

**Hello Everyone -**

**Another plea for an Events Manager** to organise the set up in Stowford Hall for the open meetings. There are many willing helpers for the chairs and tables but it just takes a bit of directing. Please let Gail know if you will take on this role.

**IMPORTANT - Please note that if you have a question for a member of the committee at the AGM, that you must present this in writing to Gail prior to March 10th. Thank you.**

At the end of each meeting, could everyone who is able, please stack their chair in eights at the side of the hall. This would help immensely. Thank you.

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

Group news items for the newsletter should be sent via the Group Coordinators in plenty of time.

Thank You and Kind Regards.

Francetta Bridle - [newslettereditor@sidmouthu3a.org](mailto:newslettereditor@sidmouthu3a.org)

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Hello!

Well here I am, almost at the end of my first year as chairman, with all its ups and downs.

What I would really like to know is what you members think of Sidmouth u3a. It is our u3a, your u3a and as such, you are entitled to voice your opinion, hopefully favourably. Do we meet the criteria of what a u3a is for? Do you find it meets your needs.....socially, intellectually....and in an entertaining way?

As you know, I am a passionate believer in the organisation, especially for those who are on their own or those who have just moved to the area and know very few people. I hope we have a good mix of interest groups and varied talks....the last two speakers certainly packed you in!

If you think of anything that we are missing, be it a new group or a talk on a specific subject, please let anyone on the committee know.

Until next month.....

Gail Richmond - [chairman@sidmouthu3a.org](mailto:chairman@sidmouthu3a.org)

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

**Open Meeting - March 10th 2026: AGM. Followed by Tony Warren - Internet Safety. Digital Paranoia - Spot and Defeat Online Threats (And it's meant to be humorous).** Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30-3.30pm. Refreshments served until 2pm

**Open Meeting - 14th April 2026: Carol Harper - Under Water Photography, Sidmouth Bay.** Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30-3.30pm. Refreshments served until 2pm

## SOCIAL EVENTS

If you would like to join the social committee please contact Jackie on [social.jackie@sidmouthu3a.org](mailto:social.jackie@sidmouthu3a.org)

**Evening Social - A Drink & Chat at The Blue Ball, Sidford.** 7-9pm, 3rd Tuesday of the month. Any queries contact [secretary@sidmouthu3a.org](mailto:secretary@sidmouthu3a.org)

## GROUPS NEWS

### IMPORTANT.

Please email the **relevant** Group Leader for any of the groups you are interested in and not via the Coordinators.

The full groups list (with group leaders' details) can be accessed here - at [tinyurl.com/ytjpzu4p](https://tinyurl.com/ytjpzu4p) or full details of all groups, with group leader contact details, can be found on our website: [sidmouth.u3asite.uk/groups](https://sidmouth.u3asite.uk/groups)

**Wanted:** A new group leader is needed for the Singles Weekend Lunch Group, if you would like to volunteer, please contact Marilyn Burton on [groupsmz@sidmouthu3a.org](mailto:groupsmz@sidmouthu3a.org) or talk to me at the monthly meeting.

**Bridge** - Would you like to learn how to play bridge? A new group is being formed on a Wednesday afternoon. Please contact - John Howton [howtonj37@gmail.com](mailto:howtonj37@gmail.com)

### **New Group - Knit and Natter/Craft and Chat**

Location in Sidmouth on the 1st Monday afternoon of the month. Bring your own work that can be done without a table. Tea/coffee/cake provided for £1.00. A taught craft session will be offered every 3 months.

Please contact Alison Daniel. [alisondaniel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:alisondaniel@hotmail.co.uk)

**Music Appreciation** - The Music Appreciation group is thriving, and has recently enjoyed musical presentations on British Choral Music, Latin-American Music, and Sights and Sounds (an insider's look at what...

musicians see on the page, and how this affects their performances). 4th Thurs, 2-4pm in Primley Hall - all welcome.

To join contact - Amanda Haste. [amandahste68@gmail.com](mailto:amandahste68@gmail.com)

**Short Tennis** - The short tennis group has a couple of vacancies. We play in Sidford Social Hall on Thursdays 2pm to 3pm. It is played on a badminton court with short racquets and a soft ball. Members contribute toward the cost of the hall on a term basis. Come along to a **Free taster session**.

Thanks, Sharon Young - [syoung5727@gmail.com](mailto:syoung5727@gmail.com)

**Yoga and Seated Yoga** has discontinued.

**A Good Read** - This group now has a vacancy. We meet on the afternoon of the 3rd Thursday of the month. Please contact Eileen Conn - [eileenconn1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:eileenconn1@yahoo.co.uk)

**Exploring Art Group** - For anyone interested in looking at actual art made by local artists and not AI generated images, I recommend you go down to the Ham and the Sensory Garden, where there is an art exhibition called "Marine and Green - Together be Seen" which includes the work of members of our very own Exploring Art Group. Here are a few of our art works on display. Maureen Hawkridge. Exploring Art Group leader [mshandmeh@gmail.com](mailto:mshandmeh@gmail.com)



## Events



### Visit to Coleton Fishacre April 24th 2026.

We are planning a coach visit to the NT Coleton Fishacre property in South Devon in April. This house is a stunning Arts and Crafts style property built in the 1920's for the D'Oyly Carte family as their country home. It boasts several outstanding entertaining rooms as well as bedrooms and downstairs servants' quarters.

