



Editor's Note



Welcome to the Summer issue of the Sturminster Newton u3a Newsletter.

We extend a warm welcome to all our new members and hope that they find the u3a experience enjoyable and fulfilling.

In this issue we have several reports from Groups which are packed with details of activities they are passionate about.

If you are interested in finding out more about a particular group, please contact the group leaders via the link on page 16.

You can also find out about recent meetings and discover what we have to look forward to in future events.

All the headings opposite ('In This Issue') are direct links to each page. Simply click on the page number to be directed to the page of choice.

I would like to say a sincere thank you to everyone who has submitted an item for this issue. If you wish to contribute to the Autumn issue, please send to:

[Newsletter](#)

Wishing you all a lovely summer,

Viv Jeffery

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Chair's Report

Hot! Hot! Hot! I'm writing this on the Friday of our heat wave. So, this is what our summers are going to be like from now on? I don't know about you, but I don't function too well when it's too hot – and humid! Thus, this report will be shorter than usual!

Current membership is 249 with 30 new members this year – obviously the £5 fee has been a factor. We shall be issuing the new membership cards via group leaders as soon as possible.

We have 22 groups, having lost one (Natural Bee Keeping) and gained Pickleball, which seems to be very popular! If you want to find out about any group, click here - [Groups](#). We do appreciate all our group leaders for their effort and the members who support them – thank you!

We thoroughly enjoyed Mary Smith's visit at our April bi-monthly, when she gave an excellent talk on 'A School Girl's War'. This was our AGM, when we adopted a new constitution. At our June meeting attendance was smaller than expected for the visit of Silverline Legal.

Click here - [Bi-Monthly Meetings](#) - to see what else is happening this year.

We now have 10 members in the committee, with Pippa Tanner and Ruth McCormick jointly taking on the Groups Coordinator role – many thanks! For all those of you who volunteer in whatever way we are very thankful - our u3a can only exist if we have enough volunteers to run it.

Finally, many thanks to those of you who have contributed to this newsletter, and particularly to Viv Jeffery who has, as usual, done a brilliant job editing it. We hope you enjoy reading this Summer Newsletter! Please do feel free to forward it to anyone who might be interested in our u3a.

Click here - [Newsletters](#) - to see all back copies.

Stay cool!

Andrew



Members' Coffee Mornings

Following the success of our first Members' Coffee Morning, we have arranged two more. These will take place on:

Saturday 25th July and Saturday 5th September

10am – 12 noon

Bow Room

Free tea/coffee and biscuits

This is a great chance to socialise with your u3a friends and make new friends from other groups.

We hope to see you there!

Group Leaders' Lunch

You may wonder what our group leaders do when they're not leading our many and diverse groups, and when no-one's watching!

Well, on 12th June, group leaders from u3a Sturminster Newton were invited to lunch as a thank you for their hard work and commitment on behalf of our community.

Many of our leaders attended and enjoyed a good, and noisy (only from chatter) lunch.

It was a good opportunity for an exchange of experiences and ideas, and for them to get to know other leaders and learn about their groups.

There are many and varied groups in our area, as our website shows, although we are always looking for ideas and suggestions for new groups

We'd like to thank our group leaders for all their efforts on our behalf and look forward to another year full of interesting and varied activities.



Ruth McCormick

Our Next Bi-Monthly Meeting



Thursday 15th October at 2.30pm
In the Exchange

Ashley Jones MBE

“The Dickin Medal”
(The highest award for animal bravery)



The PDSA Dickin Medal is the highest award an animal can receive while serving in the military. It is considered the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross and is awarded to animals which demonstrate exceptional acts of bravery or devotion to duty.

Ashley has many years' experience of working in the military, law enforcement and the charity sector.

Through storytelling, photographs and real-life accounts, he will tell of the achievements of many animals whose bravery has made enormous differences in time of war. We will learn of the extraordinary bond which exists between humans and animals in situations of extreme danger and challenge.

Entry Free for members
£2 for visitors
Refreshments afterwards!

