

February 2026
Charity Reg No. 1038544



CAMELOT AREA
Newsletter

Who's Who in Camelot

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March issue is 14 February 2026

Cover Picture Colleen Jackson

Website www.camelot-area.u3asite.uk

Web Editor: Alan Gibbons webmaster1@camelotareau3a.org

Notes from the Vice Chair

As this is the first newsletter of 2026, we, the committee, wish you a very happy and healthy New Year. Christmas probably feels a long time ago now and by returning to our groups, we will have hopefully chased away the excesses of the festive period, particularly the walkers.

Fingers crossed that you are still observing any New Year Resolutions made, particularly if you wished to embark on a new activity or venture. You might consider joining an additional u3a group, or if you have never been before, attending one of our monthly talks. Please have a browse on our website, address on page 3, and see if anything appeals.

Alternately, if your interests are not represented, why not start a group yourself? We are here to offer help and advice and would love to talk you through the practicalities of creating a new u3a activity.

It will be good to return to our monthly talks. February's talk 'Fishy Tales' is on Friday 27th February and sounds humorous and interesting. Kevin Little, an experienced speaker with 54 years as a successful fishmonger, promises many amusing stories, plus informing us on how fishing has changed over the years. You will be glad to know that Gill Bagnall, our speaker secretary, has an extremely varied programme of talks to amuse, educate and entertain you in 2026. As we begin 2026, we, the committee, would like to acknowledge all the hard work and enthusiasm displayed by our group leaders monthly and weekly.

The pleasure and enjoyment they give to members is very much appreciated by us all. One member said to me recently, that without meeting friends regularly and keeping the grey cells ticking, that life would be a lot lonelier and definitely less fun. So thank you as we look forward to another good year.

Once again, a very happy belated New Year to all,

Best wishes,

Stella Fairbairn – Vice Chair.

Camelot Monthly Meetings

Caryford Community Hall

Friday 30th January 2026 at 2.30 p.m

Name of Speaker Susie Simmons

Museums of Somerset

The South West Heritage Trust and its museums (The Museum of Somerset, Somerset Rural Life Museum, Brick and Tile Museum and Avalon Archaeology)



This talk will look briefly at each of the four sites, consider what makes them special, and include a few fascinating facts and stories. Susie will also share a little about her work and some of the surprising aspects of her role!

Susie Simmons has worked for the South West Heritage Trust for 17 years, and has over 30 years of experience of working in the Heritage Sector. Her role as Museum Operations Manager is all about opening the sites to the public, and organising events and activities, for all to enjoy, rather than the care of the museums collections.

Friday 27th February 2026 at 2.30 p.m

Name of Speaker Kevin Little

Fishy Tales

In his talk, Kevin will recount humorous experiences he had over many years trading as a fishmonger, as well as touching on other anecdotes that help explain the origins of sayings, such as Red Herring and Holy Mackerel.



On a more serious note, Kevin will explain the changes that have occurred during his career selling fish, including noticeably, what increased awareness of sustainable fishing has had on the fish being sold in the high street.

Your speaker – Kevin Little

With 54 years of being a successful fishmonger behind him, it's fair to say that Kevin knows his stuff regarding both fish and running a business. Other interests include narrow boating, animal rescue, travelling, etc. He is an experienced speaker, who loves being in front of an audience.

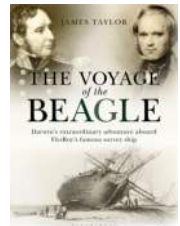
Friday 27th March 2026 at 2.30 p.m

Name of Speaker Dr James Taylor

The Voyage of The Beagle

Captain Robert FitzRoy, Charles Darwin and the Voyage of HMS Beagle

2026 marks the 200th anniversary of the first voyage of HMS Beagle when Robert FitzRoy became captain. This led to the second global voyage in 1831 with Charles Darwin as his shipboard naturalist and the collection of evidence for the publication *On the Origin of Species*.



FitzRoy paid for two artists, Augustus Earle and Conrad Martens, to paint the people and places encountered, and these images underpin the seafaring stories. This talk also focuses on the family and influences on FitzRoy and Darwin.

