NEWSLETTER
November 2026

u3a Sidmouth

Hello Everyone,

Firstly, Thank You to Jeanette Marsh who has stepped forward as a Group Coordinator, with Angie, to support our Group Leaders.

Your committee warmly welcomes her.

Could someone come forward to fill the vacancy of **Speaker Finder**? This is a very interesting role and not an onerous job, particularly as CaroleAnn filled the calendar to the end of next year, and as with all the positions there is always help at hand if needed.

Another very important role that needs filling is **Assistant Groups Treasurer**. To work alongside the Sidmouth u3a treasurer. A Groups Treasurer is required to manage a separate bank account, payments and receipts for groups who collect subscriptions through the Beacon system. Please step up to help Lesley who does a brilliant job. If you would like to find out more, just ask myself, or our Chairman Gail, as either of us would be happy to help you.

Please see below the information for booking the Christmas Party and thank you again to Neil Morley for this month's quiz - **See at the end.**

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.
Kind Regards. Francetta Bridle - newsletteredit@sidmouthu3a.org

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

And so to Hallowe'en



Does this pass you by, or do you live on a road where there are witches and ghosts knocking on your door for a "treat"?

The custom apparently blends pagan harvest festivals with Christian and modern secular traditions. There are now so many pumpkin competitions, whether it's by size or by fantastic carvings.

And then we have the hour going back.....which makes for a much longer and darker evening in the winter. I'm just glad I don't live in Scotland where the days are even shorter at this time of the year.

Maybe we should just be glad of the various seasons we have, with all their characteristics. So long as we have suitable clothing for our changing climate, we should be content.

Gail Richmond - chairman@sidmouthu3a.org

Is there anyone who is a **First Aider** amongst our membership and who comes to most of the meetings? Please can you make yourself known to Gail - chairman@sidmouthu3a.org

IMPORTANT DATE for your Diary - **Our Christmas Party.**



Tuesday 8th December 2026

🎄 **Sidmouth u3a Christmas Party – Booking Information**

We are looking forward to welcoming you to the Sidmouth u3a Christmas Party 2026. Booking instructions will be sent out at the end of the month by email with all details and booking conditions. Look out for this in your inbox.

As the number of places is limited, attendance is by confirmed booking only. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

There is no charge for the Christmas Party, but please only book a place if you intend to attend. If you find that you are unable to come, please let us know as soon as possible so that your place can be offered to another member. Once your booking has been confirmed, you will receive a booking number. This will also be your ticket number for the free Christmas Raffle. The ticket is only valid for you and you must be present to win

Please check in at the door when you arrive. Unfortunately, we cannot admit anyone who does not have a confirmed booking, as numbers are strictly limited.

There are vegetarian and gluten-free options but please note that the party food is bought-in and we cannot take responsibility for, or guarantee, the food served at the Christmas Party being completely free from allergens or that cross-contamination will not occur. Members with food allergies or other dietary requirements must decide for themselves whether the food provided is suitable for them.

Bookings will close once all available places have been filled or 30 November, whichever is sooner.

We hope you can join us for an enjoyable afternoon of Christmas celebration and good company.

Reservation Confirmation
You will receive an email confirming your booking, together with an e-ticket. You do not need to bring the ticket to the party as everyone will be checked in at the door against the booking list.

Cancellation
If for any reason after booking you find you are unable to attend, please let the organiser know as soon as possible so that those on the waiting list have the opportunity to attend.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Open Meeting - November 10th 2026: Devon Air Ambulance
An in-depth talk about this very important service in Devon, who now badly need funds due to the high cost of fuel for the helicopter and other running costs. Defibrillator instructions and much more.
Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30-3.30pm.
Refreshments served until 2pm

December 8th 2026: Members Christmas Party
Featuring **Mark Leveridge,** the very clever and fun Magician.
Stowford Rise Community Centre from 1.30-3.30pm. Confirmed bookings only. There will be party food & drinks. Plus a free raffle. And a magician.

Guest Speaker Disclaimer
Regretfully it appears to have become necessary to include this.
Sidmouth u3a does not vet or endorse the content of presentations given by guest speakers. The views, opinions and information expressed by individual speakers are their own and should not be taken as representing the views or position of Sidmouth u3a.

When presentations refer to historical events, attitudes or practices, some content may reflect the language, attitudes or conventions of the period being discussed. While appropriate in its historical context, such content may differ from contemporary views and standards and could, in some circumstances, be considered sensitive or offensive by today's standards.

