



Dawlish & District u3a

Newsletter

Our Newsletter is back in a n experimental format after a short absence and will try to keep you abreast of recent and future events at our local U3A. We would like to give all members a chance to publish impressions, opinions and thoughts in its pages. The Newsletter will also be on display at the Dawlish Hub on the Strand and members without email or internet will be able to request a printed copy there. For more information, please visit <http://u3a.dawlish.info>

From the Chair:

It has been so enjoyable to be able to return to the normal life and rhythms of life in u3a. I am writing this with the sound from another room of the French Conversation Group discussing what they like and do not like about living in Dawlish (I trust u3a is high on the list in the first category!). This afternoon, we are hosting a group of new members who would like to join the Art Appreciation Group. I know that similar meetings and conversations are happening across Dawlish as we engage our new members with our interest groups. Let's make the most of every opportunity!

Following my recent 'sit vac' advert, I am delighted to report that we now have a Newsletter Editor. It is great news that Dana Dima has volunteered. This is her first edition, and I hope you enjoy reading it. Our monthly Newsletter is an important way we all keep in touch with each other and find out about all the activities which are taking place across our u3a. It is important that members contribute articles about what they are doing, as well as writing about things of broader interest to the membership. Dana will be very pleased to receive your copy and photographs if you send them to dawlishu3anewslettereditor@gmail.com

Group Conveners: Everyone who takes part in our interest groups will know that Conveners play an important part in making everything happen. The success of almost everything we do throughout the year depends on them and I am certainly very grateful to the many people who are doing excellent work at the moment. Naturally, when people have done the job for a while, they feel they would like to step aside and that someone else should take a turn. Our Groups Coordinator, Anne Whitehead, is hoping to find new conveners for several groups, and I hope some of you will step forward to volunteer. While the role is certainly important, the actual workload really is not excessive – and it is actually rewarding to keep in touch with everyone and help everyone to enjoy their participation in a group. No-one should feel daunted by it, and you will get plenty of support. The main functions are:

- To arrange the time and place for group meetings
- Communicate with group members as required
- Ensure that there is a programme of activities for your group's future meetings
- Provide information on group activities to the Newsletter Editor each month
- Liaise with the Groups Coordinator as required.

Obviously, the role varies according to the nature of the group. Art Appreciation, Here There and Everywhere, Great Lives, Theatre, Badminton and Wine Appreciation all run very differently, so the role is not the same in each case.

If you know your group's convener is looking to stand down, it would be very helpful if you were to volunteer to take over. And it should not be considered as something you do 'for ever'. We should all see the need to do our share from time to time, as u3a is very much 'for the members, by the members'. Do contact Anne Whitehead if you would like to know more.

Learning

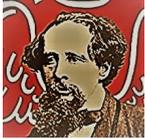
Laughing

Living

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

Oliver Twist: Parable, Providence and the Poor

It is a very long time since we had such a good speaker at our monthly meetings than in October. Those who were able to attend were spell-bound by an outstanding talk. A specialist on 19th century literature, Dr Keith Hooper, gave a highly entertaining and authoritative account of what drove Charles Dickens to write some of the most powerful and influential novels in our language. I had sent reminders to the burgeoning memberships of our reading groups, but it was not just enthusiastic and committed readers who enjoyed this talk so much. Dr Hooper succeeded in engaging his whole audience and will have inspired those who have been reluctant to embark on reading a full-length Dickens novel rather than just watch a film or TV version, to do take on the challenge. It really is worth it!



Dr Hooper described in graphic terms the notorious Poor Law system which degraded the poorest members of society. He showed how uncaring so many prosperous members of society were, not least because they were often completely ignorant of the lives of the mass of the population that lived close by. This neglect was made more shocking by the fact that the decision makers and leaders in government invariably claimed to be Christians with a mission to help the needy. Dickens was motivated to expose this hypocrisy and to shame the country into reform.

Having a burning desire to help the poor and create a fairer country did not prevent Dickens from being a formidable businessman. Alongside his powerful moral agenda, he was also determined to avoid the poverty and humiliation his own father experienced by making his fortune – and he was outstandingly successful in this.

