



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR!**

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due to works being carried out at Henstridge Village Hall, the meeting on the 6th January will take place at Milborne Port Village Hall. The times are the same as are the entry fees.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE NOW

£15.00 or £11.50 if you bring proof of Membership of another u3a branch.
Group Leaders & Committee Members £7.50

Cheques payable to Blackmore Vale U3A
(Please contact Gill Westall for postal address)

We are now able to take membership payments by debit or credit card – in person only. This can be done at the general meeting.

If you wish to pay by bank transfer:
Blackmore Vale U3A
Barclays Bank
sort code: 20 99 40
account: 03388832
please use your surname and membership number as the reference then email bvmembership@outlook.com to say you have done this.

January 6th

at

**Milborne Port Village
Hall**

Springfield Road
Milborne Port
Somerset
DT9 5RE

We welcome once again **David Bailey** to give a talk and slide show called

‘Wildlife Wanderings’

Doors open at 2.15pm for refreshments and David will start his talk at 3pm.

£2 for members and £3 for non-members



Story Time

We are continuing our new feature, with stories and anecdotes from members.

The theme this month is myths and ghosts.

Please let us know if you enjoy this.

A Northern Lights Myth – the Vanya Widda

Children, listen carefully to your wise grandmother--stay near home in the long dark nights of winter and hold hands as you walk together in the forest.

If you don't, you'll be captured by the great black witches, the *Vanya-Widda*.

The *Vanya-Widda* take weak and stray animals and cook them for the pot. Their absolute favourites are young human children who are foolish enough to stray by themselves in the depths of winter.

When these children are cooked by the *Vanya-Widda* their charcoal fires give off spectacular coloured smoke and fumes, which dance in the night sky.

Green for a boy and red for a girl!

Ron Smith



A Baby in the Ice?



A baby in the ice?

The Sami are a nomadic people whose life is governed by the rhythms of the reindeer herds they tend. The herds need to move between safe breeding grounds and feeding grounds as the varying seasons and climates dictate.

These natural migrations mean that the Sami people roam across international boundaries in the northern regions of Sweden, Norway, Finland and on the Kola Peninsula of Russia. Despite their long-established presence and culture, there have been times when the local governments have tried to suppress the people, their culture and language.

In modern times a more relaxed and hands-off approach has been followed, allowing Sami a degree of autonomy with a flag, national anthem and Sami parliament to manage their affairs and negotiate rights with the state powers.

Much of the Sami's traditional clothing, known as *gatki*, uses reindeer leather and fur and reindeer meat is also an important food source. Similarly, the traditional portable *lavvu* tents, carried during the reindeer migrations, wooden structures covered with reindeer hides, which were secured by reindeer gut twine. Nowadays the design is much the same, but more modern materials are used. The Sami people live in harmony with their environment, but changes in climate can cause certain hazards to arise.

For example, the reindeer may be ready to move to their winter-feeding grounds at a specific date, but rising temperatures may mean that the rivers and lakes are not yet frozen. This can force the herders into large detours, or into crossing streams or rivers that are not adequately frozen.

Legend has it that a certain number of herders and their wives and children are lost each year due to falling through the ice, or being taken by wolves, trolls or other unfriendly beings. In the case of the unfortunate souls who fall through thin ice, their images are said to appear in the ice alongside the streams and rivers as they freeze.

Of course, this may just be a fairy tale to frighten the children into not taking undue risks, but you never know ...

Ron Smith

Finding Peace: How I Resolved a Ghost's Grievance in My Shop

My dream comes true! At last I had found a shop within my price range, as I wanted to open a book shop where people could come and sit and browse. I had been warned by local people not to buy this shop because it was haunted, but as I didn't believe in ghosts that wouldn't bother me.

Eventually the shop was ready to open. The shelves were full, there were a couple of chairs and a table, and the whole shop looked welcoming.

