



NEWSLETTER NO 63 October 2023

**From the Chair:**

Welcome to the October Newsletter, a month that is traditionally the start of our year. In this issue we are covering our “literary“ groups, i.e. the Play Reading Group, the Theatre Group and the Book Group. In the next issue I hope to feature the Cycling Group, the Lunch Club and the Gardens Group.

At its recent meeting the committee discussed the welcome given to new members. If you see people alone at a monthly meeting it may be a good idea to say hello and introduce yourself; committee members will also try to do this better. We have also decided to publish lists of new members in the Newsletter.

We pay a yearly subscription to “Third Age Matters” magazine, based on the number of copies sent out, which many members enjoy reading. However, if you receive this magazine and don’t read it, please let us know so that we can save on the subscription cost.

In my Beginners German Group I have started to read a joke at the beginning of each session, a trick I pinched from Liz Hayden’s German Improvers Group. I reckoned that I could tell if they understood by whether they laughed at the end. However, this doesn’t always work as some of the jokes are terrible. We thought it might be fun though if we translated a couple of the better ones into English and published them here. So here goes:

From Liz:

Romantic man on the telephone: “I’ll love you forever. I would climb the highest mountain for you. I would swim the widest ocean for you...”

Girl: “Are you coming round to my house?”

Romantic man: “Yes, as soon as it stops raining.”

From me:

A drunk came staggering out of a posh hotel and saw a man in uniform standing by the entrance. "Call me a taxi" he said to the man.

"I am a lieutenant-general of the German Air Force", the man replied indignantly.

"Call me a helicopter then".

And they say the Germans don't have a sense of humour!

If you are interested in learning or improving a language, we have German, French and Spanish groups at different levels. There is interest in Somerton u3a in starting an Italian group, a group we did have here at one time. If you are interested, or wish to facilitate such a group, getting together with Somerton u3a may be a good possibility to make it viable. They also have other groups that we don't have, and which may interest Martock members. Somerton is only a 20min drive away and it should be possible to arrange a carpool; because of the Avalon arrangement, no subscription fee is payable. Two members of Somerton u3a have recently joined my Beginners German group, and two the German Conversation Group. Somerton u3a will have a table at our Open Day on 18<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Annual General Meeting:**

This will take place prior to the talk on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October and should not take too long. Documents relating to the AGM have been sent out to members. Any concerns, questions or comments should be sent to me or can be raised at the AGM.

We ask that as many members as possible attend the AGM. If you cannot attend, please send in your apologies to our Secretary, Pat Brett.

### **Monthly meetings:**

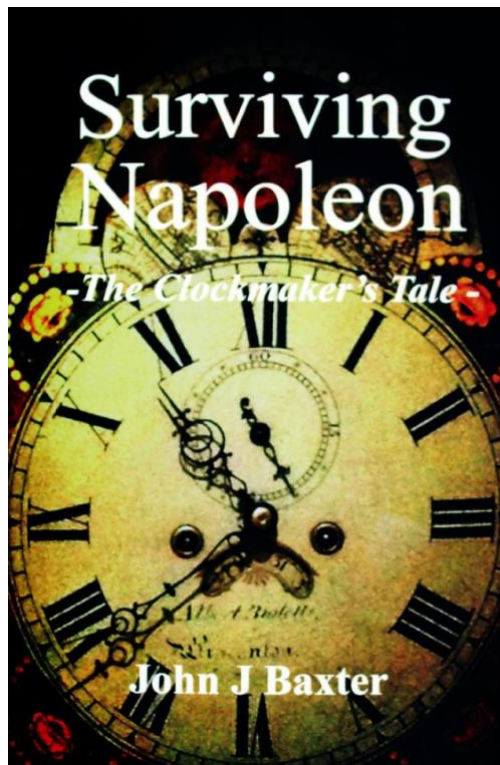
On 11th Oct – "Alberto Bioletti and the French Parole Prisoners in Wincanton". John Baxter presents the life of an extraordinary man, a talk based on his recent book.

