

# Dawlish & District u3a

## Newsletter September 2022

### From the Chair

#### u3a Members Blossom

It was good to see so many of our u3a members taking a leading role at this year's Dawlish Garden Society's annual 'Flower, Produce and Crafts Show' in the Strand Centre. The Show is a highlight of the summer season in Dawlish, and u3a members were much in evidence amongst the contributors and the prize winners.

Despite the extreme weather and its challenges of heat and drought, the Show demonstrated what can be achieved through hard work, enthusiasm and creativity. Entries were invited for 95 different classes in everything from displays of fruit and vegetables to flowers of every description, potted plants, photography, quilting and other crafts, baking and much more. Some classes were very topical – a display using the colours of Ukraine's flag and a table centre celebrating the Platinum Jubilee, while others were for children only. Chair of the Garden Society and u3a member, June Cassidy, had a very long list of medals, trophies and prizes to award at the end!

It was lovely to see members of our u3a Craft Group taking home First, Second, Third and Highly Commended certificates between them, while rumour has it that it was another u3a member who won more first prizes than anyone else at the show! My own blackberry and apple jam didn't quite make it onto the podium this year, but I was pleased with Second for my rhubarb! My freezer is full of fruit, and this is a great way to be reminded of the

summer as I  
enjoy it in the  
dark winter  
months.

**John Vick, Chair**

#### AGM Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September at 3.30pm

Our next meeting will be the Annual General Meeting at 3.30pm on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September. While some people may feel that AGMs are not often the most enthralling item in any organisation's calendar of events, they fulfil an important function. They provide an opportunity for all members to learn about what is happening, and to have input into our future direction. The Committee works hard throughout the year on behalf of members, but this is the time when you can have your say.

It is, of course, the occasion when all the officers and members of the Committee are elected for the year ahead. You have all had nomination forms to give you the chance to put yourself forward for election, or to nominate another member who you believe can contribute.

A healthy and vibrant organisation has new people coming forward to contribute their ideas, experience and energy, so I hope this will be the case in 2022-23. As a matter of procedure, our constitution requires us to have 20% of the membership at an AGM for decisions to be valid, so this means a minimum of 30 members need to attend. Please put this in your diary!



### From the Editor

August being holiday time, some of the groups did not convene this month. Therefore, this issue of the Newsletter is slightly shorter, but we hope you will enjoy it just as much.

**Dana Dima**



### August Monthly Meeting

I was so pleased that we were able to organise an additional monthly meeting in August after the cancelled meeting in July. Corina Skerritt, the Dawlish Librarian, was asked to respond to the question, 'What can Dawlish Library do for you?'. The answer is – a great deal. Gone are the days when libraries were unwelcoming places reserved for silent reading, where food and drink was banned, and only the most committed reader (of 'proper' books) was likely to linger.

Even regular users of the library are not aware of the full range of services available to us all – mostly free of charge. Apart from the books on the open shelves, library users have access to all the other libraries across the region, and further afield too. There is a wide range of large print books, as well as audio books and DVDs.

Technology allows us to borrow and return books easily, to renew and order books, and also explore the catalogue online. Not many of us are familiar with 'Libby', an app which gives readers access to thousands of e-books which we can access remotely and read on a tablet or other device – all free of charge unlike better known but commercial alternatives.

Corina is excited about all these opportunities for us to get the most out of these huge resources, but she also wants to welcome us to the Library in person. There's nothing quite like the personal enquiry and 'one to one' help and advice. Interest groups can use the Library for meetings; we can use the IT facilities free of charge for two hours at a time and we can all get free IT advice and tuition from volunteers who can help us

make the most of the technology. The Library also has access to Which? and other magazines both online and on the shelves. This can save us the cost of a subscription when we are doing some research on the purchase of a washing machine or other expensive item.

Before the pandemic, the Library hosted group activities for children, older people and special interest groups of all kinds. Understandably, this sort of activity was not possible during lock down and when we were all mindful of the risks of social contact. At this time of the year especially, the Library offers activities for children whether they live locally or are visiting on holiday. Some members might be very interested in this for their grandchildren. As restrictions have ended, there has been only a slow recovery of these activities, but Corina hopes we will be keener to return to this in the months ahead. Perhaps some u3a interest groups might like to consider using the Library for their regular meetings?

