



Dawlish & District u3a

Newsletter April 2022



NEW GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

BRIDGE

A new friendly social bridge group is just starting. Initially, weekly meetings (day and time yet to be decided) will be held at the convenor's house or other members' homes if they have space and tables etc.

You need to know how to play bridge to start as soon as the group is set up, but if you are

keen to learn to play, please do let us know so we can look into finding a bridge teacher if there is sufficient demand.

If you are interested in joining the group or learning to play bridge, please contact **Natalie Brophy**

enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info

DARTMOOR EXPLORE MEETING

Hello Everyone,
Hope you are all well and looking forward to our first meeting at 12.30 pm on Tuesday 5th April at the Strand Centre; this is where we will put a few ideas in place and hopefully get our first trip arranged. As convenor, I felt that I should sort out the first one so

my plan is to visit the WW2 rifle range.

Thereafter, I hope that everyone will want to participate and help choose and plan further visits to some of the lovely and very interesting or historical sites available to us. Please let me know if you are not able to attend the meeting on the 5th.

Linda Studley

The **PAINTING AND DRAWING GROUP** will be meeting on Monday 11th April at 11am but not on the following Monday 18th April as it is Easter Sunday.

Kim Walker

MONTHLY MEETING REPORT: THE VIKINGS IN THE WEST COUNTRY

It seems a common misconception that the Vikings did not get down to Devon and Cornwall much but clearly that is untrue.

At our monthly meeting on 21st March, Derek Gore from the University of Exeter gave us an interesting insight into the Viking Invasion from as early as the first Viking age during 789 – 924.

In 836 it is recorded that King Egbert fought 35 ship loads at Carhampton but sadly lost many of his soldiers to the Vikings who were eventually defeated and withdrew. Why Carhampton? We learnt that the Vikings invaded places that were known to have great wealth i.e. Monasteries, Royal Residences etc. The Vikings were only interested in portable wealth they could take back on their ships and were particularly drawn to silver which was easily melted down and made into jewellery. Leaders would share the spoils of war with their soldiers as payment. This wasn't always a fair means of distributing the gains as they had no scales to assist them.

The second invasion recorded was at a place called Wicganbeorg which some believe could be Weekabourough in the district of Torbay. Did the Vikings land at Torquay? To date there has been no archaeological evidence of a battle in that area. Both invasions were recorded in the English Annals.

The second Viking Age was 980 to 1069 and lasted up to the Battle of Hastings. Led by the Kings of Denmark and Norway they were keen to become Kings of England.

In all, three quarters of England were successfully infiltrated by the Vikings, but King Alfred the Great saved the day by holding strong with Wessex. He was succeeded by his son King Edward the Elder who posted lookouts along the coastline of the Bristol Channel to evade any further invasions.

In 1001 the invaders attacked Teignton (now known as Kingsteignton) but it is recorded that peace was then made, probably due to being bought off by

vast quantities of coins and silver, and they set sail back to Scandinavia. Interestingly, they sailed past Dawlish which clearly did not hold much attraction to the Vikings. Exeter had less luck and the Vikings did land and ransacked the entire settlement before continuing on their journey back to their homeland.

Evidence of Viking Settlements

Throughout these ages, many Vikings did choose to settle across England and became Christians. Evidence of this can be seen in churchyards with their distinctive stone carvings in the monuments

In North Yorkshire and Cumbria there are what are referred to as Hogback Stones which are stone sculptures found in churchyards. There are different styles found in Cornwall which suggest the Scandinavian influence and possible Settlement

Closer to home, in Copplestone, near Crediton, there is a stone monument believed to be of the Viking period and once again showing evidence of the Scandinavian period.

Items of jewellery discovered from Archaeological Digs include rings, amulets, jewellery cases and book-covers all with the intricate Viking design. Even a gold armlet obviously dropped by a Viking. The horses were not ignored either, several interesting pieces believed to be part of a horse harness have also been found once again with the Scandinavian style.

Not forgetting placenames associated with this period - Sleep Isles now Isles of Scilly, or Lundy Isle, to name but a couple.

(Cont.)



In summary by the end of the 2nd Viking Age, Scandinavian Landowners were prominent in Devon. Finally, a heart-warming story from the Bodmin Gospel Book, which is believed to be the oldest book written in the Cornish language. It is also the oldest record of slavery in Anglo Saxon Britain. A

woman called Elsigar purchased a Cornish female slave and her son from a Scandinavian and immediately gave them their freedom.