Like so many of us, Dickens was a complicated man, not least in his personal and family relationships. His treatment of his wife has resulted in great criticism from biographers but should this devalue his other monumental achievements?

Dr Hooper's impressive talk was delivered without notes and glittered with anecdotes and remarkable details. Dickens was famous not just as a writer but as a public performer, and he would have enjoyed Keith Hooper's own theatrical delivery! His audience was left in no doubt about Dickens importance in our literary culture but also as a major figure in shaping political and social attitudes. Dickens was an enormous celebrity by the time of his death, and Dr Hooper's talk demonstrated powerfully why this was so.

Keith Hooper's 'Charles Dickens – Faith, Angels and the Poor' is published by Lion, and his lectures on Dickens as well as Charlotte Bronte can be found on YouTube. This is a link to one of them but there are more if you search on Google. They are well worth seeing! [Oliver Twist: Parable, Providence and the Poor - YouTube](#)

Next month's speaker will, I am confident, also be well worth listening to. Councillor Martin Wrigley is a very well-known figure in our community, having served for many years at all tiers of local government – Dawlish Town Council, Teignbridge Council and now Devon County Council. His commitment to the people of this area is outstanding, and he is respected across the political spectrum, regardless of party allegiance.

John Vick



Defibrillator Awareness Training

The South Western Ambulance service, with Dawlish Town Council, will be delivering a defibrillator awareness session, on:

TUESDAY 7th DECEMBER 11:00 – 13:00 at: THE MANOR HOUSE, OLD TOWN STREET, EX7 9AP

This session is free of charge and open to all;

if you would like to attend, please phone 01626 863388 or email admin@dawlish.devon.gov.uk

to book a place.

The Strollers walking group met on Thursday 14th October. We had been hoping to catch a no 2 bus to Langdon hospital, but problems with the buses on the day meant most of us caught a no 22. We carried on up a footpath to the side of the hospital site, and happily were caught up by two members who got the right bus at a different stop. The path joins Port Road which we followed, crossed the main Exeter road and carried on to Cockwood, sensibly stopping at the Ship for refreshments. The bus journey back was less eventful.



They will meet again on Thursday November 11th. We shall catch the no 2 bus (1.10 pm from Teignmouth, 1.25 pm from Dawlish) and go to Exminster. The plan is then to walk through the RSPB reserve to Turf Lock on the canal, where we'll stop for refreshments. You'll then have a choice of going back along the towpath and the lane to Exminster, or if you wish you can carry on alongside the canal and estuary to Powderham Church and Starcross. It'll be flat all the way this month.

If there are any questions from old, new or prospective members do get in touch with me. Jean Gitsham, Convenor, mjgitsham@hotmail.com 01626 779140.

Discussion Group.

The Discussion Group met on Monday 11th October at Anne's house to talk about the repatriation of artworks and other artifacts. Many views were expressed. It was accepted that many items had been brought to first world countries in past times under circumstances of dubious legality, frequently outright theft and sometimes as spoils of war, clearly unacceptable by today's standards, but often unremarkable at the time. Many artifacts had been preserved that might otherwise have suffered destruction or damage in their original settings.

However, in the light of current appreciation of both cultural sensitivities and the availability of the technology for the accurate reproduction of many types of artworks re-homing them in their original environments would be the best option where proper preservation and access for research and public display can be assured so far as possible. The problems of identifying stable political regimes which can provide the necessary environment for preservation were noted. Where there are multiple items, most could be returned, leaving some originals for research with copies being quite adequate for the public to appreciate. All human remains should be returned without question where the descendant population still exist.

Any suggestions that countries outside the West would be unable to look after the artefacts of their own culture must be questioned, and indeed often appear insulting. The return of items taken as spoils of war and those which would be of cultural significance to the descends of those who produced them would be a huge political, diplomatic and ethical step forward. No encyclopaedic museums can display every-thing they hold, so retaining some samples for research whilst repatriating significant amounts should be possible and scientific researchers are better able to visit collections wherever they are.

So far as it is possible the rotation of exhibits between cultural institutions to allow for the widest possible audience should also be a priority.

Having solved another major world problem in the space of a morning, we dispersed for lunch.