The speaker Dr James Taylor is a former curator of pictures at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich and author of *The Voyage of the Beagle - Darwin's extraordinary adventure aboard FitzRoy's famous survey ship*

Monthly Meeting Tea Rota 2025

The Tea and Coffee for the Monthly Meetings will be organised by the nominated Group below. The nominated Group for that month will liaise with the group from the month before to bring the box of tea coffee etc. Please also bring fresh milk, teas and biscuits if necessary. The Group should arrive early enough to set out the cups before the

meeting and stay to serve the teas and to make sure the washing up has been done afterwards and the kitchen left clean. With meetings only eight times a year and currently twenty four Groups, each Group will be asked to do this only once every three years or so.

2026

January	Wednesday Walking	Ron Cossins
February	Wednesday Poetry	Hazel Hudson
March	Bridge	Kate Mair

The Group Leaders are invited to use the Tea Rota as a guide to also mount a small display or information about what happens in their Group.

u3a Website

"The Still Got It Photography Project"

The u3a are inviting you to take part in a celebration of positive ageing through photography. In their words "The project is all about capturing the spirit, energy, and creativity of u3a members. We're not looking for technical perfection—just images that tell a story or highlight the many ways older people are embracing learning and new adventures later in life. We launched this activity at a workshop during u3a week with u3a photographer Mike Longhurst who aims to capture the contribution made by members to society through photos.

A selection of submitted photos will be featured in our online gallery on this page, and with permission from the photographer and subjects, may also be used in u3a promotional materials to share with others.

This is your chance to:

- Showcase the amazing activities happening in your u3a.
- Highlight the positive approach older people are taking to their learning and activities later in life.
- Share ideas with other members in the u3a movement that reflect the breadth of activities taking place.

If you would like to submit your photos got to the their website

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/learning/learning-activities/the-still-got-it-photography-project> or email learning@u3a.org.uk.

Cinema in Caryford

Caryford Community Hall , Maggs Lane

Doors open 7.00pm Film starts 7.30pm All tickets £6.00. Available from the Market House Mon - Fri 9.30 - 12.30; Sat 10 - 12.

Wednesday 28 January **Downton Abbey The finale (2025)** (12)

When Lady Mary finds herself in a public scandal and the family faces financial trouble, the household grapples with the threat of social disgrace. The Crawleys must embrace change with the next generation leading Downton Abbey into the future.



Wednesday 25 Febuary **The Roses (2025)**(15)

Life seems easy for picture-perfect couple Ivy (Olivia Colman) and Theo (Benedict Cumberbatch): successful careers, a loving marriage, great kids. But beneath the façade of their supposed ideal life, a storm is brewing – as Theo's career nosedives while Ivy's own ambitions take off, a tinderbox of fierce competition and hidden resentment ignites. The Roses is a reimagining of the 1989 classic film The War of the Roses, based on the novel by Warren Adler.



Wednesday 25 March **The Choral (2025)**(12)

Ramsden, Yorkshire, 1916. The chorus master and most of the men of the ambitious local Choral Society have volunteered for the front, so under the direction of the demanding, driven Dr. Guthrie (Ralph Fiennes), the Choral recruits a crop of teenage boys and girls. Together they discover the joys of singing and the urgency of desire as the new boys come to terms with their imminent conscription into the army.



Amateur Dramatics Group

Chard has started a new Amateur Dramatics Group. They meet on alternate Sundays in The CommuniTea Waffle House, Holyrood Street, Chard. Their aim is to put on a play in the latter half of 2026.

Simon Thompson would like to invite anyone from our u3a who is interested in an Amateur Dramatics Group, to contact him for further information. Details on the poster below.

