

Spire u3a

Newsletter 58 October 2025



October monthly meeting - See page 13

Monday 13 October 10 for 10.30am Harnham Memorial Hall



Chairman's Message

If the amount of material we have to pack into this newsletter this month is anything to go by - Spire u3a is thriving.

We began the new 'academic' year with a proper working Academic as guest speaker at the September meeting, highlighted our movement at two public events (Men Matters and the Scarecrow Festival) and marked the start of u3a Week 2025 with a three-course lunch at the Parish Hall.

At the same time we updated our flyer and revealed our u3a-themed website - So a big thank you to all who supported and helped out with all that last month.

Being one of the smaller u3as though, sometimes punching above our weight (nothing wrong with that), it is important that we all play our part in any way we can.

All the committee have a copy of *Guide for running a u3a* by David Hammond, leader of the 'u3a Bath and Wiltshire Network'. It describes u3a as a force for good amongst those it serves and provides active participants with a rewarding experience:

"You can have a local book group or social group outside u3a. However, what u3a offers is an outward looking focus on all those who can benefit from a wide range of activities – social, intellectual, and physical – which help people develop and grow by exploring new ideas, skills and interests."

Thus we are encouraged to understand and embrace the self-help learning principle of u3a and think how we can contribute. Judging by recent experience I think we - each one of us - do pretty well but we always need to keep that principle in mind.

Maureen

Please Remember

.....to provide us with your date of birth and 'in case of emergency' contact details. We explained why in a previous newsletter.

Pauline or write down your Name, DOB & ICE and hand to Pauline at a monthly meeting.

Thank you to those of you who have already made this information available or told us that you do not wish to share.



Our Meeting in September

Lundy Dr Chris Pawson

Chris started by setting out his areas of interest and research as an academic in the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) and quickly moved on to describe the island of Lundy in the Bristol Channel. Which is about 3½ miles long North to South and about half a mile wide. He described, with the aid of photographs, the tranquil east side of the island along with the wild, west side, which faces the Atlantic.

Access (March to October) is via MS Oldenburg from Bideford or Ilfracombe or by helicopter from Hartland point. Chris showed photographs of the accommodation available which varied in style and comfort but all had the island-wide limited hours of diesel powered electricity.

His students carry out various research tasks including wild animal censuses and he pointed out that, against a



backdrop of falling numbers of seabirds on mainland UK, the seabirds on Lundy; Puffins, Guillemots, Shearwaters etc are doing very well. Part of this is due to the eradication of rats on the island. Although islanders have to be on guard against them returning, given the recent case of a box of creme eggs with rats inside.

There is a 'no take' zone around the east side which has improved the underwater ecology and the other notable feature of the waters is the number of wrecks. This led Chris to talk about the three lighthouses. The north and south lighthouses being built to replace the middle one which was constructed with the light too high so that it was often in cloud. The social history of the island was touched upon, along with piracy, insurance fraud, the ruling families (including a self-styled king), off-course migrating birds and two wartime Heinkel bombers.

Being an enclosed environment Lundy is a useful place for research: birds (wheatears), grey seals, human and animal behaviour - with the two groups being considered together. In short it was an informative and entertaining talk and very well received.

Frank

Astronomical autumn began this year with the autumn equinox on Monday September 22; it ends on Sunday, December 21

Sally's Summer School

On the first of September I set off for my initiation into u3a Summer School. A sunny journey to Chichester, where the school was taking place, and my first visit to Chichester University.

Having waited in the courtyard we were called in to register and given our instructions as to where we were sleeping and where the tuition would take place. Quite a buzz of excitement and a rush for the afternoon tea available in the dining area. Over to the education block for the initial class. I was studying opera and the course was so interesting, many lovely video snippets of famous arias sung by well known stars of the genre over the three days we were there.