If you feel you have cause for complaint, the procedures set out in the Complaints Procedure document on the Information page of the website should be strictly adhered to. Notice should also be taken of the Members Code of Conduct document. "Treat fellow members with respect and courtesy at all times."

SOCIAL EVENTS

Evening Social Invitation - A Drink & Chat at The Blue Ball, Sidford.
7-9pm, every 3rd Tuesday of the month. Any queries please contact 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. Thank You.
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

NEW GROUPS

Spanish for Holidays
Would you like to learn some Spanish for your holiday? No Spanish necessary, rusty Spanish speakers welcome! Not suitable for fluent speakers. Please contact Pauline Rayner paulinemrayner@gmail.com or 01395 568027

ESTABLISHED GROUPS

Cook and Share - now has a vacancy.
Please contact - Chris Gaine at christinegaine@gmail.com

Global Flavours - We are a small group of members who like to try out the food and drink of other countries. Each month we all make a dish or snack from the chosen country and bring them together at lunchtime. The group is very friendly and supportive, none are expert chefs, we just like to explore other culture's food. The next few countries will be Turkey, Portugal and Sri Lanka.
If interested, please contact Janet on jbailey194@yahoo.co.uk

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

Organic Gardening - now has vacancies.
Contact Chris Gaine at christinegaine@gmail.com

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Birdwatching Group at the Lower Otter Estuary



The Birdwatching Group's October visit to the Lower Otter Estuary was more in hope than expectation of seeing the elusive Yellow-browed Warbler, which breeds in taiga forests of Siberia. We did meet a man who had met a man who might have seen it but that was the closest we got. However it was a beautiful Autumn day and we managed to spot 25 different species of bird including: cormorant; curlew; grey wagtail; heron; lapwing; little grebe; meadow pipet; wren (photo); and some wonderful spoonbills.

Exploring Art Group

A colourful community artwork celebrating the creativity of Sidmouth residents is now permanently on display in the children's waiting area at Beacon Medical Centre, where it can be enjoyed by patients and visitors of all ages. In the picture with the mural are members of the Exploring Art group with Dr Hadfield and Kate Tobin from the Keith Owen Fund.



The Million Flowers project was initiated by artist Maureen Hawkridge and the Exploring Art group of Sidmouth u3a, who led the Our Town community art project in 2022/2023. The project was inspired by the vision of local benefactor Keith Owen, one of whose suggestions was to fill Sidmouth with flowers.

The Exploring Art Group created flower paintings to inspire others to take part, and ran flower-painting workshops throughout the summer of 2024, which were open to everyone. Workshops in local schools were facilitated by Sidmouth School of Art and led by Exploring Art volunteers. Further paintings were contributed by local art groups and individuals working at home.

In total, 401 people aged between four and 85 contributed paintings to the project. The finished artwork features more than 500 flowers, leaves, butterflies and insects, digitally brought together by Maureen using Photoshop to create one vibrant, collaborative piece.

In 2025, a poster of the Million Flowers artwork was displayed on the Wallspace billboard in the car park beside Sidmouth Swimming Pool.
Run by Sidmouth School of Art, Wallspace provides a public gallery for everyone to enjoy.

The project was kindly supported by the Sid Vale Association's Keith Owen Fund and Sidmouth School of Art, the visual arts charity whose mission is to make Sidmouth the Artwork town.

EVENTS

Please note that for all Events once booked there is no refund. If you do need to cancel, you will need to find a replacement, or we will do our very best to find someone to take your place.

Bath Christmas Market. - December 1st 2026. Cost £35

A full day trip leaving Sidmouth at 8.30, returning at approximately 18.00. Approximately 2/2.5 hrs travel time each way, so 4/5 hrs to spend in Bath.

The Market has 170 twinkling chalets spread across picturesque Bath's Georgian streets. Gifts, crafts and festive treats. Food and drink stalls, entertainment with choirs, carol singers and street performers.

This Christmas Market is award winning and regularly ranked among the UK and Europe's best Christmas Markets.

Join us on this exciting day which is limited to 24 owing to coach parking restrictions: so booking early is necessary. The cost is £35.

TECH CORNER WITH TONY WARREN

The Incredible Shrinking SIM Card



Hello everyone, and welcome back to the Corner. Have you ever noticed that as technology gets more advanced, the bits and pieces involved seem to vanish into thin air? We went from vinyl records to "streaming" music from the ether, and massive desktop computers to sleek glass slabs in our pockets.

