

Spire u3a

Newsletter 68 September 2026



Painted Harpsichord in
Salisbury Museum
with thanks to Alan N Frost
& Michael A Stroud
See page 6

Monday 14 September
monthly meeting
10am for 10.30
Harnham Memorial Hall
See page 3

From the Chair

Well, what a change since our August Drought Edition! Umbrellas, socks and cardigans have all come out of the cupboard, the fans have been switched off and the gardens are showing some tinges of green.

In the meantime Alan and I have been visiting family and can report that wherever we went in southern England, the landscape was pretty much the same dull *shade of pale*. After several different beds, two new-to-us National Trust properties, an exhibition on school dinners, a terror ride on a fake racehorse, navigating the Dartford Crossing, a splendid prom concert and a family party, we arrived home refreshed and well-fed but with a lot of catching up to do. That is holiday time for you. Hope you have enjoyed your summer too.

With the additional activities for u3a Week this month, including an extra coffee meet up, I hope to see you all at some point.

Maureen

Editorial

Welcome to this Michaelmas edition. Hopefully you will find something to *learn or laugh* about Michaelmas from our space-fillers.

Thank you to all of you who have contributed copy or illustrations to this edition.

Last month we promised more things to do in September. So as well as all the need-to-know items and a report of the Summer Outing, this newsletter is packed with things to do.

Some Interest Groups are re-starting after a summer break or starting for the very first time. We have some special activities for u3a Week, this year, and pointers to some non-u3a opportunities, locally or online, that might appeal to you.

Read on

August Talk – Brilliant Mini Beasts Part Two



Juliet's enthusiasm for her chosen topic - seeking out, identifying, researching, photographing, recording and then disseminating her knowledge on the creatures she has found in her garden is an example to us all. Thank you, Juliet, for telling us about the rare ones, the unexpected relationships between them, those that eat mould or love rotting wood, the beetle that is not a bug and the true bug which is not a beetle, even the scary ones: how fascinating and incredible nature is!



Next Meeting – 10 am coffee for 10:30 start

"The Dramatic Art of the London Underground" - with Metro Art expert Mike Grundy. Since the 1960's, a host of leading British and foreign artists have been commissioned to decorate and enhance over 70 stations on the London Underground. These permanent large-scale artworks celebrate the rich history and culture of London and its people. The lecture reveals the stories behind a selection of the artworks, exploring the famous personalities, institutions and dramas of the areas served by each of the stations.

Monday **September 14** at the Memorial Hall, as usual.

And next month...

Our speaker on **October 12** will be Leigh Chalmers and others from Wessex Archaeology - Harnham Field Notes.

Summer Outing

- See the website for more photos

We had a comfortable minibus ride to Blandford: everything and everyone on time such was Maureen's careful planning. Almost none of us had been to the museum before – that's what happens when things are virtually on the doorstep – they get ignored. The museum has evolved from a costume collection by Betty Penny and can be found in the centre of the town in a charming Georgian townhouse.

Some rooms like the 'Youthquake' 1960's display of mini dresses and white wet-look boots reminded us of our own youthful wardrobes, as did the Laura Ashley display of long cotton dresses edged with lace which replicated our own 'milkmaid' era of 1970's. Bridal gowns spanned much of 20th century with a mixture of modesty and fabrics including parachute silk. That looked rather special, even if it wasn't really silk. Of course, there is no touching of any of the garments which is frustrating when you want to know if a Catherine Walker power dress in scarlet feels as good as it looks. Square shoulders may make a comeback; thank goodness the laced 18" waist is well and truly out of fashion. We had an easy browse round the different displays followed by afternoon tea before the journey home.



Katharine

SITS VAC - WANTED

Two routine jobs - Please speak to a member of the committee if you can help.

1. Designing a simple poster, once every two months, with basic details of monthly meetings. The poster has to be emailed to a trustee of the Memorial Hall who will put it inside the noticeboard on the corner of Watersmeet Road.
2. Occasional updating of coming events and photographs on our website. Nothing too technical; we have a webmaster who does the difficult stuff.

u3a Week 2026: 19-27 September: Expanding Horizons



The theme this year is *expanding horizons*. By walking together (those who are able), meeting in a variety of places and perhaps going somewhere new to eat or drink together we will get to know one another, and our surroundings, better.

