



# Dawlish & District u3a Newsletter

December 2021

From the Chair:

### Monthly Meeting Venues and Times

At our last meeting, we did our very best to follow good advice on making the seating, ventilation and other arrangements in the Manor House as 'Covid secure' as possible. I think those who attended appreciated what was done.

I also explained that the only options currently available to us to meet in a room (the Council Chamber) with more generous spacing, would be to change the time to either 11am or 3.30pm. Although very few people felt that the timing would be a problem, it was pointed out that the acoustics in that room are not good, and that would be a problem for many people. Given that there seems to be no major concern with the arrangements we currently have, we will continue to meet in Rooms 4a and 4b of the Manor House for the time being.

### December Monthly Meeting, 2pm on Monday 20th December

When we are all due to meet again Christmas will be just days away, so our next monthly meeting will have a festive feeling. Graham Carey will compile a 'Seasonal Quiz' and we look forward to having a sociable afternoon, complete with mulled wine (or tea and coffee if you prefer), mince pies, stollen and other Christmas fare. Teams will consist of four people, and tables and chairs will be laid out accordingly. Feel free to form your teams in advance, but we will soon be able to organise teams if you just turn up. Being in a team is a great way to get to know other members.

If by then you are not yet in the Christmas spirit, perhaps coming with yuletide jumpers, hats, Santa beards and even antlers may help. There could be a prize for the best offering! We will have a raffle, so it would be good to have some enticing Christmas prizes. If you would like to donate a prize, please bring something along on the day. It might also be helpful to let a member of the committee know in advance if you propose to do this.

I hope to see you all then.

### Tracy Penfound

I would like to thank Tracy for all her work as Convener of the Coffee & Chat Group. She has carried out this role for quite some time and the many people of who joined her have enjoyed this opportunity to get together and keep in touch. This group is now being 're-founded' as 'Tea & Chat' with a special emphasis on welcoming new members to our u3a as well as a chance for existing members to get together. Kate McCarthy, assisted by Michael Heyden, will be the group's convener.



**We hope that our December Newsletter finds you well. This is a busy and enjoyable time of the year for most of us and I am sure the upcoming U3A meetings will contribute to the festive spirit. Have a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year and continue to stay in touch!**

Please send your contributions to your group convener and then to the

[webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info) and [newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info) for publication

## Monthly meeting report:

### **Making a Difference – the Challenges Facing Local Government**

At a time when we are being bombarded with reports of questionable behaviour from some MPs at Westminster (and in the British Virgin Isles) it was truly refreshing to learn more about the hard working - and unpaid - people who represent us at all levels of local government. Councillor Martin Wrigley took time from his very full schedule to speak at our monthly meeting about the many challenges facing local government and the work of a councillor.

He began his wide-ranging talk by explaining how some councillors receive a very modest allowance for the considerable time they spend on council business. In his case, he chose to give up a senior role in the IT industry when he could see that poor decisions were being made at a local level. He felt that he could bring his knowledge and experience to his community and help make a difference by seeking election as a councillor.

Local Government is a very complex area which few people fully understand – including Cllr Wrigley as he was happy to admit! The three tiers in Devon of parish (Dawlish Town Council), district (Teignbridge) and county (Devon County Council) each have different responsibilities. Martin is active at all three levels and has gained enormous knowledge over many years.

His audience learned a great deal from his experiences in navigating the system in many areas. When dealing with housing and planning, he is particularly frustrated by the limited powers available to local authorities to require developers to include broadband, green heating and other infrastructure in new developments. He is pleased that Teignbridge is now building council houses after many years when this was not possible. He is especially satisfied by the successes of the lengthy campaign to build a link road from the Sainsbury's development up to the new housing at Gatehouse. It was an object lesson in how difficult it can be to bring about change. Nonetheless, persistence and community pressure does bring results.

While he and his fellow councillors feel they are making a difference, there are enormous challenges ahead, not least financial. Councils are not able to borrow money, and there are clear limits on how much they can increase council tax to fund the many things we all need.

The discussion could have gone on for much longer, and huge areas of council responsibility were left untouched, but Cllr Wrigley had to leave our meeting to rush to more council business, this time on Zoom. Members were left impressed, and daunted, by the work Martin and hundreds of fellow councillors of all political persuasions do throughout the year, with the aim of making life better for all of us.



