u3a Sturminster Newton Newsletter – Autumn 2026



Editor's Note



Welcome to the Autumn issue of the Sturminster u3a Newsletter. I hope you all enjoyed the lovely summer days of sunshine. The evenings are drawing in, leaves are displaying their glorious Autumn colours and there is the hint of a chill in the evening air. Let's hope for a season of "mellow fruitfulness".

We extend a warm welcome to our many new members and hope you will find the meetings and activities interesting and a fun way to forge new friendships.

Once again, we need to say a huge thank you to Andrew for all his continued hard work on our behalf as Chair.

Thank you, too, to everyone who has contributed to this issue. Find out what some of our groups have been doing lately. If you feel inspired to send an article in for next time, please send it to:

Best wishes, Viv Jeffery

Newsletter

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Chair's Report

Membership
This time last year our membership was 229. Today it is 276 - I think this is the most ever! We have had 9 new members join just in September alone – and the month is not over yet! Why are our numbers so healthy? Several factors come to mind:

- The £5 subscription fee. We were only able to do this because we could afford to. I have mentioned before that £4 of this goes straight to the national u3a Office – this is called the capitation fee. Then we have to pay for the u3a Matters magazine that some of us receive. If you don't receive the magazine, you can read the online version HERE
- Interest groups. Pickleball, Line Dancing and Keep Fit have attracted some new members!
- Advertising? We advertised in all the local Facebook pages - which we haven't done before.

We produced membership cards again this year but I'm not sure how successful they were. It would be good to have feedback on how useful they are please. If they are stuck in a drawer or a purse/wallet then why have them?

Interest Groups
Currently, we have 24 groups, with the recent additions of Pickleball, and Table Games. And exciting news! Soon we will have another group starting up – Dance - which will be run by a professional dance teacher (see the poster in this newsletter)!
Thank you to the new group leaders – for your willingness to give up your time to run these groups. And to all our group leaders we do appreciate what you do – organising and running your groups.

Bi-Monthly Meetings
Attendances at our bi-monthly meetings have been generally good. If you haven't been to one of these meetings yet, then you have been missing out on some excellent speakers!
Our Christmas meeting is on Friday 18th December at 2.30pm. for 'The Big Christmas Quiz - Part Three! This will be an hour of fun and laughter, followed by festive refreshments – and it's free!

Committee
We now have 10 members in the committee! Viv Jeffery has taken on the job of Speakers Secretary. Also, Phillippa Tanner and Ruth McCormick have jointly taken on the role of Group Coordinators. So, hurrah and thank you!

Coffee & Chat
Our regular Coffee & Chat socials have been very successful, with numbers increasing at each meeting. The last social was hosted by members of the Line Dancing group. Viv Jeffery provided a quiz sheet for people to complete at their tables, if they so wished. It certainly encouraged a lot of chatter!
We would like other groups to take on the responsibility of hosting the socials. Please see the poster about this in this newsletter.

Finally, many thanks to those of you who have contributed to this newsletter, and particularly to Viv Jeffery who has edited it. We hope you enjoy reading it - please do feel free to forward it to anyone who might be interested in our u3a. It will be accessible from the website in due course.