The first evening meal gave us the taste of the standard of cuisine we could expect, really excellent for mass catering. I was afraid for my waistline with two big meals a day. A 'welcome' drink was followed by a quiz (not compulsory) which concluded our evening. The accommodation was in students quarters with en suite facilities and really most comfortable, security was good with key cards for every door and access. The walking from building to building salved my conscience over the two meals a day plus tea and coffee breaks.

The second evening most of the assembly trotted over to the Chichester Theatre to see 'Top Hat' which made us happy, singing the songs on the way back to the campus. A good nights sleep ready for our last session on the Thursday morning with our tutors.

I would really recommend having a go at summer school. There are not many in the country now and this one, organised by the South Eastern u3a is very well run. Among the courses on offer this year were patchwork, Latin, AI, walking, mahjong, yoga and maths. Have a go next year, I am sure you will enjoy yourself.

The national **u3a Festival** will be held at York University from **July 1-3 2026**.
£18 per day + accommodation around £90 per night.
www.u3a.org.uk/events/festival-2026

From Mary Robson

On **Monday December 8** we will be having our Christmas/Festive Lunch after our meeting.

Deadline for menu choices and payment is **November 17**.

Reminder: payments are non-refundable but you may negotiate with a friend to take your place.

Payment

- Cash in a named envelope with your choices
- Cheque in a named envelope with your choices
- BACS + email to inform of payment and choices

BACS: Spire University of the Third Age
Lloyds Bank
Sort code - see email
Acc. no.

Spire u3a Christmas Lunch

Monday 8th December 12.30pm

at The Rose and Crown

Please choose Two Courses - £28.50 Per Person

STARTERS

Winter Vegetable Soup Croutons & crusty roll (VE)(GFOA)

Halloumi, Fig & Walnut Salad Mango dressing (GF)

Pan Fried Mushrooms in Stilton Sauce Roasted chestnuts & crusty bread roll (GFOA)

MAINS

Roast Turkey Breast Pigs in blankets, roast potatoes, honey glazed parsnips, medley of veg & turkey gravy (GF)

Vegan Sausage Casserole Roast potatoes (VE)(GF)

Pan Fried Swordfish Steak New potatoes, fine beans & tomato salsa (GF)

DESSERTS

Apple & Cherry Crumble Vanilla ice cream (GF)(VEOA)

Chocolate Orange Posset Shortbread stars (GF)

Traditional Christmas Pudding Brandy sauce (VE)(GF) G

GF GLUTEN FREE, GFOA GLUTEN FREE OPTION AVAILABLE

VE VEGAN, VEOA VEGAN OPTION AVAILABLE

Meteorological autumn started on September 1 and lasts until November 30.

Interest Groups

Geology

For the first meeting of the academic year we temporarily abandoned our "armchairs" and undertook a geological tour of Salisbury Cathedral Close. Starting at the museum building it was noted that many alterations to the layout had been undertaken using a variety of materials, not always in keeping with the original stonework. The present day cafe, believed to be the oldest part, exhibited poorly executed repairs to the weathered Hamstone window surrounds, carried out using portland cement!

The tour proceeded towards Harnham Gate, passing Myles Place - of brick construction but with the imposing facade of cream coloured stonework. (Chilmark limestone?) We then inspected the wall running from the former Leadenhall School and noted the use of a great deal of recycled material, including what local amateur geologist Steve Hannath spotted - a broken piece of Portland Marble column, laid on it's side.



Harnham gate provided much of interest in it's stonework - primarily of cream coloured Chilmark limestone - but with some greenish tinted Hurdcott stone too. We also noted the Ordnance Survey "Bench Mark", to be seen on the left when entering The Close from "outside".