### **Strollers Social Walking Group**

Dawlish & District u3a Strollers walks are in the afternoon of the second Thursday of each month. Our walks are now starting about an hour earlier than previously.

#### **December 9th 2021 walk:**

We are catching the number 22 Paignton bus which leaves Dawlish at 12.17pm and Teignmouth at 12.32pm. Face masks are required for bus passengers. The plan is to get off the bus at St Marychurch and explore Tessier Gardens before strolling along Babbacombe Downs.

We will then do a circular walk on Walls Hill before returning to a cafe/pub on Babbacombe Downs for our refreshment break. Buses back home leave St Marychurch at 50 minutes past the hour. Jean Gitsham can be contacted via [enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info).



### **QUIZ GROUP**

Two online quizzes were held in November and as well the General Knowledge rounds there were questions on:

Which Century?, Which musical?. Hobbies, Whose horse?. Bonfires and the plot, French connection, Number 7, Peace, Baby talk and who invaded?

We have welcomed a few more members and as it is an online quiz have room for more.

The next quiz will be on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> December. The 20<sup>th</sup> December quiz will be held as part of the monthly u3a meeting. It will consist of 4 rounds on Christmas related subjects.

**Graham Carey**



**The Boules Group** has decided to continue to meet in the Strand Hall for the time being, to play some kind of indoor game based on boules and to share coffee afterwards. The dates in December will be Friday 10th December and Wednesday 22nd at 10.30 a. m. Please do contact **Michael Heyden** with any queries.

**The Discussion Group** met on Monday 8th November at the Manor House, to talk about the potential breakup of the United Kingdom. There was a general consensus that the UK cannot be kept together without consent of its four constituent parts. It was felt that there was considerable pressure for independence in Scotland, much less in Wales, and that the reunification of Ireland would make complete sense, dependent of course on the will of the people both Northern Ireland and the Republic. There was discussion around the lessons that could be learned from Brexit as to the wisdom of major constitutional changes being made based on the result of a 50% plus 1 referendum. The groups members held views on both sides of that debate, but the divisions caused by the campaign, vote and outcome were very clear. Current circumstances meant that most of the discussion were centred on Scotland.

It's status as a distinct country was appreciated, as was the strength of feeling that exists in part of the population, but the polling evidence that only around half of Scots supported independence suggested the difficulties to come if a vote was won on a narrow majority. The lack of clarity over defence, currency, trade and EU membership was brought up, and compared with a similar lack of clarity in the Brexit debate as to what a vote in favour of leaving would mean in practise. It was felt that the Union, with the consent of the population, had a lot in it's favour, but that the unequal balance between the constituent parts make for a feeling of alienation from a London based government, and that similar feelings can be seen in the English regions. How to rectify that is another issue we might return to one day.

#### **Michael Heyden**

Please note that the views expressed by the Discussion Group may not represent those of the wider Dawlish and District membership.

**Tea & Chat** will run in place of Coffee and Chat. The first meeting will be held at the Manor House in the Council Chambers on the 16th December, where it will be tea and mince pies.

Following the first meeting this group will be held on the third Thursday of each month at the Manor House. This meeting is open to all members and an opportunity for new members to meet others. It is hoped that members of the Committee and Convenors will join the group from time to time. There will be a small charge of £1.

Please note Tea & Chat will run from 2 – 4pm each month and not in the mornings.

**Kate McCarthy, Convenor.**

**The Creative Writing** Group's prompt for our November meeting was 'Out of the corner of her eye she glimpsed ...' and we glimpsed some varied and curious things.

Our writing included the topical subject of Guy Fawkes (alias John Johnson); a deeply philosophical piece; and another which caused gasps of horror among us as the description of a pleasant meal the writer was enjoying segued into the sight of rats running round the walls of the restaurant.

Our next meeting is 21<sup>st</sup> December with a Christmas theme for our writing.

**Alison Symons, Convenor**



#### **Theatre.**

Meets on the first Thursday of the month in room 4a at the Manor House. All welcome. This group share suggestions for performances and coordinate between themselves purchase of tickets, transport and meeting up before the performance.

Performances enjoyed by Members last month included: Mrs Winston – my life with Churchill at Pavilions Teignmouth and The Edge of Darkness at the Shaftsbury.

In November so far, tickets have been purchased for Chicago at Princess Theatre, Torquay and Female Gothic at Pavilions, Teignmouth and Barbican Theatre's streaming of Anything Goes Musical at The Pavilions Teignmouth next Wednesday 1st December.