Michael Heyden, Convenor

Philosophy and Psychology

Should we run them together? Should we discuss lofty issues, or focus on our everyday problems and the dilemmas we face in our changing world? Why do people feel the need to debate Philosophy? It was decided that the group should meet at the Swann Inn, on the corner of Church and Old Town Street, at 3.30 pm on Thursday 18th Nov. All interested parties are welcome!

ONLINE QUIZ

We still meet on a Monday evening at 7pm but now on a fortnightly basis. It has been good to welcome 3 new members to the group recently and the more the merrier!

The next quizzes are due to take place on Monday 8th and Monday 22nd November. Please let me know if you would like to join in and keep the brain cells active.

Graham Carey

COFFEE AND CHAT

Due to unforeseen circumstances Coffee and Chat has had to be cancelled in November but we will be in touch soon with some new dates for your diaries.

Kate McCarthy



Scrabble

It's impracticable to play Scrabble under social distancing restrictions, so our meeting on 25th October was the first since the advent of Covid-19. Three of the 'old gang' welcomed 4 new members, of wide ranging ability; and an afternoon of varied games was enjoyed by all. We look forward to our next encounter on 22nd November.

George Lipscomb



French Conversation

This is a great group which is a fairly advanced group with some fluent speakers including one native speaker and it has currently 8 members and one on a waiting list. Fortunately not everyone can always attend so generally we are 5 or 6 and ca suffit! The U3A open day attracted more interested parties though some describe themselves as beginners or "rusty" so another group might be a good idea?

Last week's topic was to talk about what we like and don't like about where we live. We had some interesting presentations on both Teignmouth and Dawlish and learned more about each. Some people didn't know there's a Lido in Teignmouth!

We learned some interesting expressions like "tomber dans les pommes" ...to fall in the apples ...which means to faint! Wonder if it has anything to do with the Hallowe'en game of trying to bite the apple! The next time we meet the topic will be "if you were to come back after departing this world what would you like to be?"

Bridie Cushion



Boules Group. Sadly summer and autumn have gone and we have had our last game on the Lawn for the time being. The group has only come into being this summer as restrictions were lifted, the number of members have grown steadily and I hope everyone has had as much fun as I have. I'm looking forward to playing again outside in the spring, do please contact me with any questions or suggestions.



We can't play outside over winter, but you are all invited to the Strand Centre on Friday 12th November at 10.30 a m for coffee and a chat, with a background of a party game of indoor boules. Afterwards we'll talk about making it a regular meeting. Old members, new members and anyone with nothing better to do on Fridays are invited to come along. The cost will be £3 for the room and equipment.

Michael Heyden
heydenmichael@yahoo.co.uk

Adventure Group

We are delighted to announce our first adventure: kayaking at Exeter Quay, under the supervision of Nils of [Kayakhub](#). Nine of us, all new members, learned where and which way up to hold the paddle, how to paddle forwards, backwards, slowly and quickly, how to get in and out of the kayak without tipping ourselves into the water. We even had a race, won by Tony.

We took to the water in single, double, sit-on and sit-in craft. I tried a sit-on kayak for the first time and learned belatedly that these have holes in the bottom – guess who came home with a very wet bum?

We ended up at the Double Locks pub and rest and refreshment there were much needed. The lesson must have been successful because nobody fell in.

Here is a photo taken By Dave Pickton



We are taking to even greater heights for our next adventure; the zipwire and tree walk at Haldon, scheduled for mid November. Go Ape offer a one hour session, for those who wish to have a try, and a 2-3 hour challenge course involving higher walks and longer zipwires.'

Please follow us on <http://u3a.dawlish.info/tag/adventure> for more and updated information.

Art Appreciation Group

Barbara and Richard Warburton kindly hosted our October meeting and Barbara gave a very interesting presentation on brother and sister artists, Augustus and Gwen John. Theirs was a fascinating story. Born in Wales in the 1870s, they sadly lost their mother when Gwen was eight and Augustus two years younger. Despite a difficult childhood, they both managed to secure places at the prestigious Slade School of Art in London.