Andrew

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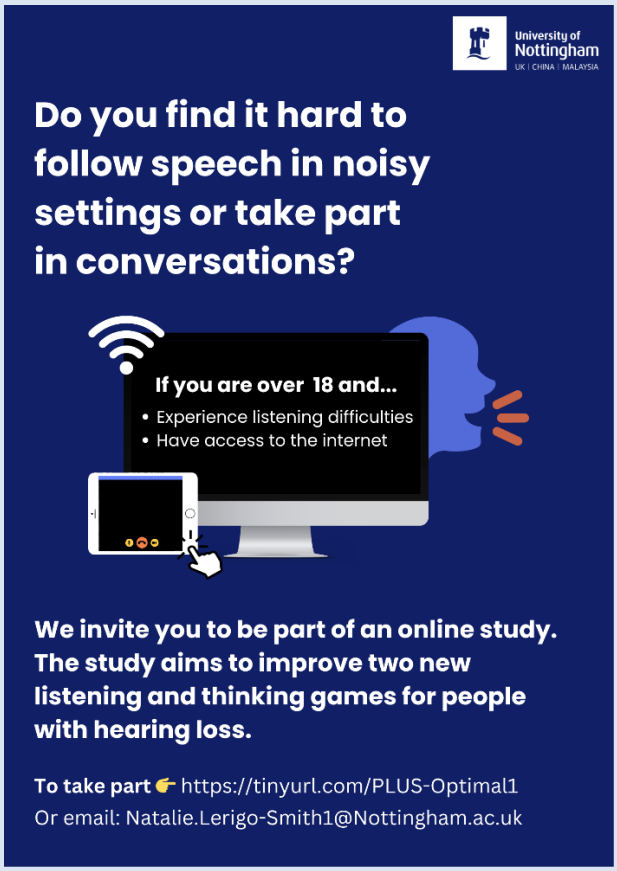
u3a News and Information for Members

In 2023, Sturminster Newton u3a planted a tree at the Recreation Ground to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles 111. It is flourishing, in spite of the exceptionally hot summer. This is mainly due to the efforts of some very kind residents of Bridge Street who have visited it regularly to water it. Andrew and Rosemary have also watered it on several occasions. These are very kind acts, for which we thank them.



Would you like to take part in an online study?

We have received this request from the University of Nottingham who are conducting an online study and are looking for participants.



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Members' Coffee and Chat Morning

Thank you to everyone that came to the coffee and chat, which was hosted by the line dancing group on the 5th of September.
Well done to Viv who planned our 'just for fun' quiz, that got quite competitive! And to the many line dancers who came along to help make the morning such a success.
We think we can safely say that everyone enjoyed the morning and will be looking forward to the next one.
We hope to see some new members at our line dancing class very soon.
Barbara Burridge & Jane Wade – Line Dancing Group Leaders

Some happy (and puzzled!) faces at the event!








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Members' Coffee and Chat Morning

A huge thank you to members of the line dancing team who took on the job of hosting this coffee morning and helped to make such a fun morning run smoothly.
It would be great to see other groups sharing the task in this way. It really is not too onerous - the tables, chairs, urn and cups are set out in advance by the Exchange staff. On the day, it involves getting the u3a refreshment bag out of the store cupboard (which the Exchange staff can help with), welcoming members, serving drinks and helping to tidy up at the end.
A member of the committee will usually be there to assist.
Please let us know if you would be willing to help in the future, either as a u3a group or as a group of friends.
Thank you.

U3a Committee

The next Coffee and Chat Morning will be:

Saturday 21st November
10am – 12 noon
The Bow Room at the Exchange
Free tea/coffee and biscuits

This is a great chance to socialise with your u3a friends and make new friends from other groups. There will be another fun tabletop quiz – this time a picture quiz!

Just a reminder – this is for **members.** If you wish to bring a friend along to experience the social side of our u3a , the event for you to do this is a bi-monthly meeting. Thank you.

We hope to see many of you there!

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October's Bi-monthly Meeting

u3a Sturminster Newton

Thursday 15th October at 2.30pm
In the Exchange

Ashley Jones MBE

Animals at War – A TALK

"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.

Entry Free for members
£2 for visitors
Refreshments afterwards!