John's book be obtained from Amazon at:

<https://amzn.eu/d/bZUhAxf>

Here is the summary:

Alberto Bioletti was a little-known Italian who became a soldier of Napoleon. Born in 18th Century Turin he expected to follow in his clockmaker father's footsteps. Influenced by the European revolutionary tide, Bioletti joined the French Army and experienced a very different destiny. As a soldier in the French Army he crossed continents, survived impossibly gruelling campaigns and was caught up in Bonaparte's rise from dashing young general to his fall as defeated emperor. After enduring the war in Russia, Bioletti's battles seemed over, but his final destination in Somerset tells of a triumph every bit as unexpected as his military escapades. *Surviving Napoleon* is based on extensive research into Bioletti's life and follows his adventures from Italy to Egypt, Haiti to England, Paris to Kazan. The result, rich in authentic detail, is an unexpected and gripping read.



The photo above shows John and his wife Elizabeth at the recent History Day in Wincanton, when he dressed as Bioletti, and a blue plaque commemorating Bioletti was unveiled.

On 8<sup>th</sup> November Jane Robinson will talk about Chinese Medicine. This meeting will be chaired by Chris Atkins.

Our monthly meetings are held in the Parish Hall on the second Wednesday of the month; doors open at 2.15pm for a 2.30 pm start. Tea and homemade cake are served after the talk.

## **Parish Hall:**

You may have observed that we have had trouble with the facilities in the Parish Hall not working. It seems the projector and computer system are now working, but we now have a backup projector which Alison Sutton is lending us if necessary. The PA sound system has not been working for months and still is not working, which results in our speakers having to shout and sometimes not being heard easily, which I am told was the case with the last speaker, so apologies. Emily Dawson, their Operations Officer, says she will have it repaired but this still has not been done. For this reason, we are considering purchasing our own system. Also, the dishwasher has been out of action for months. Emily has assured me that an engineer has now looked at it and it needs a spare part which he has ordered, and it should be working again when that has been installed. This should please our hard-working tea team.

Although they don't have a room big enough to house monthly meetings, The George has several rooms of various sizes that can house group meetings. I hold my Philosophy and Science Group meetings there and I have found that their facilities, including AV and refreshments, are first class and their charges for room hire are reasonable. They are also very helpful if you have any problems or special requests.

## **Open day:**

We will be holding an Open Day on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2pm to 4pm in the Parish Hall to showcase our group activities, allow potential members to chat to group facilitators and committee members, and to give people an opportunity to join. Committee members and facilitators will wear name tags which can be collected at the meeting.

Group facilitators should plan a show table and sign, and set up a list to sign so that potential members are recorded. Let Mary know that you are doing this, and make sure your table is continually manned by members of the group during the two hours.

If you are planning a new group, this is a good time to showcase it. Again, make a sign, a list to record potential members, and let Mary know.

It might be a good idea to publicise your group beforehand and let people know that you will be present. "Martock Chat" on Facebook is a good place to advertise since they have a group membership of 5,300, greater than the entire population of Martock! This may be particularly important if you are thinking of establishing a new group, as people who are not yet u3a members may be interested, and remember membership is no longer age restricted.

## **Christmas event:**

This will be held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2.30pm to 5pm. More on this later.

## **Play Reading Group:**

From Jane Hodges, facilitator:

We were amongst the first groups to form when Martock U3A began, and we've kept going ever since!

As the name suggests, we read 1 or 2 Act play scripts, usually supplied by the Performing Arts Library in Yeovil. The content varies, most plays taking a light-hearted look at daily life. Members sometimes find themselves cast in more than one role when there aren't enough readers present. The only problem can be remembering which voice you have chosen for each character!

Shakespeare is not neglected. At one meeting, we read a short extract from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', and then 'translated' it into modern English, with hilarious results!

Do we ever write our own scripts? Just before lockdown, I floated the idea and members responded with enthusiasm. There's definitely an opening scene in existence....