Augustus was the star student and achieved significant celebrity due to his flamboyant personality and lifestyle as well as his artistic talent. He secured many commissions for society portraits. Gwen was a much quieter individual and somewhat overshadowed in her lifetime by her younger brother and her famous lover, the sculptor Rodin. However, she has recently received more acclaim for her paintings and is compared favourably with Augustus. Both are known for their portraits and self-portraits, but their contrasting artistic styles reflect their very different personalities. Many thanks to Barbara and Gwen Smith for their research which left us much better informed about them and inspired to seek out their work.



Augustus Jojn
Self-Portrait

Gwen John
Self-Portrait



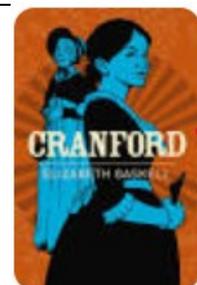
Following the Open Day, we have had a significant number of new members to our group, so our next meeting will be a change to our usual format. To accommodate our larger group, it will take place in the Mayor's Parlour in the Manor House, Dawlish at 2pm on November 8th. David Gearing will be leading with a presentation about Filippo Lippi, one of the great masters of the Early Renaissance.

Lynne Vick

Literature Group

The Group meets at members houses on the 3rd Friday of the month.

Cranford, the classic novel by Elizabeth Gaskell published in full in 1853 was last month's read. First written as a series of articles in Household Words it is set in a small country town. The main characters are women, mostly widowed or spinsters eking out their lives in genteel poverty. The book goes into fascinating detail about the minutiae of their everyday lives, their homes, clothing, meagre eating habits and the strict social codes that they have to follow. It tells of friendships and both the support and the petty and often cruel snobbery in this tight little community.



The interaction between the women and their servants was eye-opening and the stories of the impact of outsiders was both funny and sad. Our discussion led us to consider class structure in Britain now and to compare our lives with the characters in the novel. Overall, however, although Cranford is well-written, we found the book rather irritating, with the narrow lives of the women and their preoccupations with, what to us, seems so unimportant.

Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South is a more political novel and would have probably been a preferable read.

Our next book is After the Fall by Charity Norman which claims to be a "gripping tale".

Badminton

Peter Thorogood and I have taken on joint convenorship of this group. Times, dates and fees will remain the same unless there is a problem at the leisure centre, i.e. every Tuesday at 4.30 to 5.30. We will have two courts pre booked. Attendance is currently £4/session.



Barry Baker

Great Lives

Because the number of new members enrolled since the u3a Open Day had exceeded the current membership of the group it was evident that the group size exceeded the number that could safely meet in a domestic household, the decision was taken to hire a room at the Manor House for our meeting on 22nd November. As it transpired 7 of the 'old gang' met to consider the life of Lyse Doucet; but of the 9 people who'd expressed an interest on Open Day, 2 had decided not to join u3a, 1 had decided not to join Great Lives and 6 had sent apologies! Perhaps the eve of Half Term influenced their decisions; but, confident that some if not all, will join us 26th November to discuss the Great Life of Audrey Hepburn, the same room at the Manor House has been booked.



George Lipscomb

Natural History

Perhaps the world's awareness of climate change has been significant; but the impact of the Open Day has transformed this group. The existing 8 members were joined on 23rd October by 6 new members, with 1 apology. (Although a further 5 had expressed an interest they did not respond to the invitation.) New member, Dave Hutton, introduced himself as a Devon Wildlife Volunteer and presented his work, as such, in Dawlish, and the role of Action Climate Teignbridge (ACT). His talk was enthusiastically received; and we concluded with a look at some of the images that we had taken when 5 of us had visited the RSPB reserve at Bowling Green, Topsham, on 8th October. We plan to meet on 16th November at 10.00 to explore the ecology of the Dawlish Memorial Garden and St. Gregory's adjacent churchyard; and our monthly meeting on 23rd November, again will be in room 4a of the Manor House. We will be following up on Dave's presentation by exploring the vast array of apps available on mobile phones for identification of species. There is room for more enthusiasts!

George Lipscomb

This is all we had for the month of November. As the groups take/change shape, we hope to get more information, comments and impressions in these pages. We welcome suggestions from members. Do not forget to take pictures of your exciting journey with U3A!