Mon 21 at 9.30am - **Men's Breakfast** at Charlies Cafe, 35 Catherine Street. Order from the vast menu, or just a cup of tea: pay on ordering. Numbers limited: 12.*

Tues 22 - **Walking in the City** 9.30am. (See P.7) Finishing at St Thomas's where there will be hot drinks, cheese scones and cake. [Being part of the welcoming party, without doing the walk, is fine.]* Sign up is for the walk only.

Thurs 24 - **Picnic** at 12.30 tbc. In The Close, bring your own food or purchase takeaway from the Refectory. Meet by the visitor entrance. Let us know if you need a seat provided.* + Opportunity to see the Embroidery Demo.

Fri 25 - **Cream Tea** at 3.30pm
Field View, Lower St., with a few appropriate readings £6.
Numbers limited: 20*

APOLOGIES: It has not been possible to organise a lunch in the Parish Hall this year.

*Please look for the sign-up sheets at the September meeting.
ALTERNATIVELY, email Dave, for the Walk or Maureen for the rest

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/u3a-week>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/u3aweek>



The Feast of Michael and All Angels, Michaelmas, is celebrated on September 29. Falling near the equinox, it is one of the “quarter days” with Lady Day, Midsummer and Christmas.



News in Brief

I'm delighted to hear from you and that you all enjoyed your visit to Blandford Fashion Museum yesterday afternoon. Your group were a collection of fabulous ladies and for us it's validating that you had such a good time. The positive comments left in the visitors' book were seen by us today. So, thank you. I will pass your kind comments to the rest of the team. - Valerie

RIP - John Minney - 28-07-26

Spire u3a has written in support of Harnham Memorial Hall's application for funding from the **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**.

Our cover pic shows The Salisbury Museum Harpsichord made locally by James Mogford. The lid, painted by Diana de Vere Cole, depicts the Cathedral and musicians in the Close. You can hear it being played in the King's Room on **Wednesday, September 23** - Salisbury Banks Trio Ensemble 11am – 1pm.....drop in at anytime to enjoy the music.

You can also hear the harpsichord being played by David Davies on **Sunday October 4** from 10.30am to 12 noon. Normal admission/concessions apply.
<https://salisburymuseum.org.uk/your-visit/prices/>

Men Matters (see P.11)
At City Hall on the morning of Saturday October 10.



RIP - Revd Michael Turner

It was a privilege to attend Michael's memorable funeral on behalf of u3a. Michael will be much missed come December when we been accustomed to having him entertain us. The service sheet and a copy of his book 'God's Coincidences' will be available on Monday 14 to borrow and share around.

A recording of the memorable funeral service can be seen here, courtesy of Mark Turner.

[In loving memory of Michael Turner](#)

A prospective member has raised the idea of a **Meteorology** Group. Watch this space.

Two members Greg Condliffe and Peter Read were featured in the *Salisbury Journal* viewing the recent **Eclipse** via a replica of Newton's 1668 telescope.

Across the British Isles, including Ireland, a well fattened goose, fed on the grattan (stubble) from the fields after the harvest, is traditionally eaten to ensure prosperity: "Eat a goose on Michaelmas Day: Want not for money all the year"

Interest Groups

Walking In the Countryside



Our walk in August was around Downton and visited places associated with Nelson's family plus Barney gave us a history of his part in saving Charlton All Saints Church. We will be having an additional short walk during U3A week in September starting at 9.30 on **Tuesday 22 September** starting and finishing at St Thomas Church. We will be meeting other u3a members after the walk at about 11.15 am for tea and cake/scones. Details of our next walk on 18 September have been sent out to members and anyone else who has not previously joined us will be very welcome, just let me know by email before the Wednesday prior to the walk.

Each walk starts at 9.30am and we try and end near a coffee shop for those interested in partaking. Interesting local facts will be part of the format of each walk.

Dates for walks up to October '26 are as below, so put the dates in your diaries:

18 September – Wilton and into Groveley Woods – 5.5 miles. Start at Wilton Shopping Village Car Park with coffee at The Weavers Coffee Shop.

22 September (u3a Week) –St Thomas Church /Avon Valley Park– 3.25 miles. Coffee at St Thomas Church

9 October – Cranborne – 4.8 miles. Start at Cranborne Garden Centre with coffee at the end in their tea rooms. The Cheese Scones there are legendary.

Dave Chapell

According to the proverb, Michaelmas marks the end of blackberry picking in Ireland: *On Michaelmas Day the devil puts his foot on blackberries.*

Apparently, he was so angry when he fell into brambles, having been thrown out of heaven that he spat on the berries and turned them sour.