A reminder has been sent out for tickets in advance for the Pantomime at Shaftsbury on 15th January.

Members are encouraged to share with the group a performance they would like to see as other members might like to attend and travel arrangements can be shared.

Our next meeting will be held at the Manor on Thursday 2nd December 2 – 4pm to accommodate new members who expressed an interest in joining the group. All welcome.

**Margaret Cunningham & Kate McCarthy Co Convenors.**

#### **Literature.**

Our October choice was After the Fall by Charity Norman.

In New Zealand a small boy has fallen from a balcony and is seriously injured. It seems, at first, that it was an accident, but we realise, through the narration of his mother Martha, that she is compelled to hide a dreadful secret.

We are taken back to England, where the family decide on a fresh start after financial problems and Martha's husband, Kit's drinking is getting out of control.

At first, their new life appears to be idyllic, even the reluctant teenage Sacha settles in, but soon it is clear that things are going badly wrong. The novel, although described by the group as a page turner, dealt with very difficult issues of drug addiction and the family's slow realisation to see what is happening.

Added to that was the secrecy surrounding



Sasha's father. We felt that the way the story resolved at the end was rather too pat and perhaps a bit unrealistic. However, most of us became involved in the characters and only one of us guessed how the child came to fall.

Charity Norman is a previously unknown writer to the group and the majority of us agreed that we would probably read more of her work.

After the Fall was given 4 out 5.

Our next book is *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins.

**Liane Goulding Member**

### History

It is with regret that this Group is currently suspended due to no one coming forward to be Convenor. This is a large Group and could possibly be split into two. Anyone interested in knowing more about the role of the Convenor please contact [enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info)

### Philosophy & Psychology

A few members recently met at the Swan Inn to decide whether this group, which attracted lots of interest on the Open Day, had a chance to get off the ground.

We are very interested to debate topics that affect us in our lives and for now, as the group is still small, we will keep the subjects of Psychology and Philosophy together, approaching the questions from two different perspectives.

We shall meet in the afternoon, on different days of the month, depending on availability. Our next/first meeting will be at 3.15 pm on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, at the Swan Inn, which is not busy at that time of day, and where the rooms are large and airy. As we go along, we can choose other venues, although preferably quiet pubs and cafes.

Members are expected to do some research online or in books and prepare an argument or useful ideas on every topic. Topics will be suggested at each meeting for the following meeting. We have also proposed that guest speakers should be invited to help address some of the issues in the new year.

The topic under debate for this meeting is *Transgender Issues*: what gender means for the human condition, its role in society, and its psychological implications for different individuals.



We hope more members will join us and, as we grow, we might even split into separate subject groups.

**Dana Dima, Convener**

**Gardens & Gateaux** will start up on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2022.

It will meet at the Strand centre on that day and every second Tuesday at 12.30 throughout the summer. These meetings will be to plan excursions, and possibly eat gateaux.

For now we have two excursions planned, the first to Toby Buckland's garden festival, at Powderham, on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2022. This will require tickets being purchased. More information on this to follow, but we could get a discount if we get them in December.

Our second excursion is to be to the national trust site at Coleton Fishacre, charity, Kingswear. This is a 23 mile trip to just the other side of Brixham and will require a minibus. Further arrangements for this are to be made in the near future, and date to be agreed with the transport provider, but it will be around the end of May. Anyone interested in either of the first two excursions will need to contact Barry via [enquiries@u3adawlish.info](mailto:enquiries@u3adawlish.info) as soon as possible. Please also contact Barry if you wish to be included in group communications before February.

Otherwise, if you wish to join you can do so by contacting Barry, or by attending the first planning meeting, please come along, we will be pleased to welcome you to the party.



**Barry Baker, Convener**

**The French Group** has become a desired and popular group!



We have more Francophiles wanting to join than we can manage as we meet in each other's houses or on zoom and realistically we can only accommodate 8

though we have 10 in the group and more on a waiting list. We have to hope that a couple of members don't come!

There's also a few at a more rusty or even beginner level who are keen to join a group. So we could do with another convener!

We generally have a topic so people come prepared and this means everyone has a turn to speak. At our last meeting, which was November 18<sup>th</sup>, the topic was "What do we need to do to save our planet and reduce our carbon footprint and what are you, as an individual, doing?"