Now, they are coming for that tiny, stubborn piece of plastic inside your mobile phone: the SIM card.

If you have bought a new smartphone recently, you might have heard a new buzzword floating around: eSIM. But what on earth is it, and do you actually need to care? Let's break it down minus the jargon.

What on Earth is an eSIM?

Cast your mind back to your first mobile phone. To connect it to a network like EE, Vodafone, or O2, you had to slide a little plastic card into a tray. That is your SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) card. It’s essentially your phone's digital passport; it tells the network who you are and what your phone number is.

Over the years, manufacturers kept shrinking these pieces of plastic. They went from the size of a credit card down to the tiny "Nano" SIMs we use today, which are so small they require the steady hands of a surgeon and a fair bit of luck not to drop into the sofa cushions.

Well, tech designers finally asked: Why are we making people fiddle with tiny bits of plastic at all?

Enter the eSIM. The "e" stands for embedded. Instead of a removable plastic card, an eSIM is a permanent, microscopic chip built directly into the phone’s circuitry during manufacturing.

Instead of inserting a physical card, your network provider simply "beams" your subscription details over the air. You download your phone plan onto the chip, usually just by scanning a QR code with your camera or clicking a link in an email.

What Are the Advantages?

You might be thinking, Tony, my plastic card works perfectly fine. Why change it? Fair point! But the eSIM does bring some handy benefits:

No more paperclips: To change a physical SIM, you usually have to hunt down a paperclip, poke it into a microscopic hole on your phone, and pray the tray pops out. With an eSIM, that frustration disappears.

Brilliant for travel: If you love a holiday abroad, say, a trip to Spain or a cruise you can buy a temporary local eSIM online before you even leave Devon. When you land, your phone automatically switches to the local network for cheap data, while keeping your regular British number active for emergencies.

Better security: If someone steals your phone, they can easily pop out a physical SIM card to stop you tracking it. They cannot do that with an eSIM locked inside.

How Much Does It Cost and Do I Need One?

Here is the best news: it is completely free. Your network won't charge you a penny extra to use an eSIM.

Do you need one right now? No. If your current phone works and you aren't travelling, stick with your plastic card. But change is coming. Many new phones are removing the plastic card slot entirely.

When your next upgrade comes, don't panic! The same old digital passport, it just finally lost the plastic weight.

Anthony Warren

THIS MONTH'S QUIZ

This 20 question quiz also has an added bonus question:
The first letters of each correct answer spell out what phrase?

QUESTIONS

1. The spitfire and which other British fighter plane is credited with helping to win the Battle of Britain in 1940?
2. Who was the first Western pop star to play in the old USSR in 1979?
3. What event took place on Saturday July 13th 1985?
4. Where did an attack take place on Dec 7th 1941 that played a significant part in the outcome of WWII?
5. What was the surname of the WPC shot outside the Libyan embassy in 1984?
6. What kind of creature lives in a HOLT?
7. Whose motto is 'Per Ardua Ad Astra'?
8. Brothers Gavin and Scott both played rugby union football for Scotland in the 90s, but what was their surname?
9. To which island was Napoleon exiled after his defeat and abdication in 1814?
10. What is Michael Schumacher's younger brother's first name who was also a Formula One racing driver?
11. Which Desert won the Cheltenham Gold Cup in 1989?
12. How many bits are in Byte?
13. What rank in the Royal Air Force lies between Flight Lieutenant and Wing Commander?
14. Who had a hit with 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' in the 1980s?
15. A hoglet is the young of which common garden animal in the UK?
16. The coastal resorts of Croatia are found on which sea?
17. The Calcutta Cup, between England and Scotland is played for in which sport? (Please be specific.)
18. Who wrote 'Principia Mathematica' published in 1687?
19. What is the surname of the longest serving British Prime Minister of the 20th Century?
20. What word can mean 'a sharp tug' or 'a slang term for a person from the USA?

Answers on next page

ANSWERS

1. **H**awker Hurricane
2. **E**lton John
3. **L**ive Aid
4. **P**earl Harbour
5. **F**letcher (Yvonne)
6. **O**tter
7. **R**AF
8. **H**astings
9. **E**lba
10. **R**alph
11. **O**rchid
12. **E**ight
13. **S**quadron Leader
14. **C**yndi Lauper
15. **H**edgehog
16. **A**driatic
17. **R**ugby Union
18. **I**saac Newton
19. **T**hatcher
20. **Y**ank

Bonus Answer: Help For Heroes Charity

CONTACT DETAILS

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