Coffee Companions

For those who cannot make the usual first Tuesday of the month there is an additional opportunity in September as part of the u3a Week activities. Join the Walking group as they return from a wander round Avon Valley Park some time after 11am at St Thomas's Church on **Tuesday September 22**.

If you miss the monthly meeting Coffee Companions is a good way of keeping in touch. Next regular gathering will be on **October 5** at 10.30am Contact Enid for venue through the website.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/coffee-companions/



Wednesday Book Group

This month's book was "The Shadow Child" by Rachel Hancox. The book is essentially about relationships, how they interconnect to other people's lives, the impact secrets can have, the upbringing that occurs at childhood and how that feels in adulthood. It was an emotional rollercoaster of a read and the author dealt with a very difficult subject, dealing with the loss of a child in its many forms.

Sharon

Explore AI (Artificial Intelligence)

The Explore AI Group will, as well as practical skills, try to include a balanced discussion of current topics. One such topical issue is the building of data centres and their use of water and electricity.

Did you know the majority of data centres are not used for AI but to power everyday services – everything from banking and commerce to government and email? Most of those that are built for running AI will use NVIDIA's B200 (or later), reusing water in a closed loop, rather like your fridge keeps using the same coolant. Should we still be concerned about AI's use of water?

As to electricity, the big three 'hyperscaler' companies (Amazon Web Services, Microsoft and Google) are committed to being carbon neutral by 2030 by using renewables and reusing the energy in waste heat. Few of the other announced data centres in the UK are actually progressing, in part because it is cheaper to run them in countries like Norway, where renewable electricity is cheaper. Third, AI systems are becoming about 10 times more energy efficient every two years. How much should we still be concerned about AI contributing to global warming?

And will the benefits of AI outweigh the costs? That's another big question to tackle once we know more about the subject.

Explore AI starts **October 16** in Salisbury Library from 10 am till noon. To join us, please email me and include a mobile number if you have one.

Michael Stroud

Michaelmas daisies, genus *Symphyotrichum* includes around 90 species. Central disc florets are typically yellow, surrounded by pink, blue, purple or white florets.

OBC

Wiltshire Libraries have come up with plenty of titles to choose from within our chosen theme - Travel Writing - by Patrick Leigh Fermor, William Dalrymple, Nanjala Nyabola, Damien Lewis, Sven Hedin and Bill Bryson.

With seven away we were a very select group but Mary Mitchell and Rosemary Chapell had provided written feedback and Malcolm regaled us with his thoughts arising from *SAS Great Escapes* which tells the story of seven of the most daring escapes executed during WWII: with each story comes a nail-biting, rollercoaster ride in classic Damien Lewis style.

Next meeting: 3 Burford Avenue - **Tuesday October 13** at 3.30pm

Contact through the website

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/book-club/

Lunch Bunch

With the holidays in full swing we were a select group at the Giggling Squid but sat very companionably at a round table and welcomed back a long-missed face.

Please contact Judy through the website for decisions on where and when the next lunch will be.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/eats-and-treats/

Judy

Art & Craft

We have had a particularly good summer with trips to Romsey and Blandford to admire the cleverness of others.

This month we will focus on colour and take a closer look at some of the mandalas on show at the quilt exhibition. Please bring any colouring pencils that you have laying around - or beg & borrow - and a clipboard or something to rest on, if possible.

Tuesday **September 22**: 2pm at 3 Burford Avenue.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/art-craft/



Penrose Tiling in Crochet & a Quilted Patchwork Mandala.

Armchair Geology

Meetings are scheduled to recommence this **September - on Tuesday 15** - usual time (10.00 to 12 noon) and place (20, St. Clair Road) so please make a diary note now!

For the three months to November the idea is to study the various natural stone materials which were utilised in Salisbury city building construction and decoration. Then, armed with that knowledge, the city geotour (planned for the December meeting) will enable us to easily identify the stones to be found in the city.

New members welcome, just let me know as soon as possible so I can include you when issuing the reminder(s). Contact is via the website.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/geology/

Stuart

Playing Simple Music

Please note our first meeting of the "new" academic year will be on **Monday September 28** at 20, St. Clair Road, 10.00 to 12 noon. Our group currently comprises guitars and recorders. We now have the use of an electronic keyboard which just needs a pianist! Also a few recorders are available if required. (soprano and alto recorders) and simple percussion items, so why not join us. All music supplied, too.