Looking ahead! ... Thursday 18th December
In House Christmas Event

Could you be a new Group Leader?

Our u3a thrives because of the enthusiasm, skills, and generosity of its members.

Would any members be willing to help keep our activities vibrant and varied by running a new group?

You don't need to be an expert— just someone with an interest, a willingness to organise, and a friendly and welcoming nature.

Your enthusiasm could inspire members with a shared interest to learn new skills and make new friends. You will have the satisfaction of seeing your group members connect, learn, and grow.

If you have an interest and would like to consider starting a new group (perhaps with a team), please contact the groups co-ordinator: [Groups](#)

Our first group report comes from the newly formed Pickleball Group, which has proved very popular. Thank you, Allan for your hard work in organising and setting this up.

Pickleball Group Group Leader – Allan Taylor

On the 3rd June the u3a issued an invitation "Have a Ball with u3a Pickle" to all our members to explore the potential for starting a group. We had a very encouraging response and at our first session on Monday 15th June we fielded 9 players at the Sturfit leisure centre. The majority of the players were beginners, but everyone seemed to take to enjoy the game.

By the following Monday we were fielding fifteen players and despite the 30°C heat, it proved very successful thanks to two of our more experienced members, Alan and Nicola, volunteering as coaches.

Unfortunately, with only two courts available, we had to restrict the group to sixteen and are now investigating the availability of other courts to form a second group.

With 27 members having now registered an interest, we are pleasantly surprised at both the level and enthusiasm shown by members for Pickleball.

Allan Taylor

Book Group 2 Group leader – Roger Bradshaw

It has been an enjoyable few months discussing our choices of books monthly and admiring everyone's garden over a cup of tea and biscuits.

It has been great to welcome a new member this year, and we still have space for anyone that may be interested. Recent titles have included A Month in the Country, The Woodcutter and How to Stop Time.

Roger Bradshaw

Canasta Group

Group Leader – Audrey Groves

Everything is going along fine within the group, with everyone enjoying it. Plenty of concentration but also laughter. We all look forward to our cup of tea or coffee and biscuits. We start at 2pm and finish at 5pm. In the winter months it is 1pm - 4pm as most people do not like driving home in the dark. We play at Hinton St Mary Village Hall which has a good size car park. If you are interested to join, even if you haven't played for years, please get in touch with me.

CHANGING THE SUBJECT...

I had a lovely lunch today (Friday 12th June), along with other Group Leaders, at the Swan Inn in Sturminster Newton. Thank you, Andrew for instigating it and also Ruth and Phillipa for organising it.

Audrey Groves

History Group

Group Leader – David Dando

On Thursday July 9th, the History group will look at the story of coffee...

from Ethiopian legends when goats were hyperactive after eating berries from a bush, and birds were lively pecking the same berries, leading to monks finding that the berries in a drink kept them awake for long prayers.

It was widespread among Ottoman Turks and Islamic countries which frowned upon alcohol. Coffee shops were known as schools of wisdom.

In the 16th century the coffee houses became the "Penny Universities" regarded as more important than a person's home. They were the birth of a wide range of current establishments from the Stock Exchange to the British Museum.

There was a battle with tea and alcohol which not even the monarch could solve.

Coffee shops were thought by some to foster sedition.

Historical figures often depended upon coffee to give them stimulation.

In 1950s there was a further surge with the Espresso machine and Espresso Bongo.

The late 20th century saw a massive increase in coffee shops which are set to outnumber pubs by 2030. Asking for a coffee is something we rarely do unless at home.

David Dando

French Group

Group Leader – Janet Solomon

'Did you think the French Conversation Group wasn't for you because you really didn't know very much French. You might well be surprised. Below is a very brief list of everyday words borrowed from French.

Apostrophe	Avant-garde	Brunette	Chauffeur
Detour	Dossier	Gallery	Gastronomy
Liaison	Literature	Machine	Metro
Occasion	Restaurant	Rich	Sabotage
Technique	Television	Uniform	Valid

And we didn't think it necessary to list champagne!