With the assistance of FODL (Friends of Dawlish Library) the Library has hosted a varied programme of events such as film nights, talks, quizzes and other social events. Corina is keen to ensure that the Library continues to play an important part in the community life of Dawlish. Speaking for myself, having a library in Dawlish is one of the many things which makes this a great place to live. So many smaller towns have lost their libraries as spending cuts have been imposed, so we must do all we can to ensure that the Library continues to play a unique role to enhance the life of everyone in Dawlish. Use it or lose it!

**John Vick, Chair**



### TEA & CHAT

We now meet on the first Thursday of the month from 2 – 4pm at The Riverside (blue building behind The Manor). If you fancy some company, come and join us for a cup of tea and a chat or if you fancy a game either bring along your own or join a

board game. New members are encouraged to come along, meet other members and find out about the Groups in our u3a. All welcome.

**Kate McCarthy & Michael Heyden, Conveners**

### SCRABBLE

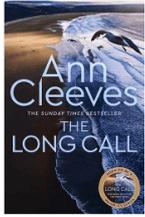
Never a large Group, it is sad to relate that, over the years and for totally unconnected reasons, we have said farewell to nine lady members. Hence, we were particularly delighted to welcome Charlotte to our meeting on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> August (always the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month). The presence of six

men did not deter her, though that fact that three were all called George may have seemed confusing. You don't have to be male or called George, or even particularly good at Scrabble, but new members are always welcome.

**George Lipscomb, Convener**



## LITERATURE



### **The Long Call by Ann Cleeves**

Most of our group had not read any books by Ann Cleeves before but we were familiar with TV dramas based on her work.

The Long Call is, on one level, a gripping detective murder mystery with misdirections and enough suspects to keep the reader guessing right to the end. However, we found that there was a lot more to it than that, particularly with well-developed characters facing complex dilemmas.

Detective Matthew Venn is an outcast from the Plymouth Brethren and his family who are members. Many people in the book are outsiders, some literally so, having recently moved to Devon where it is set.

Ann Cleeves realistically explores the problems of parents with adult learning-disabled children wanting to both protect them and help them gain some independence.

One guilt-ridden man wants to redeem himself by trying to obtain justice for a victim.

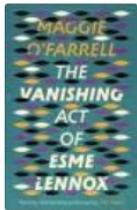
Another is a woman in an abusive marriage, unable to seek help as her husband maintains that she has mental health issues and cannot be taken seriously.

People are up against powerful men who put their desire for status and position above any notion of right and wrong.

There was an interesting grey area voiced by one of the detectives, should justice be sought no matter what the cost or is it sometimes preferable to let it go? We found the relationship between Matthew and his husband Jonathan interesting as they are such opposites and we considered how these differences might add balance to each of them, wondering how they would develop in future books in this series.

The Long Call was enjoyed by the majority of the group, even those who don't normally like crime fiction and was awarded 4/5.

**Liane Goulding**



The **PAGE TURNERS'** book for August was *The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox* by Maggie O'Farrell.

This novel was published in 2006 but was new to most of the group. In the 1930s it was relatively simple for an upper-class husband

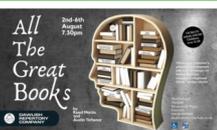
or father to consign a troublesome wife or daughter to a psychiatric hospital and never speak of them again within the family. This is what happened to Esme when, after a troubled childhood, she rebelled against the expectations of society, damaging her family's reputation and her elder sister's marriage prospects. The book opens some sixty years later when the hospital is closing and her great-niece is asked to take responsibility for a relative she has never heard of. The story is told in several time frames, exploring Esme's past as well as what happens when she leaves the hospital. It is also told from several

different points of view as we explore the relationships of Esme, her sister Kitty and her great-niece Iris.

Whilst the book is not a true story, it is based on real events and led to some interesting discussion about society. All members enjoyed the book, although some found the style challenging as information is gradually drip-fed to the reader about what actually happened. At least one member has been moved to explore further works by this author.