Simon Thomson cidu3aAmDram@gmail.com



The poster features a central graphic of two theatrical masks (one smiling, one frowning) with paint splatters. The text 'Community Amateur Dramatics' is prominently displayed in large, colorful letters. Below this, various roles are listed in different colors and orientations: 'Lighting', 'Actors', 'Costume', 'Set Design', 'Back Stage', and 'Avalon'. The 'u3a Chard Ilminster and District' logo is on the left, and the 'u3a Avalon' logo is on the right. A QR code is in the top right corner. The main text reads: 'Open to people from this u3a Register as an Avalon Member on Chard Ilminster & District u3a for FREE and come on over and join the group.' A second QR code is in the bottom left corner. At the bottom, the website 'chardilminster.u3asite.uk/membership/' is listed, followed by the meeting details: '2 hours every 2 weeks on a Sunday afternoon in Chard'.

Community Amateur Dramatics

u3a Chard Ilminster and District

Lighting Actors Costume Set Design Back Stage

u3a Avalon

Open to people from this u3a
Register as an **Avalon** Member on
Chard Ilminster & District u3a for FREE and
come on over and join the group.

chardilminster.u3asite.uk/membership/
2 hours every 2 weeks on a Sunday afternoon in Chard

Puzzle (u3a)

My family travelled to Scotland from our home in Nottingham in two cars. I am a slower driver at an average speed of 40 m.p.h. while my wife set off on the same route an hour later at an average speed of 50 m.p.h. How far had we travelled before my wife overtook me? Answer next month

Monday

Art (am Weekly)

Sylvia Mottram

Digital Photography (am 2nd Monday)

Anne Wood

History (pm 1st Monday of Month)

Bruce Bower

Literature (pm last Monday of Month)

Sue Kewish

Recorder (pm weekly)

Gill Bagnall

Garden Group (pm 3rd Monday)

Caroline Reeves

Tuesday

Art (am Weekly)

Dayella Stickland

Advanced French (alternate Tuesday pm)

Susan Keen

Mah Jong. (pm 2nd and 4th Tuesday)

Marion G Pace

Play Reading (pm 2nd Tuesday)

Chris Martin

Listening to Jazz (pm 2nd Tuesday)

Neil Houghton

Wednesday

Wednesday Walking (am alternate Weeks)

Ron Cossins

Wednesday Poetry (am last Wednesday)

Hazel Hudson

To check for spaces and other group details, contact the group leader by going to the groups page of the website, select your group from the list, then click on Group email: to send your message

Bridge. (pm Weekly)

Kate Mair

Wine Appreciation (Evenings 3rd Wednesday)

Alan & Alison Gibbons

Thursday

Book Group (pm 1st Thursday)

Jill Halford

Looking at Art (pm 2nd Thursday)

Jenny and Colin Bowen

Writing for Fun (9am 1st Thursday Monthly)

Helen Tracy

Thursday Poetry (am 2nd Thursday)

Ray Leary

Scrabble (pm 4th Thursday)

Karrie Barron

Reading (am 2nd Thursday)

Gill Bagnall

Friday

Friday Walking (am 1st & 3rd Friday)

John Stalley

Shorter Walks (am 2nd Friday Monthly)

Susan Keen

Non-Specific

Walk into Nature Seasonal

Ron Cossins (Group leader)

Vicky Taylor (Deput leader)

Travel

Anne Wood

To check for spaces and other group details, contact the group leader by going to the groups page of the website, select your group from the list, then click on Group email: to send your message

Digital Photography News

Our first meeting of 2026...and a collection of old bones!!



Members came prepared with photos, taken over the Christmas Break on the prescribed topics of Bones, Reflections and Ribbons.

Ribbons proved to be the most straightforward theme as there were many opportunities to

use the wrapped or unwrapped Christmas gifts as subjects.



Bones was a bit trickier, although as one

member found,



it was necessary to buy and eat a chicken in order to take the shot! A trip to Housteads Fort led to rather older bones! And a hospital where the nurses have an unusual sense of humour.

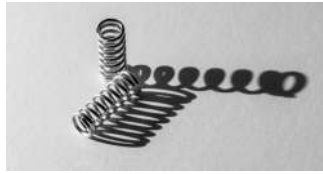
All the photos on Reflections were beautiful and carefully thought out. The light and

angle play a significant role in the composition and capture of the resulting image, whether it be taken outside or within a "studio". A selection of the photos are shown below.