By midday I was a little disappointed that, though people had passed by, they looked and walked on. Oh well, these things take time. At lunchtime I decided to go out for a sandwich, and as I opened the door, I realised that the sign said 'CLOSED'. I distinctly remember putting the OPEN sign facing outwards. I turned it round, and it immediately turned again. Not to be outdone by this, I reached for the Sellotape, and stuck it firmly in the OPEN position. At this moment there was a thump, and I turned to see a book falling to the floor. I went over, and picked it up and put it back, and then another, and another fell on to the floor. I frantically tried to put them all back, but eventually there was a huge pile on the floor.

I began to realise that this was no earthquake, or unbalanced shelves, but something else. 'If you are trying to frighten me, I can tell you now, I don't believe in ghosts!'

A pause, then a book fell to the floor, and the pages began to turn furiously. I picked it up at the open page, and realised the book was about local history. I read the article: *'In 1895 a fire began in the living room where an old man was reading by candlelight. He fell asleep and his book caught fire. Sadly, all members of the family, except the old man, died. He was never the same, and it was said that he later died of a broken heart, and remorse that he had imbibed more than he should that night.'*

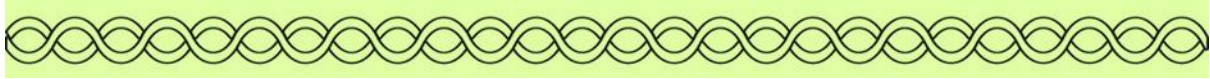
Having read that, I felt sympathy for this – what – a ghost? – what else could it be? 'Ok', I said, 'I am sorry for what happened to you, but I own this shop now, and you are causing me problems. What can I do to help you? There was no answer, but a feeling of waiting for me to speak again. 'If you like reading, you will have all the books you want here, and not only that, you won't be lonely, because people will come in, and like you, enjoy reading. And I will commission a sign for the front of the shop to commemorate the fire. Will that help?'

There was a deep sigh, and the books returned to the shelves simultaneously, except for the opened one. No words were spoken by the ghost, so I did as I had

promised, and put a plaque for the wall at the side of the shop. The book of local history I left open on the table, and one by one, people started coming into the shop, and browsing the shelves, and many would read the local history book, which always returned to the appropriate page at the end of each day.

I heard no more from the ghost, so can only assume that he is content, - if indeed there is such a thing as a ghost! What do you think?

Natalie Thompson



READING GROUP

No report this month.



GARDEN VISITS GROUP

We have had a very successful year with a good variety of garden visits and events. The monthly coffee mornings at Dikes are also very well attended, with an average of 15 members, although on one occasion we had 21, which was a record!

We have sadly lost a couple of members during the year, but managed to fill these vacancies with new members who had been on our 'waitlist' from the Open Afternoon, so are now back to our maximum number of 30.



Our next event is our Annual Group Lunch (on Thurs 15th Jan'26) at the Grange Hotel in Osborne, near Sherborne, so we are hoping for a good turnout (15 members have already confirmed). Brita, my Group Assistant, is co-ordinating this event and taking the menu pre-orders.

On that same note, I would like to thank Brita for all her help over the past year, compiling all the necessary forms for the coffee mornings; garden visits and other events.

We both look forward to another successful year in 2026, which will be our third year running the group together.

Jan Nast



WALKING GROUPS

On a cold, sunny and windy day the walkers met at the Gainsborough Arms in Milborne Port for the November walk. Before setting out everyone wishing to eat made their selection from the menu. The first part of the walk was straightforward as we walked up the road to Milborne Wick. This was the first decision point as the recce had found that one option was very wet and muddy; as there had been more rain, it was decided to make a minor variation to the planned route. This involved going through a farmyard full of cattle which was rather intimidating. Fortunately, one of the farm workers was available, so he was asked whether it was safe to walk through the area where the cattle were enclosed. He suggested we all walk in a group and keep to the side away from them. This hazard was successfully negotiated.