Contact is via the website.

https://spire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/playing-simple-music/

Stuart

u3a Choir

Open to members of all u3as, the choir meets on Monday afternoons in Wilton Community Centre. The repertoire ranges from medieval music to songs from the shows. There is no audition. If interested, please ring David Davies, (local code) 714440, for more information.

Learn, laugh, live

Archaeology

DIG In Cafe resumes in the Autumn at the Playhouse.

Meet in the foyer from 10.30am for Coffee (optional).

There will be a short talk in the community space (easily accessible) at 11am.

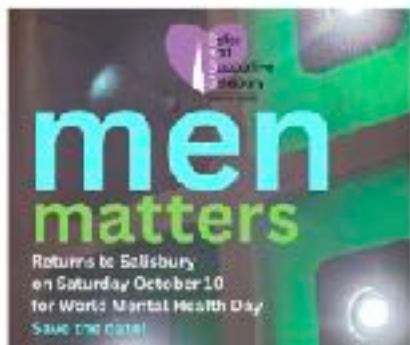
These FREE talks are generally on the fourth Wednesday of the month. The topic is always a surprise! They are usually presented by one of the younger employees at Wessex Archaeology, however we understand that Phil Harding will be delivering one this season.

Leigh Chalmers, who told us about the HMP Erlestoke Dig, at one of our monthly meetings, is handing over Dig In to Ruth Yoxon but we are still expecting Leigh to be at our October talk in the Memorial Hall, to tell us about her work in Harnham.

• **Wed 30 September** 10.30am for 11 at The Playhouse.

Also Wednesday 28 October and Wednesday 25 November

Men Matters



Men Matters 2026 Showcase

Venue: Salisbury City Hall

Date: Saturday 10 October 2026

Time: 10am-12 noon

Gentlemen - offers of support to Dave, please.....

French Conversation Cafe

Fancy keeping your French going – or simply having a go at speaking French in a friendly group?

Friday 18 September, 10.00am to Noon at Harnham Parish Hall.

Please come along and practice your conversation French in a very informal atmosphere led by a native French Speaker. This is likely to be great fun as well as helping you order your croissants and coffee!

Email HCN if you would like to attend.

c.£25 for 8 sessions.

Online Learning with u3a

Sheep, Brain Health, Cryptic Crosswords, Iona Artists, Autumn recipes, Mods & Rockers and Aviation all feature in these sessions which are free to members.

Choose your topic and book your place here



<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events>

Concerts in Poole with The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

There is an organisation (not u3a) in Salisbury that takes people by coach to attend the BSO concerts at The Lighthouse --Arts centre

We stop in Wilton Salisbury, Downton and Ringwood to pick up people.

You are sent a programme of several concerts you might like to attend---these are on Wednesday evenings. We usually have trips about twice a month from October to May. Just come to the ones you want to. If this interests you please get in touch by phone/email for more details.

Thank you, Daphne -- phone (local code) 782532

Michaelmas Daisies thrive in fertile, moist, well-drained soil in sun or partial shade. Plants will benefit from mulching in autumn, and division every few years to maintain vigour. Will not tolerate waterlogging in winter, and may need support.

HCN Film Night

My Mother's Wedding

Wednesday 16 September, 7.30 pm,

Harnham Social Club

£5 per person - tickets available on the door.



St Michael, mentioned in the Old Testament Book of Daniel and the New Testament Epistles of Jude and Revelation, was celebrated from the Middle Ages in art, prayer, and poetry. By the 18th century, his feast day was marked by church services. Bach's cantatas, Herr Gott, dich loben alle wir, BWV 130 (1724), Es erhub sich ein Streit, BWV 19 (1726) and Man singet mit Freuden vom Sieg, BWV 149 (1728 or 1729) were all written for Michaelmas.

And finally... Tipple Time

Many thanks to Richard and Enid for keeping the August conversation, more or less, on track.

The topic for September is flowers - garden flowers or wild, round beds or straight borders, seeds or plants, drought resistant, plastic fakes free with Daz, Laura Ashley prints or Van Gogh's Sunflowers.

Friday September 18

All welcome. Just click the usual link below at 6pm to join the conversation –

us02web.zoom.us/j/86725675768?pwd=RjMxRGhvQ0pzYUd4NjhHT1hYNmV6UT09

PLEASE come prepared to the monthly meeting with your diary/calendar so you can sign up for events AND with cash/cheque to pay as necessary.

Thank you.