Our next port of call was intended to be the West Front of the cathedral but on arrival we found our route barred by police on security duty! A small procession of dignitaries including the Dean, officials, and soldiers - with Princess Anne amongst them - were waiting to enter the cathedral via the West Front doors. We learned that the regiments "colours" i.e. their flag, needed to be replaced with a new "blessed" one. So after a short break from our "geologising" we proceeded round to the North Porch to admire the huge decorative columns of Purbeck "Marble", fairly recently renewed. On return to the West Front we were able to admire the 1860s repair work whereby all the Purbeck Marble columns (presumably dating from the 1300s) was replaced by cheaper Devonshire "Marble". One of the group spotted small lead "plugs" at the heads of some of the columns. At this the leader produced part of a column (from 1860s) which had broken and so ended up on the scrap heap in the mason's yard. It contained a lead plug whose purpose was to secure the finials to the tops of the columns.

The tour ended with liquid refreshment in the refectory.

Stuart

Nightingales, cuckoos, swifts and swallows all fly south to warmer climates for the winter. Swallows will fly 6,000 miles in six weeks.

Art & Craft

The craft group met on Tuesday September 23 to begin work on the decorations for this year's Christmas Tree Festival in St Thomas's. Our theme is the traditional nativity figures again, but this year we are crocheting them. We had four attend the meeting but if there is anybody else who could help with this task you will be most welcome. We will meet again on Tuesday **October 28** at 2pm, at Janet Pengelly's house.

RIP - Members will be sad to hear of the death of Joan New who led a number of origami sessions for us. Joan was a member of S&D u3a and a Harnham resident. Her skill with papercraft was as admired as her ability to get us all producing the seemingly impossible.

OBC

Sally started us off by reading us the Tiger poem, one of a published collection written by young people at a workshop run by Faisal Mikdadi but inspired by the poetry of Thomas Hardy.

Frank is not a fan of Hardy but shared his enthusiasm for the *Memoirs of Alfred Plumley 1880 - 1892: Schoolboy, Servant, GWR apprentice*. That led us on to books that include maps, lamplighters, and thence to Malcolm.

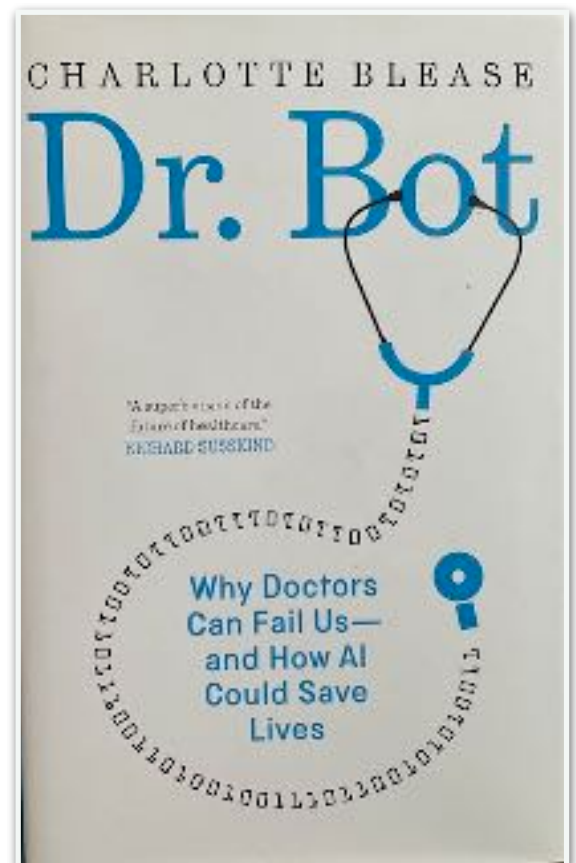
Malcolm told us about the title he had read - well written, easy to read and set in Somerset in the 1920's. The rural setting and class system it described was totally different to his own experience of an urban family upbringing.

Rosemary, a prolific reader, talked of more local authors/settings, Mark Dawson, Atticus Priest, Andy Maslin etc and moved on to the dark story in Daphne Du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn*. And that took us back to Hardy and his more enjoyable smuggling tale of *The Distracted Preacher*.

We had a plan to move on from writing with a West Country connection after the October meeting. Now Yale University publishing has kindly given us copies of a new book, *Dr Bot* by Charlotte Beasley, so we will look at that next.