The walk continued diagonally up a hillside, to the top of the hill where we certainly felt the wind and were pleased to have the sunshine. After a short stretch we reached the footpath which has excellent views over the countryside towards Osborne and Poyntington. Fortunately, this stretch was downwind, so felt very pleasant with the sun shining. The final leg took us along a small road for a short way, then down a slope and up a short, but steep, climb. From here it was a gentle walk downhill, through Newtown

and back to the Gainsborough Arms where we had booked lunch. We enjoyed an excellent lunch after which we parted ways and went home.

The Tuesday group did the same walk and the Gainsborough Arms were good enough to open specially for them so that they could eat lunch there after the walk.

The December walk was cancelled due to forecast heavy rain, but everyone met at the Bird in Hand at Henstridge for a buffet lunch followed by mince pies made by Hilary and stollen made by Richard.

Hilary Smith



LUNCH GROUP

We had a very enjoyable meal at the White Lion in Bourton at the beginning of November. The food was good and amid much laughter the conversation flowed. Many thanks to Dennis for arranging it for us and also for sorting out the confusion that the pub created over our payments and the deposit he had paid originally.

It seems that in general Friday is the best day for most people to come. So we will probably meet on that day in the future.

We agreed to give December a miss for a meal and to start up again in the New Year. Ann Bevan and Lyn Comrie have offered to book the next two meals for us in January and February. The dates we agreed are **Friday 9th January**, probably at the Ship Inn, and **Friday 6th February**, venue to be decided.

The size of the group is capped at 20. We have a place in the group available at present, so do contact me if you are interested in joining us.

Gill Westall

gillwestall@hotmail.com



Future events

(CAN BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

All talks and meetings are held in
Henstridge Village Hall from 2.15pm

March 3rd

Annual General Meeting

Followed by

Kevin Patience

Operation Mincemeat and
the Man Who Never Was

May 5th

Linda Farrand

World Cheese Awards

July 7th

James Taylor

Careless Talk Costs Lives

September 8th

Open Afternoon

November 3th

Charlotte Carty

In my Grandfather's Footsteps



Your Committee

Chair Vice Chair	Susan Kidd Gill Westall	skiddsbvu3a@gmail.com
Secretary	Helen Lennon	hlennon35@yahoo.co.uk
Membership Secretary	Gill Westall	bvmembership@outlook.com 01963 204318
Treasurer	Judy Penfold	Jood58@gmail.com
Publicity	Susan Kidd	Skiddsbvu3a@gmail.com 01963 362107
Newsletter and Web Page	Judy Penfold	Jood58@gmail.com
Speaker Secretary (temporary)	Hilary Smith	ron_hilary@tiscali.co.uk
Committee Member	Lin Allison	allisonlinda021@gmail.com
Committee Member	VACANT	

Group contacts

Walking Group, Tuesday	Richard Kidd	richardakidd64@gmail.com
Walking Group, Wednesday		
Reading Groups	vacant	
Bridge	Howard Warden	Warden444@btinternet.com
Garden Visits	Jan Nast	Janice.nast@gmail.com

GENERAL MEETINGS

Are usually held in Henstridge Village Hall from 2.15pm on the first Tuesday of alternate months.

Members £2.00 Visitors 3.00

All our general meetings are publicised in the online Blackmore Vale magazine, local Facebook pages, websites and magazines. Posters are circulated to public places in Stalbridge, Henstridge, Wincanton, Templecombe and Milborne Port.

Venue hire

Please remember when making bookings that each group is self-funding, therefore, if there are any costs involved, a suitable fee should be charged to attendees to cover these costs. **Also, a copy of the invoice and receipt is required to be sent to the Treasurer each month to be entered into the main accounts.**

Privacy Policy

Please be assured that we will never pass on your details to third parties without explicit consent from you and that we will never share your details with any company or charity for marketing purposes.

The contents of this newsletter are provided by the members for the members and is produced at no cost to the members.