As always, discussion of the book led on to further topics from our families to politics and the world was well and truly sorted out! It was good to welcome a new member bringing new perspectives to the group and we look forward to next month's discussions.

**Deborah Wallis, Convener**



## THEATRE

This month a group of us went to see "All The Great Books" at The Shaftsbury.

Whilst we all enjoyed the performance there were mixed reviews discussed when we met at Daisies. Upcoming productions in October and November, are "Lilies in the Field", "Macbeth by Candlelight" and "Watson", all three are at The Pavilions

Teignmouth. We meet on the second Thursday at Daisies from 2 – 4pm. Feel free to join us or email me if you would like to be added to the circulation list.

**Kate McCarthy Convener**



## DISCUSSION GROUP

The Discussion Group met on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August at the Manor House, with six of us present to discuss abortion, particularly relevant following the US Supreme Court decision reversing Roe v Wade. A few statistics were presented. There were 215,000 abortions in 2021, an increase that started in 2016 from a stable level of 185,000 per year for some years before. 99% were NHS funded, 77% carried out in the private sector and 89% carried out at 10 weeks or less.

Everyone present was pro choice. As convenor, (and incidentally the only man present) I wanted to point out what I felt were some anomalies under our present laws. The 1967 Act required two doctors to certify that a woman's reasons for requesting an abortion were justified under the law. I felt that there was an argument to be made for new legislation to be brought in allowing abortion on demand, since I felt this would reflect current practice. A review of the 24 week limit might be reviewed at the same time with a view to lowering it following medical advances.

This was firmly quashed by everyone else. It was generally felt that there were considerable dangers in opening abortion up for discussion, particularly at this time. There was concern that the highly polarised views evident in the US could gain a foothold here, and that it was better to continue with our somewhat fluid and flexible approach to law,

allowing some evolution in practise as views and customs change.

We talked at some length about the situation in the US. It was pointed out that the changes made by the Supreme Court, making the individual state legislatures responsible for abortion law, is to some extent mirrored in the UK. The 1967 Abortion Act had never applied to Northern Ireland, and in the last decade abortion law had been devolved to both Scotland and Northern Ireland. However the hugely restrictive laws being enacted by some states gave concern that the provision of contraception could also be at risk. Mention was also made of the scandal surrounding the mother and baby homes in the Republic of Ireland, which, together with a general decline in support for organised religion, have lead to changes in attitude and law throughout the island.

Somewhat battered, the sole representative of the patriarchy brought matters to a close. We shall be discussing nationalisation next time. Sadly, Hilary is moving, and will no longer be a regular fixture at our discussions, although she's planning to come back from time to time. We shall miss her entertaining presence and thoughtful insights.

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

**Michael Heyden, Convener**

## CRAFT GROUP



It was good to see members take home first, second, third and highly commended certificates at the annual Dawlish Flower and Produce

Show organized by Dawlish Garden Society. We are a fairly small group with four submitting entries and all were successful.

Hopefully this may encourage other members to come along and join us to either bring along a current piece of work or seek ideas. There is always help on hand should anyone be stuck. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month from 1.30 - 3.30 in Room 6 at The Manor House. All welcome.

**Kate McCarthy Convener**

## GREAT LIVES

We have been delighted to welcome three new members to the Group. Charlotte and Margaret joined eight existing members for our monthly meeting on Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> August, whilst Geoff and three existing members had to give apologies.

Jill presented the Great Life of actress and author Mary Elisabeth Braddon, another example that reveals just how much society has changed since the last century.

The lively discussion was tinged with regret that it would essentially our last meeting with Hil, who has contributed so much to the Group; but is now moving to the New Forest. However, she is determined to remain in touch, and even start a Great Lives Group at her new u3a.

**George Lipscomb, Convener**



## QUIZ GROUP

'It ain't half hot Mum' was not a subject round but the heatwave was in full swing when the first quiz took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> August. This said, the quizzers managed to keep their cool as they answered the set questions.

We started off with a round on Racquet Sports followed by General Knowledge and UK Postcodes. Here is one for Barry and the Badminton group.. In what year was Badminton first introduced into the Commonwealth games?