A worthy subject worth exploring more and our thanks to the excellent speaker.

Kate McCarthy, Committee



Our **STROLLERS** walk in February almost became D&D u3a Adventure group 2 when we lost the intended track in Decoy Park!

We found ourselves on a very muddy path we didn't really recognise; thankfully Michael led us on via a different route and soon we were back to where we should have been ...after we'd navigated a lot of mud!

There were 9 of us ...6 arrived on the train and 3 by car plus we had apologies from another 9 who were unable to join us ... weather was good ... walk strenuous in places but fun and enjoyed

by all thankfully 👍.

Our March 10th walk was mostly on the flat ...we hoped that some of the other 20+ registered Strollers might join us as the spring weather improved...so chose a less strenuous walk to tempt them 🤔.

There were just 6 of us including David

a new walker on our March Strollers walk ... we had sunny weather for our stroll from Sainsbury's ,alongside the stream to Dawlish Warren then via footpaths to Cockwood ... after a refreshment break at The Ship we enjoyed a stroll down the lane to the bus stop near Cofton Holiday Park/ Cofton Motors.

Our April 14th D&D U3A **Strollers** walk will be a mystery adventure ... a new walk route for most of us.

We are catching the number 2 Exeter bus which leaves Teignmouth at 12.10pm and Dawlish at 12.25 pm.

We will be getting off the bus at Cofton Motors and then Michael will be leading us down the public footpath near the garage ...he has done this walk before so at least one of us knows the route

and destination 🤔.

Please do come prepared by wearing suitable footwear for tarmac, grass and possibly muddy footpaths 👍

Jean Gitsham, Convener

PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY

We were very happy to welcome a new member to our fledgeling group in March and look forward to including new people. We met in a small group at the Swan on the 18th and discussed options for the future. For now, we shall focus on values and trust as defining human consciousness. We suggested Friday the 22nd of April, same place, same time, to discuss *Moral Development*. As a tentative future topic, we chose *The Value of Life*. We will try to read up on this and bring back interest-

ing ideas about various aspects of the current topic. We suggest that we each make a list of relevant questions based on what we have read or on our life experience. Have we ourselves noticed any personal moral development or noticed it in others? When was it shaped and what by? Do we still have moral dilemmas in our everyday life? etc. We are looking forward to an interesting exchange.

Dana Dima, Convener





PAGE TURNERS

At the Page Turners recent meeting we were pleased to welcome one new member but also saddened to hear that another friend will be leaving us when she moves away.

The book for discussion was 'All the Light we Cannot See' by Anthony Doerr. This winner of the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction follows the stories of a young blind French girl and a German boy growing up in the Second World War. Events in the story led us to draw parallels with the events unfolding in Europe now and gave us some interesting discussion.

One member did not enjoy the subject matter of the book and chose not to finish it but the majority enjoyed it, although some found it over-long. Some favoured the structure of very short chapters while others found this disruptive.

The general consensus was that the book was very well researched and gave a moving view of the times and the lives of the characters. There were vivid descriptions in the book which moved us greatly although the writer avoids describing some of the most violent incidents in detail.

This book was recommended by a member who rates it as one of her all-time favourites but, as with previous reads, some members would not have considered reading it if it were not for the group. We value the opportunity to explore in this way and look forward to the variety to come.

On 31st March, after a last-minute change of venue caused by the illness of the planned hostess, the Page Turners met to discuss 'Trust Me' by T M Logan and were pleased to welcome another new member.

I admit that I hadn't read the book from the beginning to the end, but I got the plot and all characters and actually I could contribute a lot. We quite liked it (although Susan found it a little bit fantastical and highly improbable) and even if I am not into the thrillers at the present, I would say, it is worth to look at Logan's other books as they all sound intriguing. So, all in all an interesting read and not much violence. Not perfect, but for a thriller I would say pretty good.