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Christmas Meeting

u3a Sturminster Newton

Friday 18th December at 2.30pm

In the Bow Room at the Exchange

‘The Big Christmas Quiz’ Part 3





Entry Free for Members

Seasonal refreshments

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2027 Bi-monthly Meetings
Dates for your diary

Thursday 18th February - Wildlife of the Jurassic Coast

Thursday 15th April - Posted in the Past

Thursday 17th June - Life! A Library of Memories

Thursday 21st October - Remember, Remember – The Story of the Gunpowder Plot

Thursday 16th December - Christmas Meeting

Book Group 2
Group Leader – Roger Bradshaw

It has been an enjoyable few months. Our group has selected some interesting choices, starting over the summer with The Woodcutter by Reginald Hill; a psychological thriller, Three Men in a Boat; a classic read written in a very whimsical style and Bruno Chief of Police a French policeman in the Dordogne which whilst ostensibly a detective story covers contemporary issues which are just as relevant to life in Dorset.
We take it in turns to choose books and we continue to meet in each other's houses each month to discuss the book and set the World to rights, sort of. This month, as it was the Chinese mid-autumn festival, we also sampled Moon cakes with our tea.
We always welcome people who would like to stretch their reading experiences. One of our long-time members has now moved out of Stur, so we are, for the moment, a little depleted.

Roger Bradshaw

Bridge Group
Group Leader – Daphne Dee

This summer we have sadly said goodbye to Maggie Peers. She led the bridge group for many years but has now gone to live near her son for medical reasons. We have had some new members this quarter, both beginners and experienced, but would welcome new players. We meet in the Exchange cafe on a Friday morning at 10.00am.

If you are interested in joining, please contact the group via the link on page 19 or on the website.

Daphne Dee

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History Group
Group Leader – David Dando

In History we looked at 10 people deserving of remembrance and recognition often not given in their lifetime. Five of the 10 are:
Mary Seacole, a nurse who did immense work in the Crimea. Loved by soldiers she nursed. She died and vanished from History for 100 years.
Ada Lovelace, who wrote notes about the Babbage analytic engine which was the first computer program. She died young and vanished from History for 100 years.
Dorothy Lawrence disguised as a British soldier, she spent time in the trenches under fire. She wanted to report on conditions in WW1. She was arrested and spent her life in a lunatic asylum. 100 years later her story came to light.
Walter Tull was black and loved football. He played for Tottenham Hotspur and volunteered immediately in 1914. He became a Sergeant and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in1917. He died in the Pas-de-Calais and lies in unknown grave. He was put forward for a Military Cross, but records were lost.

David Dando

Keep Fit Group
Group Leader Barbara and Annie Adkins



Well, what can we say, Annie and I are overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and support of our class.
We now have 46 members on the register, many of whom also attend other u3a groups.
We are doing our bit to improve the fitness, stamina, co-ordination and balance of our members and they love it.
There is always room for another member, so why not give it a try? We are sure you won't regret it.
Keep moving!!!

Barbara & Annie

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Line Dancing Group
Group Leaders – Barbara Burridge and Jane Wade

Celebrating two wonderful members of u3a

Jacquie Howells:



Every year since 2005 Jacquie travels from her home in Dorset to Norfolk to join the Pink Ladies Road Run. She has missed taking part on two occasions, once because of Covid and a second time because she was unable to drive following surgery. Her first run was because her Mum's best friend had breast cancer. In 2015 Jacquie's daughter was diagnosed with terminal bone cancer and secondary breast cancer just two days after her 35th birthday. When Rachel was diagnosed, she was told the average life expectancy was five years. Thanks to the treatment she receives every three weeks she is still with us and thriving. This is why Jacquie continues to raise money for Cancer Research UK. To date she has raised over £15,000. The u3a line dancers are proud to have been able to support Jacquie and Cancer Research UK.



Dee Hobbs:

Earlier this year Dee visited her friend in the Weldmar Hospice in Dorchester. This was the last time she got to see Pam. Dee came away from the visit overwhelmed by the compassion, kindness and care her friend was receiving and decided she wanted to raise some money so that Weldmar can continue its wonderful work.

A quiz night and raffle was arranged and she managed to raise £1000. Again, the u3a line dancers were delighted to support the event.



The picture shows Dee, in the centre with her husband Pete presenting the cheque.