Unfortunately, one of the quizzers had to abandon ship at the half-way stage due to her computer playing up! The final three rounds covered August, Famous Scots and Black and White.

Only one joker was played in the appropriate round and that meant that the UK postcodes round came up trumps. Would you have known that Lerwick had a ZE postcode?

The weakest link was the Famous Scots round and when we think of all that the Scots

have done for us 😞 I should have asked the participants to read the book on the 100 Scots who changed the world. Then they would have been in no doubt as to what William Paterson founded, or what Sir David Brewster, Sandford Flemming and Henry

Faulds each created.

Our second quiz on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August took place on a cooler evening and the subjects tackled were Jacks, Nautical terms, General Knowledge, Parliament, Rocks and the Commonwealth. The scores proved to be much better than the previous quiz with sixty more points on the board.

There must be a lot of sailors in the group as the Nautical Terms round was top of the pops, followed closely by Jacks and Rocks.

This said, the group needs to go and speak to our MP regarding the workings of Parliament. Also, her Majesty may not have slept well if she heard about the Commonwealth Round scores... ouch!

Rack your brain... so who is the Father of the Commons and who is the oldest MP? Also, the Commonwealth games used to be known as what?

The quizzes in September are scheduled to take place on Mondays the 5<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and in October on Mondays the 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully some of those who took a breather during the summer months will be re-joining us. We would also be happy to have others join in.

**Graham Carey, Convener**



The **BOULES** Group have met twice in August. Our first meeting, at the boules terrain in Exminster was at the height of the heatwave, and we were glad of some shade on one side. In contrast, our second, on the Lawn in Dawlish looked as if it was going to rain at any moment, without actually doing so. It was remarkable, after Carnival week AND a couple of days when we have had a little rain, to see green starting

to come back to the Lawn already.

And so I have every hope of playing on lush grass on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September, and a final session at Exminster on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September. Hopefully we shall get in one or two more games in October, before retreating to the Strand Centre to play our own version of indoor boules over the winter months. Everyone welcome, no experience or equipment needed.

**Michael Heyden, Convener**

## NATURAL HISTORY

At our monthly group meeting on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> August, Toby Sherwin gave a PowerPoint presentation of the Mid Devon wood that he and Kerry own. Although I was the only member able to visit this unique location in June, the presentation did illustrate the variety of tree species that characterise an ancient woodland. For our next monthly meeting, on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September, we are looking forward to fellow D&D u3a member, Christine Marsh, talking to us on the topic of: "Plant for a Future". New members are welcome to this, or any of our activities. [St. Gregory's Churchyard.](#)

Just seven members of the group, and more commonly three or four, have continued to work on Wednesdays and Fridays on Stage 1

of the project to convert the churchyard from a parched desert Grassland into a Meadowland. Stage 1 has involved preparing 22 one sq.m. plots in preparation for Stage 2, the seeding with Yellow Rattle in October. Additionally, Tony Leigh has single-handedly cultivated a vacant 25 sq. m. area in which it is planned to seed a wildflower mix in Spring 2023. We're grateful for co-operation from St. Gregory's Church, particularly in granting access to water for irrigation; and on 24<sup>th</sup> August, when we completed Stage 1, TDC emailed their support for Stage 2 and consultations regarding their own maintenance plans.

**George Lipscomb, Convener**



## FRENCH CONVERSATION

This group did not meet at all since the second half of July, as all the members had other commitments. The next meeting on 1st September and the next one, on the 15th, will probably have a lot to talk about!

**Dana Dima**

## ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Despite the hot weather, we had a good turnout at our August meeting. Members were asked to select a work of art on the theme of 'War and Conflict'. The results were impressively diverse.

Some of the more unexpected works were by Rubens, Turner, Millais, Franz Marc and Salvador Dali, not normally associated with these themes. The Rubens was full of symbolism which required an extensive knowledge of classical mythology which most modern observers would lack. Turner's 'The Fighting Temeraire', although familiar to all of us, would also have had associations for contemporary viewers which are not so clearly apparent to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Millais's 'The Ransom' depicted the conflict between a father and kidnappers demanding ransom for the return of his children. Franz Marc's expressionist paintings of animals are typically of a peaceful or exuberant nature. By contrast his picture 'The Wolves' drew comparison between the conflict in the natural world and the wars which were causing destruction in the Balkans when he painted it in 1913. The Dali work was an intriguing portrayal of racial conflict in the United States. There was also a massive sculpture from a 20<sup>th</sup> century Croatian artist commemorating in superb detail the

peasants' revolt in 1573.