The book begins with Ellen trying to help a stranger. She agrees to hold a baby for a flustered young mother sitting opposite her on the train while the woman makes an urgent call. Then the train pulls into a station and Ellen is stunned to see the woman step off the train and rush away down the platform, leaving her baby behind. She discovers a note in the baby's bag, three desperate lines scrawled hastily on a piece of paper asking her to protect the baby and to trust no-one, including the police. We were intrigued when the book was introduced to us and looking forward to our first thriller. The book was gripping from the beginning and most who read it enjoyed following the twists and turns of the plot although some found it a little confusing and too improbable. We won't give away any spoilers but will say that we are encouraged to look for more books by the same author.

Next month we will be reading 'The Reading List' by Sara Nisha Adams and this will be followed by 'The Red Tent' by Anita Diamant in May and 'The New Neighbours' by Diney Costeloe in June.

Deborah Wallis

The **BOULES** Group, which has been meeting inside over the winter months, will be playing on the Lawn again from April, on Friday 8th and Wednesday 27th, subject to the weather. Contact the convenor, **Michael Heyden**, for further details.



DISCUSSION GROUP

The Discussion Group met on Monday 14th March, having had to cancel the previous meeting with members otherwise engaged over half term. We had a good turnout this time, welcomed Mike Collins as a potential new member and Catherine who hasn't been able to attend for a while. We carried forward the topic of how to fund the BBC, something we decided on before Nadine Dorris' widely reported comments on the topic. There was a lively exchange of views and lots of interesting contributions. The BBC has a royal charter to provide a service and this is due to expire on 31st December 2027. The government has promised that until that date all monies raised from the license fee will be handed to the BBC, £3.75 billion in 2020/21. Public service broadcasting, including ITV, and Channels 4 and 5 as well as the BBC, was generally agreed to be necessary. The BBC, the focus of our meeting, was felt to be a particularly trustworthy source of news, and through TV, its internet presence and radio, including the World Service had an unparalleled coverage. There was less agreement over how, and who, the entertainment, education, culture and sport coverage should be chosen by, to complete the public service broadcasting remit. We talked of various options which might be available to replace in whole or part the license fee, for example an addition to council tax (all would pay, but wealthier households more), general taxation (as in Ireland and the Netherlands, where complaints of government control are made), advertising (which would compete with ITV), taxing media giants such as Netflix

and Disney, and making the BBC a subscription service. We didn't seek to reach any conclusions, and no solution presented itself as an obvious choice. The current license fee is criticised to being subject to government pressure so far as the level of the fee is concerned, but other options often have the similar flaws.

The BBC was described, memorably, as being relentlessly middleclass, like Waitrose, by one member. This led to an interesting, if not totally pertinent discussion as to whether the middle or working classes provided the driving force for change in society. We further diverted ourselves with a brief consideration of state broadcasting of the current war in Ukraine by Russian and Ukrainian sources. Russian reports were clearly false, but some Ukrainian reports could understandably have a propaganda element.

The area of sports broadcasting was given a good airing; there were a large number of important occasions in many different sports, not all of which could be covered by free to air broadcasters, and how those to be broadcast were picked was talked about. Some consideration was given to the sums paid to presenters, but less agreement on who was worth what.

BBC Radio was generally admired, the variety being unavailable elsewhere, and particular mention was made of the World Service. After considering 7 possible funding options there was no consensus on the best one, and the members retired, exhausted by their deliberations.

It was decided to discuss **trans issues** next time, and the convenor is already stressed.

Michael Heyden, Convenor

THE QUIZ GROUP

As well as General Knowledge questions, the last four quizzes have included specific rounds on special dates i.e. Pancake Day, The Emerald Isle and All about Wales. Now how many times did you toss your pancakes this year and were you anywhere near the world record? The most tosses of a pancake in one minute is 140 and was achieved by Brad Jolly (Australia) on 21 February 2012.

We also had questions on 'pulling your leg'. Again, how about going for a world record and beating the three-legged race longest distance ever run in 24 hours. Presently it is set at 68.23 miles and was achieved on 7th-8th September 2013. So how about having a go at beating these two records. Any takers? In other rounds questions were set on Valentine's Day, Stones, Scissors and Paper, Orange, Prince Andrew,

Sundays, Absolute Classics, Historical and Modern slang. Talking about slang, in the mid-19th century sausages were referred to as 'Bags o'mystery'. We still wonder what ingredients are put in them... 🤔 Other recent subjects were 'The name of the game', 'All in the past', 'Number crunching' and 'Body language'.