It was thought that "Reflections" would be an interesting theme for any exhibitions set up by the Group in 2026. If anyone is interested in joining the Group please contact me for a tester session, we meet on the second Monday of the month in Galhampton Village Hall at 10:30am.



Anne Wood



Tuesday Art



Tuesday art group are back in action after our Summer holidays. We are a small group of like minded people who enjoy to dabble in some art, a chat and a cuppa. We do not have tutors but try and help each other with whatever knowledge that each of our members have. We meet every Tuesday from

10.15 to 12.15 at Caryford Hall in Castle Cary.

Sadly we said goodbye to one of our valued member last year. RIP lovely John Bradly.

Dayella Ruetsche





Wednesday Walking Group

Something different for the last walk of 2025, we were taken around the old town area of Shepton Mallet. Sara was ably assisted by fellow members as she described parts of the town much of which many of us were unaware. We followed the River Sheppey as it wended its way from Charlton to Bowlish- originally two villages but now absorbed into the town passing the old prison with its gruesome history. We are grateful to Janet Ansell for providing details of the walk.

By way of contrast 2026 began with a walk led by Viv. From the summit of Glastonbury Tor we



enjoyed outstanding views across surrounding countryside. On our return we visited the ancient oaks: Gog and Magog, believed to be the last remnants of a ceremonial avenue of trees leading to The Tor and the Isle of Avalon. Oaks were considered sacred in medieval times. Middlewick Farm provided an enjoyable venue for lunch.

Ron Cossins

Step in Nature

Last event of 2025.

Yeovil Country Park and Nine Springs provided a perfect setting before the onset of Winter. Streams from the source of the River Yeo led us through woodland with abundant waterfalls and mossy banks. Birdlife was limited to waterfowl- mallard, moorhen and black headed gulls in Winter plumage. Ferns were plentiful. An atmospheric wooded valley- a Spring visit would offer early flowering plants



Yeovil Country Park and Nine Springs

First event of 2026.



Our nature experiences are weather dependent. None more so than during the Winter. We intend during January/ February to visit Ham Wall on the Somerset Levels to see a spectacular display- starling murmurations. However the birds do not perform on order and weather plays its part as to where and when they roost. We also need clement

weather as our visit will involve waiting for the performance to begin.

Ron Cossins

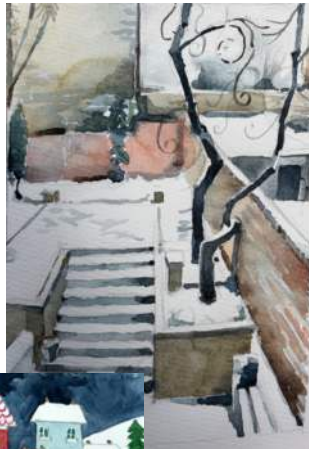
Monday Art

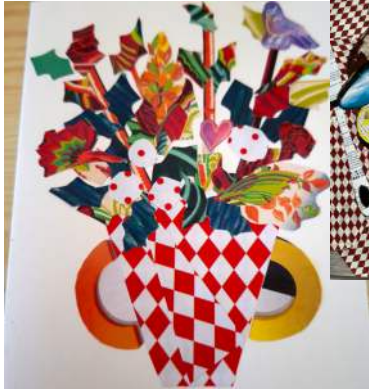
Happy New Year everyone

The week before we took our Christmas break we had a great time with collage, the first time for some and it turned out so enjoyable we will add it to our subjects again at sometime. Our last Monday we painted snow scenes then we set up for a fabulous Christmas lunch, home baked and prepared by our group members. Our term started back on 12th January and it's always great to be back together again.