The gardens are RHS accredited and you can wander down through the valley to a viewpoint with

sea views, though the climb back up is quite hard work.

There is a good café where you can buy coffee and lunch, or take a picnic. We will be leaving Sidmouth about 10am and aim to start back at 3pm.

The price for National Trust members will be £25 and for non-members £44. Booking can be taken at the March meeting at Stowford or via the events page on the website. Veronica Swinburn. [social.veronica@sidmouthu3a.org](mailto:social.veronica@sidmouthu3a.org)

**Kents Cavern and House of Marbles.** May 19th 2026. Full day trip. Sign up at the March Stowford meeting. Cost £30.00

**Royal Fleet Air Arm Museum and NT Lytes Cary.** June 26th 2026. Full Day Trip. National Trust Members £36. Non National Trust Members. £50.00. Sign up at March Stowford meeting

## SPECIAL INTEREST

Gail and myself presented Norma Pearce on her retirement from Sidmouth



u3a, with a certificate and a box of chocolates to thank her for her long standing service and especially for the many years of commitment to several roles within Sidmouth u3a. Here is her reply.

Dear Gail, It was so nice to see you and Francetta yesterday, and I was delighted to be given the service award certificate you had devised, and, of course the superb box of chocolates! I never anticipated any recognition of the assorted roles I played in U3A, so it came as a great surprise and pleasure. Please pass on my appreciation both to the committee, and to the general membership.

Of course I was sorry to leave U3A, but I would welcome the opportunity to show my appreciation by passing on some of the good condition books that I showed you briefly. I imagine the interest in informative, interesting and especially free (!) books would be attractive to many of our members.

The spread of topics is vast! I need to find homes for as many as I can. I am mainly talking about non fiction, but there are an assortment of topics. Many defy classification, but there are certainly a number on architecture, history, (worldwide as well as British), Greece/Greek, science topics, language, art, poetry, world climate, geological/archaeological, and also there are writings about military battles and war events, etc and an assortment of biographies, mainly UK/ US, political. I also have a number of booklets on assorted local and wider places. Again, I thank you most warmly for all the benefits that U3A has brought to me.

I hope not to lose touch with you and others, as time goes on.

You are welcome to call me on **01395 514906** to arrange a time to come along and choose your free books.

**u3a National Learning** offers on-line courses on many varied subjects. Please see the link for details: [u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events](https://u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events)

## TECH CORNER WITH TONY WARREN

### Hearing Aids - Tiny Tech, Huge Impact: The Wizards in My Ears

If you see me nodding enthusiastically in the middle of a Sidmouth coffee shop, I might be following your every word—or I might be streaming Mozart directly into my skull. Such is the magic of the modern hearing aid.

We often think of these as "amplifiers," but both my old rechargeable Phonaks and my new NHS ones are actually high-performance supercomputers that happen to live in my ear canals.

#### The Engine Under the Hood

Inside these tiny beige crescents is a feat of engineering that would make NASA jealous. We are talking about millions of transistors etched onto silicon chips. To put that in perspective, while they aren't quite as fast as the latest iPhone, they process sound at a specialised rate - performing hundreds of millions of operations per second.

Unlike your laptop, which gets a bit breathless opening a large spreadsheet, these devices are:

- \* Analysing your environment 700 times a second.
- \* Identifying speech versus the clattering of U3A tea cups.
- \* Triangulating sound using "beamforming" microphones to figure out if a voice is coming from the person in front of you or a seagull behind you.

The Phonaks are powered by Lithium-ion batteries (the same tech in a Tesla, just... significantly smaller) and packed with Bluetooth Low Energy antennas. This allows them to "talk" to each other to create a 3D soundscape and my new NHS ones actually pair with my phone so I can take calls hands-free, looking like I'm talking to myself.

#### A New World of Sound

The construction process involves high-precision robotics and "nano coatings" to keep out moisture, which is impressive, but the real "tech spec" is how it feels. For thirty years, the world had the "mute" button halfway down. When I first had them, I stepped outside and heard the dawn chorus. I honestly thought someone had left a high-fidelity recording playing in the trees. It was the first time I'd heard a sparrow's "tweet" in decades without it being a muffled thump.

In the past, a crowded room was just a wall of noise that made me want to retreat into a book. Now, the "Automatic Operating System" inside the aids

identifies the frequencies of human speech and elevates them above the background hum. I can actually participate in a conversation without performing the "strategic nod and hope they didn't ask a question".

From hearing every instrument in an orchestra to—thankfully—no longer having my family shout at me, this tech is life-changing.

They might be micro-computers, but the joy they bring is anything but small. Just don't ask me to tech-support your laptop; I'm too busy listening to the birds.



Anthony Warren

## CONTACT DETAILS

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