A quick look at Wikipedia is astonishing. Who knew we Brits absorbed those pesky Norman invaders so well.'



The photo shows the French Group enjoying their first attempt at a French crossword.

Janet Solomon

Keep Fit Group

Group Leader - Barbara Burridge

Our keep fit class is increasingly popular. We now have 37 members on the register, but we will always welcome new recruits.

We do a mix of aerobic exercises, balance work, resistance exercise using bands and stretches. We listen to some great music and leave the class with a smile on our faces, what's not to love? But u3a is not just about being active or trying a new interest or hobby, it is about meeting new people and socialising.

Here are some of the members enjoying a catch up after the class.



Please note that there will not be any keep fit classes during the month of August. Our numbers usually drop during this month as many of us help with grandchildren, and our friends and family remember what a lovely place we live in and come to visit.

We will be back on Thursday 3rd September.

Barbara & Annie

I joined u3a keep fit class last week, (June 4th) and found it so enjoyable.
I was made to feel very welcome by everyone who were very nice and friendly.
Barbara and Annie explained the session very well, which made it so easy to follow
I felt very energised after the class and will so look forward to every Thursday.

Sheila Berry

Line Dancing Group

Group leaders – Barbara Burrridge and Jane Wade

Our demonstration at the Exchange in April went down very well with the crowd with lots of them having a go at the dances. We have welcomed new members since and lots of visitors were interested in the activities that are available to u3a members.

In May we were celebrating again! This time it was to mark the 90th birthday of David Bacon, regular dancer and former group leader of our class. We sang happy birthday and we all had some cake – just the one candle as we didn't want to set off the smoke alarms!



There will be no class on the 17th and 24th August. As the 31st August is a Bank holiday, we will welcome everyone back on the 7th September.

On Friday 3rd July, we held our first summer party at the Exchange.

This was another great success with members bringing along partners and friends to enjoy the music and socialise with a drink from the bar and some lovely treats from the amazing buffet, all provided by our members.

We played 27 songs in 3 hours! There was something for everyone. We even managed to persuade non dancers get up and have a go



Barbara and Jane

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As a new member of the line dance group, I would like to say how welcome everyone has made me feel. From my very first session, I was greeted with friendly faces and plenty of encouragement. Even with an injury I have been welcome to come and sit and be part of the group. The group has such a lovely atmosphere, and it's clear that everyone enjoys coming together to dance, laugh, and have fun. I've already learned so much and met some wonderful people along the way. Thank you to everyone for making me feel part of the group so quickly. I look forward to many more enjoyable dances and happy and fun times together. Thanks again and many kind regards,

Claire

I went to a Line Dance class at the Exchange in February. I was on my own, a little nervous but was looking forward to going. Barbara was the first person I introduced myself to and she made me feel very welcome. Every person at the Line Dance class is very nice and welcomed me to the class.

I love the class, so they won't be able to get rid of me!

This is my first experience of u3a, and I can't express what a great group it is and whose volunteers are amazing. I would recommend u3a to everyone.

Sonia Claridge – a relatively new member of u3a

Photography Group

Group Leader – David White

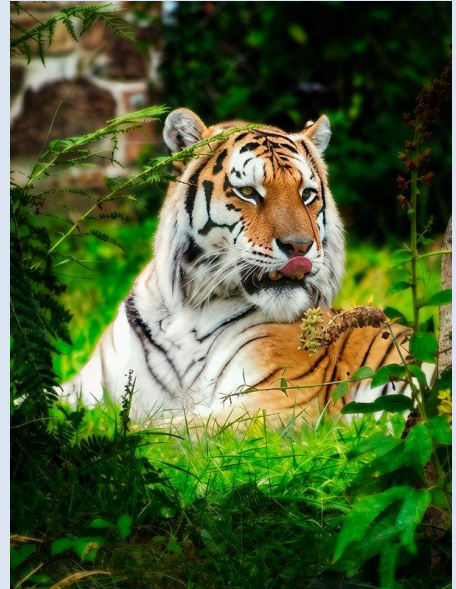
For our June meeting members were asked to bring along five or six of their favourite photographs of different subjects. The July meeting weather permitting will be at Alners Gorse to photograph Butterflies and Bees.