During the planning of the quiz, Dee was forced to embark on her own cancer journey. Her treatment started on the 18th May. She has endured weekly chemotherapy and daily radiotherapy. The effects of the treatment have been very hard for her to bear but she soldiered on. On the 24th June, due to lack of nutrients and dehydration Dee was admitted to hospital. On the 26th June, her 65th birthday, she got to ring the bell at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton. Dee remained in hospital until the 25th July, when she was allowed to go home to continue her recovery.

I think everyone reading this will agree that these are two remarkable women. They are strong, generous and determined and of course they are brilliant line dancers!

Written by Barbara Burridge - u3a Line Dancers

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Photography Group
Group Leader – David White

We did not meet in August. So, for our September meeting we viewed the butterflies taken on our July visit to Alners Gorse and other locations. Also, we saw some stunning shots taken by Caroline on her visits to various countries. For October we are going to try night photography.

David White







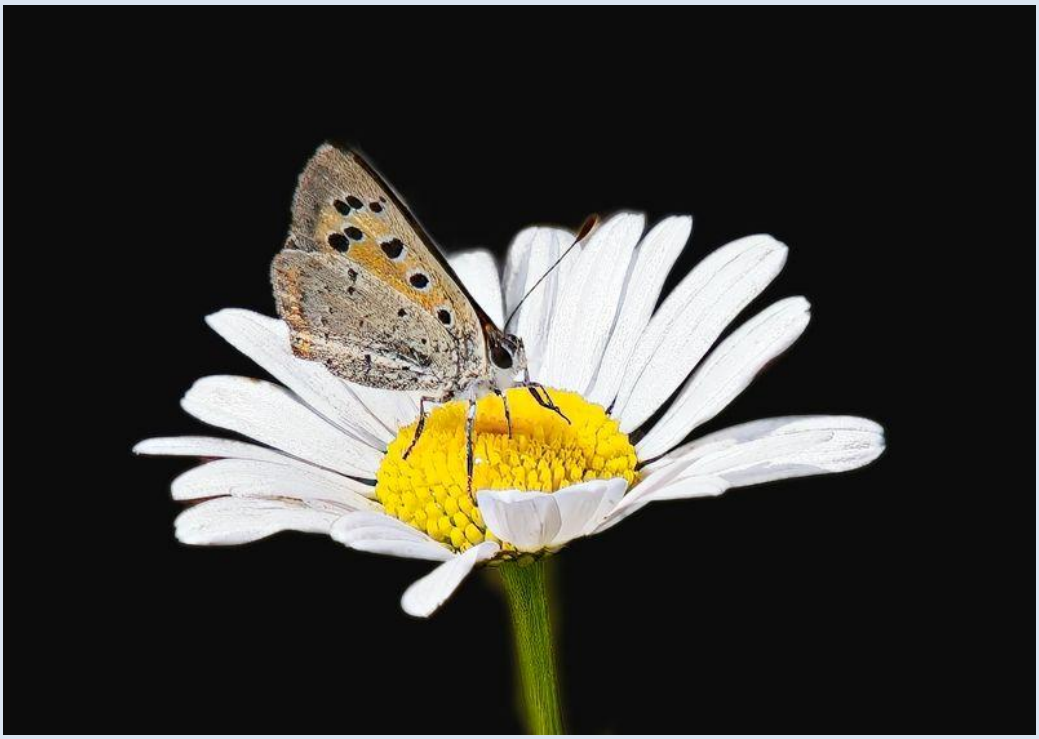


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Photography Group







What wonderful close-up photos, taken by talented members of the Photography Group!

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Quilting Group
Group Leader – Liz Wray

The quilting group continues to thrive with new members joining the afternoon session.

In addition to all our personal projects, this year we will be working on a group quilt, celebrating the centenary in 2027 of Thomas Hardy's death, which will be on show at our exhibition in the Exchange, hopefully during Dorset Arts Weeks 2027 (dates still to be confirmed). We will hope to see you all there!