Ideas included reducing food waste, growing your own vegetables, buying local and in season fruit and vegetables as well as buying "en vrac" a new expression for me...it means loose (also in bulk), try to repair rather than throw away, buy things second hand, use recyclable paper for wrapping presents and more...

Our next meeting is December 2 when the topic is.. "For what would you like to be famous?"

We chat and play the occasional game as well as having a topic.

**Bridie Cushion, Convener**

### Art Appreciation

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, due to expanding numbers, the Art Appreciation Group met in the Mayor's Parlour in the Manor House for the first time. The new venue worked well for the most part. It is a gracious room, and having the original wooden shutters, it offers good blackout capability for projecting pictures on the wall.

The focus of our meeting was a presentation on Fra Filippo Lippi by David Gearing. I'm sure all those who were able to attend the meeting will agree that the time David spent researching Lippi during lockdown was very well spent. We all came away with a much clearer picture of the artist, his body of work and his significance in the history of art.

He was orphaned at an early age and brought up in a Carmelite convent, eventually becoming a monk himself and being ordained as a priest. It is said that he was inspired to paint when he saw Masaccio at work in the Carmine church. He later left the monastery and despite his religious background, led a life full of incident, not to mention scandal, but nonetheless was in great demand due to his mastery of the complexities of the artistic techniques of the time. Looking at pictures of his work and seeing them in the context of other artists earlier and contemporaneous with him, it was clear to see why he was so much in demand despite his interestingly dubious lifestyle!

Our next meeting will again be in the Mayor's Parlour at the Manor House on December 13<sup>th</sup> at 2pm, when we will be sharing our own choices of art work with the group on the theme of 'Celebration' or 'Entertainment' as befits the approach of the festive season. There may also be a little quiz for some seasonal entertainment.

**Lynne Vick, Convener**

As convener of the **Wine Appreciation Group**, we all had a good time at our house both with the wine and celebrating the birth of our only grandson on November 5<sup>th</sup>. What a cracker! The next meeting will be at Anne and Jacks, Christmas attire optional on Friday December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm.

As convener of **Beer and Skittles** also (can you see a link here?), I am pleased to say our inauguration event will take place at the Brunswick Arms on Thursday December 16<sup>th</sup>, at 6.45pm for a 7pm start. I am hoping the pub has arranged for someone to "stick up" the fallen pins, as this is hard work. As the pub has kindly lent the room to us free of any charges, I would ask the attendees to purchase beverages and snacks to help out. The individual cost just for playing skittles should not be more than £2 each. Christmas attire again optional. See you there, Cheers!

**Mike Brandon, Convener**

**The Badminton group is carrying on as usual!**

### Adventure Group

When we set up the Adventure group, the idea was that we would provide members with the opportunity to do things they hadn't done before. Our first two adventures have been quite physical but now we have the chance to do something completely different...

John Vick, an Adventure Group member and also our u3a Chair and Publicity Officer, has been in touch with national u3a and they are keen to feature our group in their publications. In addition to possible items in Third Age Matters and their monthly news, this is what they have said:

*"...we're in the process of organising a u3a film. The structure of this film will show u3a groups, with individuals from that group then talking to camera about their u3a experience. We would really love your adventure group to be a part of this - is this something that you would be interested in? If so, I can send you some more details about this."*

It may be that this is our next adventure!

In the meantime, photos of our most recent adventure, the treetop walks and ziplines in Haldon Forest, are [now available on the website](#). Please do take a look.

**Miggie Pickton, Convener**

**Art Group.** All media. Come along and join us whatever you like to paint or draw. Experience or no experience it does not matter, advice is on hand if you want it. Just bring your painting and drawing materials with you, acrylic, watercolours or pastels and pencils. For further information please see our [Painting and Drawing News](#).

**Group meetings** are usually held twice monthly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday ([Covid-19: check here](#))

**Time:** 11am to 1pm

**Location:** Strand Hall upstairs Lounge Room

**Convener:** Kim Walker

**Cost:** £2 for the 2 hour session

**Contact email:** [enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info) or via our [Contact form](#)

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### Contact us:

You are invited to send us all your group news and updates.

**Newsletter Editor:** Please contact Dana Dima via [newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info).

**Webmasters:** Please contact Dave and Miggie Pickton via [webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info)

Want to know more about Dawlish & District u3a? Check out our website: [u3a.dawlish.info](http://u3a.dawlish.info).