At the same time the same publisher has offered us read-and-review copies of a previously delayed title about unsolved european mysteries so our next theme - stories, biographies, memoirs related to politics or politicians - may be delayed.

Next meeting will be Tuesday **October 14** at 3.30pm.



Redwings, fieldfares, waxwings some types of duck and geese head to the UK from colder countries for the winter.

Coffee Companions

October found us by the river at Arman's, where we are always made most welcome. It was particularly good to have Mervyn, such a longstanding member, joining us.

This Group is ably run by Enid and meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 10.30am. It is a very good, informal way of keeping in touch, especially if you miss a monthly meeting.

November get together will be at Jenny's, near the Library(tbc).



Lunch Bunch

Ladies who Lunch are planning to meet at Wilton this month

- a bus or bike ride for some.

In September we tried a venue new to us - Wildwood - lovely food, nicely presented, excellent value BUT it took simply ages to appear! And don't mention tonic water to Judy, ever.

But please contact Judy to join the waiting list.

All Interest Groups

Are listed here

<https://spire.u3asite.uk/groups/>

- Click on the Interest Group that you are interested in and a form will come up to enable you to contact the Group Leader.

- OR speak to Hilary Glyde, Groups co-ordinator.

- Group Leaders** are asked to take a look at the website and let us know if the information needs editing.

News from the Interest Groups can also be posted on our Facebook Group

Spire u3a (Salisbury)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/357943631840550>

Learn, Laugh, Live

Chairman's Prize Challenge

This is for everyone to have a go at. Settle down with something to write with and something to write on and write what comes into your mind. Think about December, shorter days, the coming of winter and Christmas time; the little details, the memories and old stories.

Organise your thoughts into a poem (or freeverse) of 16 lines or less, four four-line verses or any other arrangement. Give a thought to how well it reads. Does it need rhythm or rhyme?

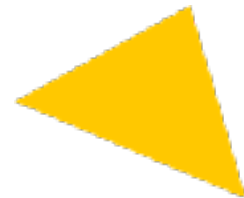
We are looking for original, unpublished work and no more than 16 lines.

The winner will be announced at our December meeting.

Last date for submission:

Monday November 17 - midnight.

When you are happy with what you have written please email it to our independent judge, at Kennet u3a, Mary Caudell.



(Please also copy to me so that I can keep tabs on the numbers in case any submissions go astray.)

Maureen

That was the month that was...

Men Matters, at the newly re-opened City Hall, was very well attended. Our stall welcomed a steady stream of enquirers, including the Mayor, and was at times quite busy.

Well done, chaps!

Pics by Terry Waldron





Likewise, *The Scarecrow Festival*, organised by Wiltshire Air Ambulance, was a bit of fun and enabled us to promote our movement (at no charge to us.)

Grateful thanks to Doreen and Frank Bryant for the time, talent and ingenuity invested in our entry.



Pic by Alan N Frost

And then there was *u3a Week Lunch*, a hot meal - three courses with tea or coffee - for just £15!



Well done everyone who helped to make it such a friendly and yummy occasion.

Together with the raffle, ably run by John and Irene, we made a modest profit that will ease our running costs.



Opportunities

Dig In

Wednesday **October 29**

Meet in the cafe area of *The Playhouse* from 10.30am. A short talk from Wessex Archaeology will follow in the fully accessible community room at 11am. Those who attended last month came away expert in the ancient privies and rubbish dumps of York! Free to attend; just turn up.

Field Notes

Connecting to People and Place



Find out all about it on Wednesday **October 15** at 4.30pm in Field View meeting room, next to the Parish Hall or ask Leigh after the Spire u3a October meeting. A Harnham-based project designed to benefit you, engaging with landscape, heritage and art through walks, workshops and special moments.....culminating in a celebration and exhibition.

l.chalmers@wessexarch.co.uk

07874 886903

Harnham Community Network

Wednesday **October 15**; 7 for 7.30pm.