This summer's triumphs have included a miniature quilt depicting a tree through the seasons by Jo Lewis which was hung at the big annual Festival of Quilts at the NEC (see picture), and a hanging by Liz Wray which won a Gold Award at the annual Dorset Arts & Crafts Association Showcase in Wareham, also making off with an unexpected but delightful Visitors' Choice prize!

We still meet every week at Liz's home, but for anyone who is interested in learning more about our groups, our meeting on the first Wednesday of each month is in the Exchange cafe 10am to midday, and we would be very happy to meet you and talk about what we do.



Jo Lewis and her miniature quilt

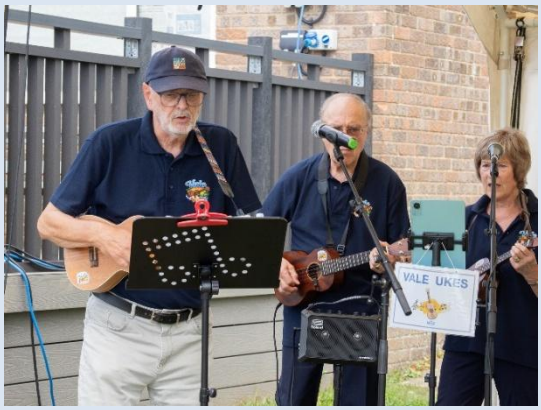


Indian Garden by Liz Wray

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Ukulele Group
Group Leader – Andrew Rowden

We received these photos from Marilyn Peddle who saw us play at Child Okeford Hey Day on Saturday 27th June. Thank you, Marilyn.









Shaftesbury Fringe Friday 17th July

Our performance at Shaftesbury Fringe attracted 55 people in the audience who all enjoyed accompanying us - singing, clapping and swaying! We all had a fantastic time. Thank you, Andrew for your continued dedication to the group, your choice of songs for the evening and your hard work in organising such a fun event. Special thanks go to Trevor for his fantastic work on the solo instrumentals and to John for helping to keep us in time with his brilliant bass playing.





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Ukulele Group continued

Over the Summer, Andrew had been busy working on new challenges to add to our repertoire. We tackled this fresh material when we returned to our fortnightly rehearsals at Marnhull Village Hall. Firstly, we had a go at picking out tunes using uke TABS. This is a notation system telling us which notes to play. We bravely attempted some as a round and decided more practise is needed!

Our new songs (which members will, no doubt, remember) are:

- All Of Me
- Crocodile Rock
- Dancing in the Street
- Jolene
- Oh Boy

The Autumn Gig programme began on Wednesday16th September at the Malthouse Care Home in Gillingham.



We had a wonderful gig! All the residents were attentive and joined in when they knew the lyrics - some were clapping to the music or foot-tapping! We were told that one of the residents, who often fell asleep during these afternoons, stayed awake for the whole time! The Malthouse kindly gave a donation of £50 for our charity. (Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance)

On the 25th September, we returned to the royal British Legion in Marnhull. This is our regular monthly performance (and of course, a fish and chip supper!)
So, if you fancy hearing us play (and perhaps a joining in a sing-along!) while you enjoy a Friday night fish and chips treat, do come along. It is always a fun evening!

Two talented members of the Vale Ukes practise outside The Poets' Corner Café, in Sturminster Newton on Sunday mornings from 10am till midday (weather permitting).
Come along and hear their music! They would love you to stop and chat!

Andrew Rowden and Viv Jeffery

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Walking Group
Group Leader – Karine Litton

We had several walks planned for the summer season. Unfortunately, due to the extreme weather, either too hot or wet under foot we had to cancel some.
The walks we were able to complete were very enjoyable. Including, Maiden Castle, Martinsdown and a local walk.
We have a full programme for our walks up to Christmas. These include Charlton to Winn Green, around Marnhull which will be a new route and others yet to be finalised. Our final walk of the year will be local to Stur followed by a Christmas get together in The Swan for a bite to eat. At the same time, we will chat about the walks for 2027.The walks are usually 4-5 miles long. We have an email the weekend before giving details about the upcoming walk - meeting point, distance, terrain and walking time.
We welcome new members to our group. If you fancy joining our happy band of walkers please contact our group leader Karine Litton.