David White

Thank you for these wonderful photographs.

Alners Gorse is one of the remaining fragments of a heavily wooded local landscape which make up the medieval Royal Forests of Gillingham and Blackmore Vale. (Editor)





Ukulele Group

Group Leader – Andrew Rowden

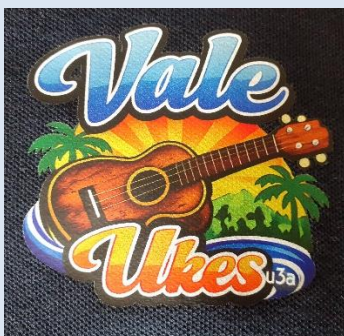
On Saturday 6th June, we had arranged to play outside Poets Corner Café for the Sturminster Newton Big Weekend. Unfortunately, the day brought steady rain, so we retreated indoors to play in the Hall.

It was a very relaxed event and visitors to the Exchange came in and out, with some even supporting us for the whole performance! The songs were well known, popular songs which the audience could join in with.

The whole day emphasised what a great asset the Exchange is for the town and the wonderful community spirit it generates.



We received another kind invitation to play at Blandford Evangelical Church on Monday 22nd June for their summer Social Meeting. Once again, our programme included a wide range of songs, and it was wonderful to see people singing along and even dancing! We would like to thank the members of the Church for being so warm and welcoming and for their delicious cream tea. We were also extremely grateful for their generous donations for our chosen charity, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance.



The photo above shows us playing at the Church in our new polo shirts. The Vale Ukles logo reflects the Ukulele's Hawaiian heritage, as well as the u3a colours.

Thank you to the u3a committee who have agreed to award us a grant towards their purchase.

Our banner has been updated to emphasise the fact that the Vale Ukes is a Sturminster Newton u3a group.



On Saturday 27th June, we played and sang at Child Okeford Hey Day. It was a lovely sunny afternoon and we were glad to have the shade of a marquee!

Shaftesbury Fringe

We are very pleased to announce that we will be playing at the Royal British Legion Hall in Shaftesbury on Friday 17th July (6 -7pm) as part of Shaftesbury Fringe. Entry is free and everyone is invited to come and sing along. We will be playing a range of popular songs from the 50s up to the 90s and **we would love to welcome some of our u3a friends there!**

Vale Ukes Poem.

Vale Ukulele Band of u3a,
it's a pleasure to hear them play.

Twice a month rehearsing songs,
making a repertoire good and long.
Playing gigs throughout the area,
audiences clap and get merrier.

Playing at care homes and other places,
to see the smile on people's faces.
Playing for charity, a very good cause,
that's where we receive much reward.

John Dare

John is a member of The Vale Ukes. He practises outside The Poets' Corner Café, in Sturminster Newton on Sunday mornings from 10am till midday (weather permitting). Sometimes he is accompanied by friends. Come along and hear his music!

Viv Jeffery

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Walking Group

Group Leader – Karine Litton

When I moved to the Sturminster Newton, I didn't know anyone or even the area. I saw that there was a u3a Walking Group. I joined and haven't looked back! The group is made up of people from all walks of life and are a really good crowd.

We walk fortnightly on Tuesdays for most of the year, having a break in August for holidays and 'grandparent duties.' Our walks usually range between 4 and 5 miles, over varying terrain. We receive an email in advance to give information about the walk, telling us where to meet, at what time, and if parking is available. The email also contains information about what the walk will entail – how many stiles we might encounter, the ups and downs, and what views and plant life we might see.

This week's walk is at Martinsdown Nature Reserve near Salisbury, and we already have walks planned for Maiden Castle, Ludwell to Wyn Green, Gillingham, and Corfe Castle for a coastal walk.

If you are interested in joining, or trying out a walk, please get in touch with the group leader.