The Penguin Lessons - Film night at Harnham Social Club £5 on the door; bar open.

Saturday **October 25**; 10am to 11.45. The Great Card Sale - amazing range of remade greetings cards - at bargain prices. Proceeds to charity. (Coffee & biscuits also available.)

Since our last newsletter there have been many more visitors to the website; most stay long enough to look at several different pages. Have you taken a look yet? You may feature in one of the photographs. <https://spire.u3asite.uk>

Oral History Project

The Salisbury Museum is on the lookout for older people (generally aged 60+) to join students from Wiltshire College or Salisbury 6th Form College for a five-week programme of reminiscence-based conversation inspired by the museum's collections.



The opportunity is open to anyone who would enjoy talking with young people and sharing their memories. There's no requirement to have lived in Salisbury all of your life and no prior experience is necessary. We're looking for about six to eight people per group: people can join as an individual, with their friends, or as part of an organised group.

Sessions will run as follows - people can choose either the **Tuesday OR Wednesday** session to take part in:

WILTSHIRE COLLEGE

Tuesdays 10am-11am – starting Tuesday **11 November**. Welcome meeting with facilitator Tuesday **21 October**, 1pm-2pm (an alternative date is possible if this is not convenient)

SALISBURY 6th FORM COLLEGE

Wednesdays 3pm-4pm – starting Wednesday **12 November**. Welcome meeting with facilitator Wednesday **22 October**, 1pm-2pm (an alternative date is possible if this is not convenient).

- This sounds like a fun, exciting project to take part in.
- Book with Community Curator, Bridget Telfer by email bridgettelfer@salisburymuseum.org.uk OR phone 01722 332151 [Mon-Wed]
- Travel expenses, including taxis will be covered: please tell Bridget that you are a Spire u3a member
- You will meet new people, explore museum objects and images, and learn interview techniques. It's all about having a chat and listening to each other!
- The project will be run by a professional facilitator and people from Salisbury Museum.

Foraging in October - <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2017/10/foraging-in-october/>

Tipple Time

Friday October 21 at 6pm for one hour of easy conversation.

Ornaments, souvenirs or keepsakes. What do you have on display? Can you remember where it all came from? Do you favour china, silver, wood, brass or photos? Does it tell the story of your travels or is it precious stuff your Granny left you?

Join Zoom Meeting

(See newsletter as emailed for link OR reminder email)

Monthly Meeting

Digging for Erlestoke

Monday **October 13**

Doors open for refreshments at 10am.

With Leigh Chalmers and Dr Phil Harding from Wessex Archaeology. Leigh's role as the Heritage Inclusion Manager means that she has been creating and delivering cultural, heritage and wellbeing projects for people to engage with in a meaningful way. She has a background in arts and heritage participation and has worked with groups in prisons, in hospitals and several third sector organisations. Phil is currently a Fieldwork Archaeologist at Wessex Archaeology's Salisbury office working on large scale excavation projects in a Berkshire quarry and on Salisbury Plain but best known for his regular appearances on Channel 4's Time Team. We look forward to an enlightening presentation on an ongoing historical excavation at a nearby HMP, normally well behind closed doors.

Bill Tucker has proved to be a brilliant Speaker Secretary, arranging a superb range of appropriate speakers, looking after them when they arrive and ensuring the equipment is in place. He even has speakers lined up for us till June 2026.

We don't want to lose Bill but he may not be able to carry on so we could be looking for someone to take over from January.

If you think you could help, or know someone who might, please speak to John Holt, or any committee member, urgently.



Our Speaker for November 10 is Richard Rickett - "Amazing Honey Bees".

Citizen Science - <https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

Newsletters are now available on our website

<https://spire.u3asite.uk/newsletters/>

NB some details will be omitted in the online version to safeguard member's privacy.

If you need to contact someone or to request a zoom link, you can use the form on the Contacts Page