Last Monday the quizzers tackled subjects on 'A sporting chance', That's entertainment, Which decade, Crises and Fruity novels! So can you remember when Blue Peter was first broadcast or when the UK parliament first approved old age pensions or would you prefer to know about the fruity novels?

The quizzes for April are planned for Mondays 4th and 18th; we look forward to racking our brains.

Graham Carey, Convener



IN OUR OWN WRITE



Our small but perfectly formed writing group was even smaller on this occasion with two apologies. However, the remaining three budding writers spent an entertaining couple of hours discussing the stories compiled about being stranded with a group of strangers. We had a storm cutting off an assort-

ment of people near a beach; a midwife being to hand when a pregnant lady was stranded at a ferry terminal in a blizzard, and a group of strangers stuck at a railway station.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 11th April and our topic will be "I never thought that I'd see him again but..."

Travina White Convener

ART APPRECIATION



At the March meeting of our group members responded creatively to the invitation to talk about a work of art of their choosing on the theme of 'Food'. The most bizarre – but popular – choice was Arcimboldo's extraordinary *Four Seasons* showing human faces constructed out of fruit and vegetables. We also had a number of still lives by Caravaggio, Cézanne, and Jan Davidsz de Heem, a *Dining Room Overlooking a Garden* by Bonnard, *A Fisher Girl* by Elizabeth Forbes, Vermeer's *Milkmaid*, and Hopper's *Tables for Ladies* where the display of fruit was almost incidental to

the main subject of the painting. The painting of luncheon in Monet's garden at Argenteuil was a delightful contrast with another al fresco meal - Beryl Cook's *Tea in the Garden* which featured very respectable but entirely naked figures seated around a tea table in a suburban garden.

We were pleased to welcome a member who joined the group for a taster session. I hope he enjoyed the session and will come again to our next meeting. **Unfortunately, the April meeting is cancelled and we will next meet on Tuesday 10th May.** The subject will be Marc Chagall who produced some of the most intriguing and beautiful art of the last century.

Lynne Vick, Convener

LITERATURE



The Wild Silence by Raynor Winn

This is a sequel to *The Salt Path* which half of our group had read. The first book told

the true story of Raynor Winn and her husband Moth who, having lost their farm and home, walked the South-West Path, camping wild and surviving on £48 a week.

Moth had been diagnosed with corticobasal degeneration, which is incurable. Their decision, though allowing that their options were limited, seemed counterintuitive and against medical advice. Astonishingly, his health improved through this vigorous exercise and, Raynor suggested, the healing power of nature.

The Wild Silence began with the couple renting a flat in Polruan where Raynor became rather reclusive, but Moth, despite his condition, successfully completed a degree course.

Raynor's mother's death caused her to

reflect on her early life and how she met and married Moth, despite her parents' disapproval. (We do not know if they came to terms with the relationship).

Raynor realised that Moth was losing precious memories of their long walk together, so she wrote *The Salt Path* for his benefit, but the book was published and was a great success.

They were offered a run-down farm to renovate and decided to undertake another arduous walk in Iceland hoping to, once again, restore Moth's failing health and lift their spirits.

Our group found that reading the first book as well as this one helped to form a fuller picture of this couple though some of us thought *The Wild Silence* was not as engaging as *The Salt Path* which dealt with familiar territory of the South-West and raised issues of homelessness and poverty.

We thought the writing was good and most found their story involving. We were left caring about what happens next to Raynor and Moth and wondered if there will be a third instalment.

We gave this book 4 out of 5.

Liane Goulding, Convenor

EDITOR'S CORNER

This issue of the Newsletter is a little late in coming, but we hope it compensates with substance... We have received exciting articles from most groups and some new group suggestions and I'm sure we will all look forward to hear more from them. We are also happy to learn that more members have joined the existing groups and take this opportunity to welcome them yet again.

Dana Dima

TEA AND CHAT A lively group with interesting conversations. We meet on the third Thursday of the month. Our next meeting is Thursday 21st April 2 – 4pm at the Riverside, which is the blue building next to The Manor House. Why not come along and meet other members? All members are most welcome and, new members or those of you who do not know many others and would like some company are encouraged to join us.