We also saw works by Otto Dix and Paul Nash for whom war and its devastating consequences were major subjects in their work. Interestingly, while Dix focused on the terrifying consequences for human beings, British war artists such as Nash were forbidden to portray dead bodies in their work. Nash concentrates on the devastation of the landscape while Dix is unsparing in sharing with his audience the horrific injuries suffered by combatants. By contrast, Eric Ravilious's pictures give a calm, detached and often very beautiful portrayal of everyday life in a war zone in the Second World War. Ravilious was one of the first official British war artists to die on active service, being lost with the crew of a plane on a search and rescue mission in 1942.

Bringing us right up to date was a work in naïve style by a contemporary Ukrainian artist showing a family sheltering in a bunker beneath a shattered city scape. The artist clearly shows the victims' patriotic love for their mother country.

Our next meeting will be at 2pm on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September when Chris Foote will be giving a presentation on Gustav Klimt.

**Lynne Vick, Convener**



## STROLLERS

Our planned August walk to new Exminster park was postponed at 24 hours' notice due to extreme hot weather forecast...(info was on website plus emails sent); however, a few of us Strollers instead did a shorter shady walk down Love Lane, Mules Park, The Dell and Eastcliff and on downhill to a Teignmouth café.

Our September Strollers walk on Thursday September 8<sup>th</sup> will be from Teignmouth to Homeyards Botanical Gardens at Shaldon. From Dawlish catch the number 2 Newton Abbot bus at 12.32pm to Sea View Diner stop in Teignmouth. We'll walk along sea-front and by back beach then up over railway footbridge and along footpath by railway line to Shaldon bridge. From Shaldon there are various routes uphill to the Botanical Gardens. After exploring the gardens we'll head

to a pub or cafe for refreshments before catching ferry back over to Teignmouth.

Our postponed Exminster Ridgetop Country Park stroll has been rescheduled for October 13<sup>th</sup>. We'll be catching the number 2 Exeter bus from Teignmouth at 12.10am and Dawlish at 12.25pm.

Plan is to get off bus opposite the garage at far end of Exminster then enter park by nearby footpath. The first field is quite steep but worth it for the views at the top pathways are then mostly alongside hedgerows with great views and three lots of seating plus information boards. We leave the park via the downhill Deepway Lane, then head for cafe or pub for refreshments before catching 2x hourly bus home.

**Jean Gitsham, Convener**



## GARDENS AND GATEAUX

Some of our group enjoyed another interesting coach trip this month. With the help of Dawlish community transport, we had a lovely day at the garden house at Buckland Monachorum.

On the grounds of an old vicarage, Lionel Fortescue began the garden project in 1945.

The 40 acre site feels a lot bigger when you're walking around, due to the many paths weaving in and out of different areas of planting. The gardens have been constantly improved upon throughout the years.

To this day, a team of committed volunteers and full-time staff maintain the grounds to a very high standard.

The gateaux ain't bad either.

If you think you might like going on trips like this, why not join our group?

**Barry Baker, Convener**



## LUNCHEON CLUB

Our Luncheon club is currently suspended, as it needs a new convener.

This has been a small group, that met for lunch at various locations, about once a month.

There has been some interest in the group, but no one has come forward to take up the position of convener. This would not involve a lot of work, just contacting group members

and making bookings. If you think you could do this, and help the group restart please contact Barry via: [enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info)

## BADMINTON

Anyone wanting to get some exercise and have a bit of fun on a Tuesday afternoon? Why not come along to our Badminton group. There's always room for new players. We play every Tuesday at 4.30pm in the sports centre on Sandy Lane. You don't need to join first, just turn up with suitable

footwear and have a go. First timers are free and can borrow a racket. Don't worry about not being good enough: we only get upset when you win!

**Barry Baker**

