHIP

All membership renewals were due for payment during February.

Members who have not renewed are now lapsed and are unable to participate in any group or social activities. Membership can be reinstated by payment of the outstanding renewal fee.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Open Meeting - April 8th 2025: Alan Jenkins - “The Royal Visit That Went Wrong”

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

Open Meeting - May 13th 2025: James Pellow - “ A Lifetime on the Titanic”.

James is an actor who has played at the Sidmouth Manor Pavilion for 20 Summer Seasons. Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30-3.30pm. Refreshments served until 2pm.

SOCIAL EVENTS

More events are now being planned for 2025

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

Evening Social - A Drink & Chat at The Blue Ball, Sidford

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

For the next few months by popular request and for the April meeting we will be at the Blue Ball, Sidford. 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

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' BSO describes 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.marian@sidmouthu3a.org

11 April: National Trust Greenway

Discover the holiday home of Agatha Christie and her family.

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 trip is now fully booked. If you wish to be put on the cancellation waiting list, contact:

social.veronica@sidmouthu3a.org

7 May: Croquet Taster Session

u3a members are invited to a taster session at The Croquet Club, The Fortfield, Sidmouth on Wednesday 7 May at 2pm.

For more details download the [Croquet Taster Session flyer](#) or go to [Events on the website](#)

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.

National Trust Members: £25 | Non-National Trust Members: £44.

Enquiries to: social.jackie@sidmouthu3a.org

18-23 May: Gardens of Ireland

6 days/5 nights - from £1292 per person. A single supplement will apply.

Flying from Exeter to Dublin with 3 nights in Dublin before transferring to Cork for 2 nights there before flying back to Bristol, then coach travel back to Sidmouth.

Visiting the National Botanic Garden, Powerscourt, Hunting Brook, Jameson's Whiskey Distillery, Irish National Stud Japanese Garden, Bantry House and Gardens, Illnacullin, Blarney Castle and Gardens. There are optional tours to the Whitney Experience and to Murphy's Brewery in Cork.

For full details the leaflet and booking form will be available at the monthly meeting.

Or download the [Leaflet & Booking Form](#) or go to the website sidmouth.u3a.site.uk

30 June: Taiko Drumming in Sidmouth

A Taiko Drumming one off session is on Monday June 30th at Primley Hall between 2 and 4 pm (14.00 - 16.00) Cost £20. The afternoon will include a talk on Taiko drumming and then a lesson where you will have your own drum and you will learn to drum yourself.

Taiko drumming is a Japanese art form involving playing wooden, barrel-shaped drums often in a dynamic and energetic ensemble, with roots in religious rituals, military signaling, and festivals.

Here is a more detailed look:

Origins and Purpose

Taiko drumming has ancient roots in Japan, used for various purposes including communication, religious ceremonies, festivals, and military signalling.

Modern Taiko

Modern taiko drumming is a high-energy performance art form that combines music, dance, martial arts, and athletics.

Performance Elements

Taiko performances often include lively shouts ("kakegoe"), choreographed movements, and an immersive experience.

Cultural Significance

Taiko drumming is deeply rooted in Japanese culture, with drums used in temples, festivals, and as a means of communication and entertainment.

For more information and questions contact Jackie Cox 07788275463.

6-10 October: An invitation from Honiton u3a

5 day, 4 night trip based in Bournemouth from 6th - 10th October staying at the Marriott Highcliffe Hotel on half board. £577.

We will meet at a central point in Sidmouth as well as a Honiton pickup. Visiting Exbury Gardens, and Highcliffe Castle. With a Poole Harbour boat trip and a steam train ride in Swanage. There is an optional visit to National Trust, Compton Acres but is not included in the price.

I should point out that single rooms are not available.

If you would like to know more please feel free to ring me on **07419 190760**. Regards Marilyn

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. 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 full details of all groups, with group leader contact details, can be found on our website: sidmouth.u3asite.uk/groups

Exploring Art Group

The picture now displayed on Sidmouth School of Art's Wallspace billboard in the Ham car park was created by The Million Flowers Community Art Project, to celebrate the beauty and variety of flowers in Sidmouth. 401 people aged from 4 to 85 contributed their paintings, and the finished artwork contains over 500 flowers, leaves, butterflies and insects.