Michael Heyden & Kate McCarthy, Co Conveners

In early March the **ADVENTURE GROUP** donned harnesses and fancy footwear to scale the heights at Quay Climbing Centre in Exeter. We had a go at several climbing walls and even tried bouldering, for which you don't wear a harness - scary stuff! You can see some photos of our efforts on the website here: <https://u3a.dawlish.info/adventure-group-climbing-photos>.

Some of our members have also been target shooting at Crackshot in Newton Abbot. Despite the decimation of group members due to illness, 16 of us still managed to go shooting; trying our hand at air rifles, air pistols and a shooting simulator.

It transpired that some members of the group had a lot of talent at this activity. In the first session, the winning team of Barry, Kerry, Margaret and Pete demonstrated their supremacy on the simulator's shooting range, moving targets and virtual clay pigeons. The second group's men's team (Dave, George, John and Richard) completely thrashed the

women by getting near perfect scores in the rifle shooting. Fortunately the women got their own back in the Wild West shoot-out!

We are now looking forward to our next activity, Segwaying, at the end of April. As ever, full details of this adventure can be found on the website:

<https://u3a.dawlish.info/adventure-group-segwaying>

Miggie Pickton, Convener



Dave, George, Richard and John: the expert riflemen

The **FRENCH** group has reverted to zoom because of the recent rise in infections. We met March 3rd where the subject was "What sort of holiday do you like and what do you like to do on holiday"



I think a few of us no longer like to sit in the sun...sunbathing is a no-no and so we like a mixture of things... relaxation, visiting museums and art galleries.

We talked a bit about the storms and the damage it caused. A couple in our group don't like zoom but we also have some who are uncomfortable meeting indoors so we have zoomed! At the first meeting this month we each talked about a favourite book or

film or TV series. Offerings included *Hamnet*, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, the film "Heat of the Night", the Richard Osmond book "The Thursday Murder Club" and "Keeping up with the Aristocrats". At the second, the topic was "if you could go back and learn something that you now wish you had learned, such as a sport, a skill, or whatever what might it be?" Contributions included learning the piano or a musical instrument, training to sing, learning and speaking more languages, learning economics, learning how to ride a bike, to ski and DIY. It was rather sad to hear some of the regrets!

The next meeting is in April which should be face to face.

Bridie Cushion, Convener

THEATRE We meet on alternate months on the first Thursday of the month. Our next meeting is on Thursday 7th April 2 – 4pm in room 4b at The Manor House.

Productions enjoyed by members this month were *I, Elizabeth* at the Pavilions Teignmouth. Performed by a single Actor it was a powerful and soul-searching production. Based on diaries and letters it gave the audience an insight into the turmoil Queen Elizabeth 1 suffered and the risk she took in choosing not to marry and the uncertainty around a future heir.



Our next trip to the Theatre by the group was to the Shaftsbury to see *TWO* with a shorter production by a different playwright at the beginning. Both memorable. We all agreed the cast were exceptional and the professional way they changed into their various roles was seamless. What a wonderful Theatre this is! The audience seemed to consist of more members of our u3a than anyone else! A perfect evening for many of us with a short stroll across the Lawn to the

Theatre, a refreshing drink and then sit back and enjoy an evening's entertainment.

Our next production to be enjoyed by this group is a trip to the Pavilions, Teignmouth to see *Mary Rose* on Wednesday evening at 7.30pm.

Future productions: *Take a Chance on Us*. Anyone fancy seeing Abba Tribute Band at the Shaftsbury Saturday 16th April? Open to all members, let me know so that I can put you in touch with other members who have already purchased their ticket and would like the company.

4 members have tickets to see *Chicago* in June in Plymouth.

If anyone fancies attending a production but may not fancy going on their own, please email me, I can send the message out to see if there is anyone else who fancies going. Going to productions as a group makes it more fun.

Kate McCarthy, Convener



CRAFT We are a small group who enjoy each other's company in a lovely relaxing

atmosphere. Some of us had tickets to attend Craft for Crafters at Westpoint, but sadly Covid stopped us from going. We look forward to the next event at Westpoint in September.

One member has offered to run a workshop showing us the basics of Calligraphy, this will be later in the year.

We meet each month on the 1st Wednesday of the month. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 6th April in Room 6 at The Manor House from 1.30 – 3.30pm. New members always welcome. Just come along and join us.

Kate McCarthy, Convener