Christine Wingate

Thoughts and Verses by a Wife and Mother

Rowland Marshall has kindly shared another verse written by his late wife, Patricia.

Me Again

At forty I can't just let life go by
The thought of interviews makes me shy.
Around the shops I mustn't lurk
Or my brain will sleep and cease to work.
Must find a job to keep me happy
Gone are the days of baby's nappy.
Because of this my husband fears
He knows how I'm bored to tears.
You would think I'm having a ball
Now my baby's started school.

Thank you, Rowland

Close Encounters of the Watery Kind

A Member's True Story

The forty-degree day had ironed the sea into a bolt of turquoise silk. The air was still and heavy and only our lower legs and feet felt cool as we stood knee-deep in the gin-clear water watching the sun settling onto the horizon.

In the near distance a disturbance rippled the glassy surface, and a triangular shape silhouetted against the low sun zig-zagged slowly toward us, the sun flashing off the glistening skin as it moved silently back and forth. We held our breaths, hands gripped together, as it came nearer. And yet nearer. Finally, the dolphin stopped swimming and lay floating very close, not more than an arm's length away, the water no deeper than our knees, its blowhole just breaking the surface. Watching us. Waiting. We stood very still. It blew, once, twice, and we smelled its fishy breath. As we studied its glossy grey body, streaked here and there with white scars and nicks, it rolled onto its side and studied us in return. Endless seconds passed. I met its gaze, and in those moments felt the separation of ages and an overwhelming longing that left me desolate. I feel it still. Breath caught in my throat and tears pricked, but, just as I thought to reach out, muscles rippled under the slick skin, and it was gone. The water swirled briefly around our knees and then settled to a glassy calm once again. I stood in the water and searched, with aching heart, for a breaking fin, until the sun disappeared over the horizon and I could see no more.

Another day and the same stretch of beach. I floated face down in the cool water, sculled slowly with my hands and let the weak current of the incoming tide push me gently along. I scanned the rippled sandy floor for life and found a small toadfish bumbling about near the bottom. It swam in erratic circles, its pouting lips and large eyes giving it a permanent expression of surprised confusion. I smiled, lifted my head for a breath, and then returned my face to the water. The toadfish had gone. I looked about for it and was startled by a large black shadow near the bottom, off to one side. Its huge triangular wings undulated slowly as it cruised just above the sand, stopping occasionally to pluck and munch on some unseen prey from the bottom, a small cloud puffing up around his nose as he did so. I saw the notch in the left wing and recognised the stingray as a familiar resident. He paused and I saw his eye roll as he looked at me. I kept very still. He resumed his cruise and I sculled to keep pace with him. Finally, after a minute or two, he tired of my presence and with a mighty wave of metre-wide wings swam off into the gloom of the deep where he knew I could not follow. I duck-dived under and let myself sink so I could watch him go. I mouthed a goodbye as his dark shadow merged eventually into the blue-green backdrop of the seagrass.

Written by member Sue Double 2026

Dorset Hills

The rolling hills of Dorset
Are beautiful to see.
The cows, sheep and horses
Think it belongs to thee.
They roam around the fields,
Chewing on the cud
Instead of looking around
The rolling hills of Dorset.
So, when you're out and about
Take a moment to look
Around the beautiful
Hills of Dorset.

Written by member Anne Walters

Summer Quiz

1. According to British folklore, if it rains on Saint Swithin's Day, how many days of rain will follow?
2. The first female aviator to fly solo across the Atlantic disappeared in July 1937 whilst flying over the Pacific. What was her name?
3. What form of transport did Cliff Richard use to travel to Greece in the film 'Summer Holiday'?
4. Which essential vitamin does the body create from sunlight?
5. In John Constable's painting, The Haywain, what is the name of the river which the cart is crossing on a summer's day?
6. In Shakespeare's "A Midsummer's Night Dream", who was the King of the Fairies?
7. In which French village is Claude Monet's garden, where he painted water lilies?
8. Penicillin was discovered in August 1881. Who discovered it?
9. Who had a hit record in 1961 with the song 'Summertime Blues'?
10. On which date is France's 'La Fête Nationale' (Bastille Day)?