The project was initiated by artist Maureen Hawkrige and the Exploring Art group of Sidmouth u3a, who led the Our Town community art project in 2022/2023. Maureen's flower mural idea was inspired by the vision of local benefactor Keith Owen, with one of his suggestions being to fill Sidmouth with flowers. The project was financed by an award from the Keith Owen Fund.

The Exploring Art group made paintings of flowers to inspire the other participants, and ran flower painting workshops throughout the summer of 2024 which were attended by u3a members and other local people. The u3a group Painting for Pleasure also contributed flowers.

Workshops in local schools were facilitated by Sidmouth School of Art and run by Exploring Art volunteers. Maureen used Photoshop to digitally collage all the flowers into a finished piece of art. The poster is on display until April 8th, so please go and take a look if you have not already seen it. A photo is attached below. Thanks Maureen Hawkrige. Exploring Art Group.



New Group: Exotic Flavours

1st Tuesday (starting in May 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. The first month is Caribbean and later in the year will be Thai, Japanese, Brazilian, Mexican and many more. Each member of the group will take turns to host.

For more information contact [Janet Bailey](mailto:Janet.Bailey@sidmouth.u3a.org.uk)

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



It's been eighteen months since my column on Artificial Intelligence. This is an update then, to keep you informed about what's out there and how you can use, or fear it. In January, I presented on AI at the Sidmouth Forum, having been carefully keeping it up to date. By the following morning, it was out of date again. The downside: AI is being used for lethal autonomous weapons on the battlefield as we speak. Both sides in Ukraine are getting clever – a self-thinking drone can't have its communication channel with the operator blocked or hacked. Because there isn't one. Big advantage! And they are operating in swarms, using AI, just as I predicted.

The upsides: Everyone should be using AI to find things out, plan trips, write letters and anything else you can think of. We have several "Chatbots" to choose from now, and they're all free. Ever since the Chinese slammed the markets with free ultra-powerful AI tools in January (DeepSeek), thereby costing the American AI industry a trillion dollars overnight! None of us chuckled.

Here are the most popular offerings for your phone, pad or laptop. My favourite (used daily) – DeepSeek (China). Download the app to phones, it works on Android and iPhone/iPad. It actually tells you how it's reasoning as it works for you. It is unbelievably good; better than ChatGPT which OpenAI were charging £175 a month for, and better (except for images) than either CoPilot or Gemini.

Le Chat (France) – Fast and accurate – my second favourite.

Microsoft Copilot (USA) – Creates images and text, once again an app.

ChatGPT (USA) – now a free app, thanks to China!

Perplexity (USA) – Yet another app, but no images.

Google Gemini (USA) – Another app, also creates images and text.

Also, there is the mighty Qwen from Alibaba (China), here's the link <https://chat.qwenlm.ai>

JanusPRO (China) - for images, videos, diagrams and text – an all singing all dancing AI set of tools. Just use this link. It is free. <https://huggingface.co/spaces/deepseek-ai/Janus-1.3B>

Worrying about your personal data? I know how everyone is frightened of bad people getting our data, and for some reason, the Chinese seem to be the most feared.

So, to put it in perspective, here is a selection of organisations that we have trusted with our personal information, and who, through security lapses, have had it stolen: Dixons Carphone (now Currys), British Airways, EasyJet, Tesco Bank, TalkTalk, Morrisons, AstraZeneca, NHS (Multiple breaches) and the most serious of all, Equifax, the largest international Credit Reference Agency which has ALL our personal and financial information. 146 million records were stolen.

So actually, a lot of our data is already out there, which is why we get so many scam emails and texts appearing from time to time, or phone calls from foreign call centres – and why we use anti-virus packages. Am I worried about China having my name and phone number? Not in the slightest! Do I trust the Americans with it? Er, let me come back to you on that one

CONTACT DETAILS

Contact details for the main committee and social committee can be found on our website: sidmouth.u3asite.uk/contact