In May last year some members performed in a Murder Mystery at Martock Library, organised by Library staff. Our efforts were well received by the audience, and we enjoyed ourselves too.

At the moment there are about 8 of us who meet on the last Monday each month in members' homes. New members welcome.

## **Theatre Group:**

From Ken Smith, facilitator:

The Theatre Group in its present form was set up to satisfy a perceived demand for social theatregoing in our local community. The progressive increase in numbers to over 40 would seem to confirm that, although numbers attending shows have been disappointingly low of late. The temporary closure of The Octagon in Yeovil has certainly been a factor, with their programme just before closure being less appealing than before.

Our theatre visits are deliberately based on local venues, to minimise long drives and especially night drives as well as keeping costs down, and Westlands has taken over from The Octagon to a large extent, while we do also have the Swan Theatre to utilise when appropriate. We always try to include an opportunity to socialise before each performance, as of course socialising (I.e., chatting!) during a performance is not encouraged. The Octagon was good in that respect because it had a very handy restaurant, but we are assured that Westlands have now improved their facilities in that respect. Socialising is of course recognised as an important factor in our well-being and is an important part of the whole experience.

The way we organise the group is for the organiser (taking into account suggestions from members) to offer shows to the membership, members then to indicate which show(s) they'd like to attend, then the organiser to confirm the event if sufficient numbers (usually just 4 minimum) are interested and to ask for payments to be sent to him before the booking is made. Clearly, the more quickly this can all be done the better, to ensure more choice of seating location. Reactions to these events have been very favourable, with the social side being invariably very friendly and welcoming.

### **Book Group:**

From Alison Bleasdale, facilitator:

“It is a truth universally acknowledged...”

“Last night I went to Manderley again...”

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...”

It is such a pleasure to be grabbed right at the start of a book, then diving in to get to know the characters, their world and what happens to them. After reading to the end, it extends the pleasure to meet up with others who have also just finished the book. You discuss what impressed or annoyed you and whether the writing was zinging or flat. Book group meetings are always lively, particularly if we have differing opinions.

We meet on fourth Thursdays at 11.00, in each other's homes. We buy paperbacks or Kindle editions or order from the library. Members are from Martock, Montacute and Norton. We all suggest books for the programme.

Our September book was superb: *The Idea of Perfection* by Kate Grenville.  
It began:

“In his ex-wife's clever decorating magazines Douglas Cheeseman had seen mattress ticking being amusing. Marjorie had explained that it was amusing to use mattress ticking for curtains the same way it was amusing to use an old

treadle Singer as a table for your maidenhair ferns. But he did not think the amusing aspect of mattress ticking being used as a curtain had made it as far as the Caledonian Hotel in Karakarook, NSW, pop 1374. He could feel the cold dust in the fabric as he held it back to look out of the window.”

### **Birthdays:**

The following have birthdays in October, according to information supplied by them to us. We wish everyone a very happy birthday.

Susie Stakes, Margaret Davidson, Laurie Hawes, Peggy Horwood, Gordon Richings, Alison Sutton, Judith Stewart, Constance Stolworthy

### **New Members:**

We welcome the following new members and wish them an enjoyable experience with us:

Sarah Atkins, Martyn Atkins, Elizabeth Glaisher, Jane Horsey, Constance Stolworthy, Kathryn Aspinall, Jill Frost, Rod Page, Rosalyn Bowers, Patricia Toosey, Andrew Toosey.

### **Other talks:**

Members of the Avalon group of u3as also hold talks at monthly meetings, and other events, which may be of interest to our members. A list of websites of member u3as may be found here on the Avalon website.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/south-west/page/28956>

Back copies of this Newsletter and the National u3a Newsletter, as well as minutes of our committee meetings, may be found on our website:

<http://www.martocku3a.org.uk/>

For more information about proposed or existing groups, or if you want to join a group, contact our Groups Secretary Mary Marshall at:

[martocku3agroupssec1@gmail.com](mailto:martocku3agroupssec1@gmail.com)

For information about other aspects of this Newsletter contact Greg Atkins, Chair at:

[chairmaru3a@gmail.com](mailto:chairmaru3a@gmail.com)

If you have any interesting news or views, or if you would like an item published in the Newsletter, contact Greg Atkins.