Sylvia Mottram





Writing for Fun



The Afterlife

The challenge was to start the story with the opening sentence

The train was crowded, so she stood holding the overhead hook and swaying slightly with movement of the carriage, she focussed on the journey ahead, silently steeling herself for what was to come. Jenny's feet were numb from the cold having waited on the platform for the delayed train to arrive. Anticipating the likelihood of disruption to the timetable, she'd allowed extra time for travelling. As she waited, she sent a brief text to her now ex-sister-in-law informing her of the delay. Linda had offered to meet her, so at least she wouldn't have to attend the sombre gathering on her own: the funeral of Jim Peters, her much loved ex-father-in-law, whose passing had closely followed that of his wife.

Following the divorce, Jim and Sheila maintained close contact with Jenny and the children, continuing the bond they'd always shared. Busy young teenagers Tom and Caroline paid regular visits to their grandparents, and with mutual agreement, talk of their absent father never arose. Jim had been appalled at his errant son's decision to abandon his family and move in with the avaricious, brash and brassy Melody, some fifteen years his junior, with ambitions of a luxury lifestyle that only someone of Tony's comfortable means could provide. Seeing Melody for the gold-digger she was, dear Jim had recommended his own solicitor to act for Jenny, who had handled dealings of the divorce with terrier-like determination to protect the children's and Jenny's financial interest.



Memories of the divorce proceedings caused Jenny's grip to tighten on the overhead hook, and she tried to distract herself by studying her fellow passengers. She was first to the door as the train came to a

halt, eager to escape the confines of the carriage. Jenny hurried through the crowd in search of Linda, buttoning her coat against the cold as she went. The chill of the grey winter morning hung in the air as sulking rain clouds threatened, and a cruel wind whipped at her hair.

"Hello you!" Linda greeted her, hugging Jenny in a warm embrace. "Rotten journey?"

"Bearable." Came Jenny's choked reply. Just seeing Linda opened up wounds of loss, rekindling hurt of the life she no longer had as a legitimate member of the Peters family, whose name she still bore. Would she change it if Melody had her way and became the new Mrs. Peters? Her eyes prickled with tears at the thought, and she hastily blamed the biting wind when Linda noticed them.

"I'm glad you've come." Linda squeezed Jenny's arm as she led the way to her car. "Let's grab a coffee, there's loads to tell you."

They wound their way through traffic and headed to the Corner Café, a once favourite meeting place for their girlie outings. Jenny went in search of a table while Linda ordered their regular cappuccinos and slices of lemon drizzle cake. They drank and ate, exchanging general news before Linda turned to the subject of her brother. Jenny braced herself for the latest news of her ex-husband's escapades, and despite her determination to show no interest, she was intrigued to hear Linda's report.

"That scheming little bitch Melody has gone!

Linda paused while Jenny, in stunned stupor, absorbed the news of Melody's departure, before continuing...

"Having said some awful things about dad, implying he'd lost his marbles, the little bitch had the unmitigated cheek to kick up a fuss about the details of his will, urging Tony to contest it, the cow. But he wouldn't... he couldn't! because he knew that Dad's wishes were watertight. The solicitor made sure of it." Linda faltered in her diatribe...

"And you won't be surprised to hear that Melody was annoyed that Dad left you a bequest and also hated the fact that the grandchildren were so generously considered. She was absolutely furious at Tony's

bequest being negligible. She ranted. She raved. She left!" Linda shrugged, draining the last of her coffee.

"Seems she's already set herself up with another gullible idiot, leaving Tony pondering on the fact of his being skint from all their extravagant spending, and his loss of income through fewer commission payments, due to his lack of focus at work, the bloody idiot. He's lucky he's still got his job! I know he's my brother, but you really are better off without him."

Jenny felt relieved she wouldn't be having to face seeing Tony and Melody as a couple. The prospect of it had been haunting her and was the reason she'd persuaded Tom and Caroline not to attend the funeral. She now felt angry that they could have come. They should have come.



On their arrival at the crematorium, breath and heart rate quickening, Jenny applied a mask of dignified indifference as she greeted Tony. The mask slipped on seeing him looking haggard, hunched and hollow-cheeked. King of the castle, reduced to dirty rascal. He gave a wan smile, and she nodded in cool response before taking her seat behind him. Linda and husband Dave sat beside her together with their grown-up daughters, leaving Tony to sit on his own.