Christine Wingate

New Dance Group
With Shawn Torgerson



Space is limited to the first 16, with a waiting list after that.

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New Table Games Group

Playing board and card games allows us to challenge ourselves gently in a non-threatening social environment. The aim of the group is to enjoy playing some familiar games and to learn new ones. The group is for everyone – no previous experience required. Most of the games are family oriented and the emphasis is on enjoyment.

When: 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Where: The Exchange Café

Cost: the venue is free, but please support the Exchange by buying tea or coffee.

Contact: Rosie via the link on the website

Famous Dorset Figures - Mary Anning

1. Mary Anning was born May 21st, 1799, in Lyme Regis, Dorset. She lived on the Jurassic coast which is rich with fossilised remains of extinct animals.
2. Mary's father was Richard Anning, a cabinet maker and amateur fossil collector. Her mother was Mary Moore, known as Molly
3. Mary had a lucky escape as a baby when a woman carrying her was struck by lightning. The woman died, but Mary survived.
4. The family was not wealthy, and supplemented their income by selling fossils. Richard taught Mary how to collect and clean the fossils.
5. Mary's income was extremely limited, but she did attend a Congregational Sunday School where she learned to read and write. Inspired by her pastor, she taught herself Geology and Anatomy.
6. At the age of twelve, she discovered the first Ichthyosaurus skeleton to be correctly identified.
7. Mary went on to make more incredible discoveries in her life, including a Plesiosaur and a flying reptile called a Domorphodon.
8. While Mary was alive, only men were recognised as part of the Scientific Community. Because of her gender and humble background, her work was not given the credit it deserved and she was not able to publish the findings she had recorded. In fact, some of the men at the time claimed her work as their own.
9. Mary died at the age of 47. Her work was forgotten for many years. Today she is recognised as a major contributor to our knowledge of palaeontology.
10. In 2022, a statue of Mary Anning and her dog, Tray, was unveiled in Lyme Regis, following a campaign by a schoolgirl, Evie Swire.

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A Member's Recipe for Autumn

FRESH GINGER AND APPLE CAKE

This squidgy, spicy cake improves with keeping.
Eat it cold, or warm with ice cream for dessert. It is a tasty way to use up extra apples; you can also use pears.

Ingredients.
4oz/110g butter
8oz/225g dark brown sugar
2 large eggs
1oz/30g grated fresh ginger
8oz/ 225 g self-raising flour (you can a tsp of ginger spice for extra flavour)
10oz/280g peeled, cored and diced cooking apple (prepared weight)

For the topping
2 tbsp runny honey
2 tbsp demerara sugar

Method
Heat oven to 170C/325/gas mark 3
Cream butter and dark brown sugar and mix in the beaten eggs little by little, followed by the grated ginger.
Sift the flour, fold in the flour, then mix in the chopped apple.
Pour into the greased 20cm/8in cake tin and bake for about one hour until risen, browned and a skewer comes out clean.
Mix the honey and demerara sugar and spread over the cake while still warm.

Optional
Decorate the top of the cake with thin slices of eating apple before baking.

Kindly sent in by Rosemary Rowden

If any member would prefer to receive a paper copy of this Newsletter, please contact the editor and it will be posted to you.
The copy will be in black and white.

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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
Dance	Shawn Torgerson		The Exchange	
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
Table Games	Rosie Taylor	Table Games	Exchange Café	1st and 3rd Wednesdays 2 – 4pm
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

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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…

1. What is a scarecrow's favourite fruit? Straw-berries!
2. What do farmers wear in Autumn? A har-vest!
3. What is the best kind of tree joke? Acorny one!
4. Why did the scarecrow win a Nobel prize? It was outstanding in its field!

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