QUIZ ANSWERS	
1	40
2	Amelia Earhart
3	London bus
4	Vitamin D
5	The River Stour
6	Oberon
7	Giverny
8	Alexander Fleming
9	Eddie Cochran
10	July 14th

Group Details

Name	Leader	Contact Details	Venue	Frequency
Book Club (1)	Brenda Stables	Book Club 1	Members' homes	2nd Tuesday, 2pm
Book Club (2)	Roger Bradshaw	Book Club 2	Members' homes	4th Wednesday 2pm
Boules	Sylvia Greenwood	Boules	Hinton St Mary, Cricket Ground	Thurs 4pm April to Sept.
Bridge	Margaret Peers	Bridge	Exchange Café	Friday mornings 10am
Canasta	Audrey Groves	Canasta	Hinton St Mary's Village Hall	2nd Wed. last Friday pm
Creative Writing	Jane Wade	Creative Writing	Newstone House	3rd Friday 2pm – 4pm
French Conversation	Janet Solomon	French Conversation	Reddleman House	Alternate Tuesdays 10.30am
Garden Croquet	Tony Stables	Garden Croquet	SN Recreation Ground	Tues. 1pm, May to Sept.
History	David Dando	History	Bow Room, Exchange	2nd Thursday 10.30am
Keep Fit	Barbara Burridge Anne Adkins	Keep Fit	The Exchange	Thursdays 10am
Life, the Universe and Everything	Drystan Shepherd	Life, the Universe & Everything	Shillingstone	Second Thursday of each month 2pm
Line Dancing	Barbara Burridge Jane Wade	Line Dancing	The Exchange	Mondays 11am
Lunch Club	Linda Insley	Lunch Club	Various	3rd Tuesday of the month 1pm
Philosophy	Graham Colls	Philosophy	White Hart in the Market Square	1st & 3rd Thursday 1.45pm
Pickleball	Allan Taylor	Pickleball	Sturfit in Sturminster Newton	Mondays 4.30pm
Photography	David White	Photography	The Exchange	3rd Friday, 10am
Play Reading & Drama	Jane Wade	Play Reading & Drama	Reddleman House	1st & 3rd Mondays 2.30pm
Quilting	Liz Wray	Quilting1 Quilting2	86 Newton	Wednesdays 10am
Ukulele	Andrew Rowden	Ukulele	Marnhull Village Hall	Fortnightly 10.45am
Walking	Karine Litton	Walking	Various routes	1st & 3rd Tuesdays am
Wine Appreciation	Charles Minoprio	Wine Appreciation	Chaselands House, Lydlinch	Every 6 weeks 4.30pm

Committee Members

OFFICIAL	NAME	CONTACT
Chairman	Andrew Rowden	Chair
Vice Chair	Allan Taylor	Vice Chair
Treasurer	Rosie Taylor	Treasurer
Secretary	Jennie Burbury	Secretary
Membership Secretary	Hazel Belben	Membership
Groups Coordinator (1)	Ruth Mc Cormick	Groups(1)
Groups Coordinator (2)	Phillippa Tanner	Groups(2)
Publicity	Andrew Rowden	Publicity
Newsletter Editor	Viviane Jeffery	Newsletter
Website Manager	Andrew Rowden	Website
Speakers' Secretary	Viv Jeffery	Speakers
Committee Member	David White	
Committee Member	David Dando	

CONTACT DETAILS:-

Website – <https://sturminster-newton.u3asite.uk/>

Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1842868155995868>

Third Age Trust - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

Registered Charity N0. 288007

Sturminster Newton u3a Registration No. 771/750/0922

And Finally ... 2026 is World Cup Year!

Why did the football stadium get hot after the game?	All the fans had gone!
How do we know that referees are happy in their job?	They whistle while they work!
Why don't grasshoppers watch football?	They watch cricket instead!
What kind of tea do football players drink?	Penaltea!
Why was the chicken given a red card?	For fowl play!