**Current Committee members:**

Chair: Greg Atkins. [chairmaru3a@gmail.com](mailto:chairmaru3a@gmail.com)  
Vice Chair: Chris Atkins; [vicemaru3a1@gmail.com](mailto:vicemaru3a1@gmail.com)  
Treasurer: Sue Roberts; [treasmaru3@gmail.com](mailto:treasmaru3@gmail.com)  
Secretary: Pat Brett; [commaru3a@gmail.com](mailto:commaru3a@gmail.com)  
Membership Secretary: Susie Stakes; [martocku3amembership@gmail.com](mailto:martocku3amembership@gmail.com)  
Events Secretary: Mal Nelson Hedge; [martocku3aevents1@gmail.com](mailto:martocku3aevents1@gmail.com)  
Groups Secretary: Mary Marshall; [martocku3agroupssec1@gmail.com](mailto:martocku3agroupssec1@gmail.com)  
Web Manager: Alison Bleasdale; [webmaru3a@gmail.com](mailto:webmaru3a@gmail.com)  
Publicity Secretary: Mona Mace; [pubmaru3a@gmail.com](mailto:pubmaru3a@gmail.com)  
Committee member: Alison Sutton, [alisoncomm1maru3a@gmail.com](mailto:alisoncomm1maru3a@gmail.com)  
Committee member: Adrian Sutton, [adriancomm2maru3a@gmail.com](mailto:adriancomm2maru3a@gmail.com)

**Honorary President:** Sue MacLean

**Proposed new committee (if approved at the the AGM on October 11<sup>th</sup>):**

Chair: Greg Atkins  
Vice Chair: Chris Atkins  
Treasurer: Sue Roberts  
Secretary: Pat Brett  
Membership Secretary: Alison Sutton  
Events Secretary: Mal Nelson Hedge  
Groups Secretary: Mary Marshall  
Web Manager: Alison Bleasdale  
Publicity Secretary: Adrian Sutton  
Committee member: Carol Youngson  
Committee member: Phil Booth

**Honorary President:** Sue MacLean (not a *de facto* committee member but attends committee meetings by invitation).

**NOTICES FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

From Caroline Bennett, Seniors Support Coordinator, Martock Parish Council:

**The Nottingham Knockers** are reported to be operating in the Parish, but they are just not knocking on doors, they are approaching people in the street.



You may know this group as ‘the duster sellers’. They are normally young lads that turn up on your doorstep with a huge black holdall full of cleaning products ranging from tea towels, dishcloths and dusters to sprays, polishes and even small clothing items. Initially they all came from the Nottingham area, obtaining their goods from a warehouse at Clifton just outside of Nottingham and they then come ‘knocking’ on your door to trade, hence the term ‘Nottingham Knockers’. Unfortunately, not only are they after selling you poor quality items at highly inflated prices they are also checking out suitable targets for details to be sold onwards to professional burglars.



Once they have their holdall of products, the teams, normally six in number, are shipped out in vans and minibuses to work an area. They will readily admit to being ex-convicts trying to make a new start in life by working for a living and may show a card purporting to be part of a probation scheme or claim to be deaf or mute, again showing an appropriate card. These ID cards are all mocked up and have no legal bearing. The probation service does not and would not be involved in any such working methods. Again, these young men deal in cash on the doorstep, trying to work sales into £ notes by using the ‘I’ve got no change’ routine. It has been held that the Knockers look out for fresh notes and may even smell the notes to see if they are musty with a view to then ‘trading’ that person's location to other criminals, thinking that the note they have been given comes from a much larger cache.