Jenny cited the need to catch a train for her brief attendance at the wake and was thankful she had a seat for her return journey. Her head throbbed and her feet ached. Was it guilty satisfaction mixed with revulsion on seeing Tony's disconsolate appearance that she was feeling, with a blissful sense of closure she hadn't felt before? Tony had taken her aside at the wake, displaying his most pitiful puppy dog 'can you forgive me' expression, asking to meet up for a drink, even hinting at his hope of a reconciliation. With a dismissive snort of laughter, she had turned and walked away. He had to be joking! He certainly looked the pathetic fool. No pang of nostalgia. No sense of regret. No mourning of loss. For the first time since Tony left, Jenny felt a frisson of excitement for what the afterlife of her divorce could bring.

Alison Gibbons

Up and Coming

Coffee Mornings at the Market House at 10am

Sat 07.01.26	CATS
Sat 14.01.26	Library coffee and book sale
Sat 21.01.26	Parish Charity
Sat 28.01.26	Tools for Self Reliance

Special Events Caryford Hall

Sat 18.01 26	19.30 Talk: Sports in and after prison
Fri 22.01.26	16.00 Live Music: Moscow Drug Club Jazz, Latin, Swing

Special Events Castle Cary

Sat 08.01 26	19.30 Cary Museum in Winter
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Markets

Every Tuesday	08.30 to midday Castle Cary Town market
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Regular events

Every Tuesday	13.45	Up-reading Classes. The Market House
1st & 3rd Weds	10.00.	Memory Cafe Methodist Church
2nd & 4th Weds	14.30.	Sing for fun The Market House
Last Weds of the month	19.30	Cinema Caryford Hall
First Thur of the month	10.00	Talking Cafe The Market House
Last Thur of the month	19.30	Market House Acoustic evening all ages welcome
Fourth Thur monthly	10.00	Repair Cafe The Methodist Church by Eat Cary
Fourth Thur monthly	10.00	Live well with pain Catherine Close Community Hall
Last Fri of the month	14.00	u3a talk Caryford Hall
Every Friday	15.00.	Talking cafe The Market House

Good Tradesman Guide

Home Improvements

Carpet Cleaning

Orchid Carpet Cleaning

Richard Payne

Tel: 01963 371284

Mob: 07599 789725

Roofer / Carpenter

Dave Whitehead

Mob: 07932 058681

General Builder

Andy Baker

Mob: 07510 943009

Painter / Decorator

Adrian Richardson

Mob: 07815 618465

Jonathan Ackland

Mob: 07759 882591

Tel: 01963 351316.

Plasterers

Colin John Caren

Mob: 07749890798

Plumbing and Heating Engineer Gas Safe Reg'd

Perkins Plumbing & Heating

Andrew Perkins

Mob: 07815 515671

Warm Welcome Heating Services Gas Safe Reg'd

Roger Welton

Tel: 01963 440341

Plumbing & Heating

Kevan Davis

Mob: 07976 741029

Electrical & Electronic

Computers - Technology and Software

Nigel Smith

Tel: 01963 220993

General Services

Domestic Appliances

Domestec

Washing machines /Dishwashers.

Tel: 01963 220366

Servicing and Repairs

PRM Domestic

Mob: 07977 802756

Chimney Sweep

Tom Sweep

Mob: 07340 743366

Vehicles

Car Body Maintenance

SMB Body Repairs

Shaun Browncey

Tel: 01935 840301

Car Repairs.

Bayford Motors

Tel: 01963 33746

We have space in the Good Tradesman Guide if
you know someone you would like to
recommend for their

Products and Services.

Please e-mail smutzdoc@gmail.com

All of the above businesses have been recommended by individual Camelot Area U3A members based on their own experience. Each of the businesses listed above have given their permission for their details to be included - last checked in January 2020. Disclaimer: Inclusion does not constitute endorsement by Camelot Area U3A. No liability is accepted by the Camelot Area u3a trustees

Newsletter Distribution

Patsy Diamond & Hilary Dunford