It is a known fact that people who have purchased from Nottingham Knockers and ‘paid in cash’ on the doorstep have become victims of a household burglary shortly afterwards with many instances of anecdotal evidence towards this sad fact. Some victims have had weekly visits from these criminals, starting with selling items for £10 but escalating week on week until the weekly price reaches

£60, £70 or even much higher. An example of the increase Nottingham Knockers can make follows with the help of this picture. These are genuine items purchased by an elderly gentleman in South Lincolnshire.

Question: “How much would YOU pay for these 10 items?”

Question: “How much did this elderly gent pay a Nottingham Knocker for these 10 items?”

**Answer – £550.00 CASH!**

Identified as a victim by his carer, it transpires that he had been visited by Nottingham Knockers for months, each time the amount requested was getting higher and higher, with the elderly gent saying “**I knew I was paying too much, but I just didn’t like to say no**”.

Many people purchase from sellers just to get shut of them, others because they feel sorry for them. But once you have purchased from Nottingham Knockers, they will keep returning to try their luck once more. We also have cases where they have become violent and forced their way into people’s homes to obtain further cash. Again, we must realise that these sellers are Professional Criminals, with handwritten lists being taken from them showing the names of streets / houses with a one-, two- or three-star rating clearly showing those homes where they have more chance of success. Many will use a charm approach and enter the phase of grooming their victims ready for their next visit. Sadly, once you are on their list, you run the risk of continual visits from the Nottingham Knockers or their burglar friends as the list will be sold on and on.



**The message: DON'T DEAL WITH COLD CALLERS**

## **REMEMBER**

- **Do Not deal with Nottingham Knockers.**
- **NEVER allow Nottingham Knockers into your home.**
- **Do Not pay CASH on the doorstep.**

Be aware of Nottingham Knockers visiting your neighbourhood and report any such activity immediately to police. By doing this you may well prevent another person falling into the cycle of repeated visits and cash hand overs.

### **HOW YOU CAN HELP?**

- Explain to elderly relative/friend/neighbour/client how Nottingham Knockers work.
- Discuss household security – doors/windows.
- Discuss opening the door to un-expected callers.
- Discuss the folly of keeping large amounts of cash in the house.
- Discuss why you should not pay with cash on the doorstep.
- Explain how it is not rude to say ‘No’.
- Reassure person that they can call police for help. You will not resolve issues or change perspectives overnight, but by REPEATING and drip feeding the information it will sink in and your patience and perseverance will help prevent further crimes.

### **Another scam:**

I have been informed of a recent scam within the Parish regarding loft insulation. A couple were the victim of a recent cold call targeted for new loft insulation. Repeated visits were made on consecutive days to the address by the fraudulent individuals who were very persuasive and responsive to the vulnerabilities within the home. Thankfully a family member was able intervene to stop the process and their bank and relevant fraud support were informed. This has affected the family greatly.

# MARTOCK CARERS GROUP

3RD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH

10.30AM - 12 NOON



**STRONGER TOGETHER**



## THE ROSE AND CROWN

EAST LAMBROOK TA13 5HF

 FREE CAR PARK

 ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES

**Support and social group for Martock and South Petherton Surgery patients who are carers and the people that they care for.**

Safe friendly atmosphere to meet, share experiences and chat.

Separate group for the people you care for, offering gentle activities for all abilities.

Regular professionals attending to answer your questions and speakers on topics you choose.



**somerset carers**  
part of CCS

For one-to-one support as a Carer, contact Somerset Carers Service  
0800 31 68 600  
[www.somersetcarers.org](http://www.somersetcarers.org)

 **Symphony**  
Healthcare Services



**Before attending please contact:**

**Cath: 07951 944420**

**[cath.holloway@sparksomerset.org.uk](mailto:cath.holloway@sparksomerset.org.uk)**

**[ewelina.zielinska1@nhs.net](mailto:ewelina.zielinska1@nhs.net)**

**Ewelina: 01460 240707**