



Dawlish & District u3a

Newsletter November 2022



From the Chair AGM

I was pleased to see such a good attendance at our AGM in October. It is a good opportunity for members to learn more about what has been going on across the organisation, even in areas which would not normally directly affect them. I hope those who were there found it interesting – and reassuring to know that our u3a is in good shape. This is the result of a great deal of enthusiasm and commitment from our conveners, committee members and office holders, as well as the contributions of our members. As is customary, full minutes of the meeting will be published before our next AGM, but in the meantime, you might like to know that David Wright has been elected to join the Committee. I know David has a great deal to contribute. Other officers and committee members have been re-elected, but Pete Thorogood has indicated that he wishes to step down from his position as Secretary in December, although he is pleased to continue as a committee member. This leaves us in a familiar position. For the past year and more, we have not fulfilled the rules of our constitution by not

having a Vice Chair. We have also had the bare minimum of six people serving on the Committee. David Wright joining brings that up to seven but one or two more members would enable us to have a more reasonable distribution of roles. The Committee hopes to co-opt others in the near future. Please let me know if you would like to be considered.

MONTHLY MEETING, MONDAY 21ST NOVEMBER

Our next meeting will be at 3.30pm on Monday 21st November when our guest speaker will be well-known local historian, Dr Todd Gray. His subject is one which has attracted much attention across many communities in recent times: 'Dawlish and Slave Plantations'. Dr Gray is an honorary research fellow at Exeter University and has many publications to his credit, including 'Devon's Last Slave Owners', published last year. I hope you will put this in your diary.

John Vick, Chair



SINGING FOR FUN/HEALTH.

Some of our members have expressed an interest in joining a singing group. I am looking into the possibility of such a group starting next year, if there is enough interest.

Can I ask anyone who thinks they would join a small, fun singing group, to get in touch via enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info

Given a positive response, I will contact those interested to find out what everyone wants and explore the possibilities.

Barry Baker

Living

Laughing

Learning

ST PETROCK'S

Our guest speaker in October was Peter Stephenson, Director of the charity St Petrock's which provides support for the homeless and the vulnerably housed. To find out more, you may wish to follow this link <https://stpetrocks.org.uk>

He started off by inviting his audience to suggest what 'Home' means to us. Members talked about many characteristics of a home - warmth, being with people who love us, having our own possessions around us, stability, safety and much else. He also asked us to suggest the reasons why people might become homeless. We came up with a list which included family or relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, unemployment, debt, alcohol and substance abuse, coming out of the prison or care systems and, above all, mental health issues. Peter said we had a very comprehensive list, and of course, many homeless people experience more than one of these factors at the same time.

While we are very conscious of those who are sleeping and living on the streets, he emphasized that in many respects the even bigger problem is 'the hidden homeless', those who have no fixed place to live but may be 'sofa surfing', frequently staying for short periods with their grans, who are major providers of care! Some may be living in a car or a disused building, or even simply living in impossibly crowded situations. Peter pointed out to us that those we see living on the streets are just the tip of the iceberg: rough sleepers are counted but the hidden homeless are not. The scale of that problem can only be estimated and probably accounts for at least 20 people for every person who is on the streets. Interestingly, the vast majority of rough sleepers are male, with women accounting for about 25%.

Peter asked us to consider what we would miss most about 'home' if we were living in these situations. All sorts of practical issues came to mind. Being hungry, cold and wet were probably obvious, but we soon came up with concerns about personal hygiene and having to wear dirty clothes, loneliness, boredom, or being a victim of crime.

St Petrock's is mainly based in Exeter and some other local communities. Peter talked about the practical support he and his team provides from their base at St Petrock's Church in the cathedral close. They go out to offer breakfast and a hot meal at lunch time. Their patrols keep in touch with those sleeping rough in the area and to help them to keep safe and to get the help they need. These days, benefits are only paid into a bank account and without a fixed address it



is hard to set up an account. Furthermore, without a fixed address, it is difficult to get a job interview. All of this makes it very difficult for a homeless person to get out of the difficult circumstances in which they find themselves. St Petrock's offers an address which can be used for dealing with the authorities, banks and possible employers, but also for family members who may wish to keep in touch with them. In today's society, it is almost essential to have a mobile phone to enable you to access support and facilities, including welfare benefits, and so not having somewhere to charge your phone presents a major disadvantage. St Petrock's has a bank of phone chargers enabling those who need it to keep in touch and access services.

Their building includes shower facilities and a laundry whose washing machines are kept going all hours of the day. This helps the homeless to maintain their dignity and to present themselves better should they have a job interview.

In the pandemic, they worked closely with the NHS to provide vaccinations on the spot, with no need for appointments. For many homeless people, a dog offers hugely important emotional support (and they are warm!) and St Petrock's provides dog food to ensure that they are looked after as well.

The charity already has a limited amount of shared housing and Peter is trying to increase the amount of accommodation they are able to provide to those who need it. In the early years of this century, the Labour Government had very effective policies to reduce the number of rough sleepers, and for a period it looked as if our society was close to dealing successfully with this seemingly intractable problem. Sadly, these policies have been dismantled so that now the number of homeless people continues to grow.

Peter spoke highly of the work done by homelessness teams at Exeter City Council and the Districts but recognises that they are seriously short of funding. The current economic crisis is likely to make that situation even worse. St Petrock's is overwhelmingly dependant on financial support from the public, from legacies and support from other non-government sources. Charities which are dependent on contracts from public bodies often feel inhibited in what they say. The main benefits of being independent from public funds are that it allows St Petrock's to be advocates for homeless people, to speak truth to power, and also to be flexible and innovative in how they work.

ST. PETROCK'S (cont.)

It is clear that those of us who were able to listen to Peter's talk learned a great deal about issues surrounding homelessness in our own community. I am sure that even those who felt that they already knew a lot about this subject came away with a better

understanding and a firm belief that our society must do better and not sweep these problems under the carpet, even at times when money is tight and other problems crowd the agenda for our nation's decision makers.

John Vick, Chair

DISCUSSION GROUP

The group met on Monday 10th October at the Manor House. We were pleased to welcome Steve Wheatley, a new member, and altogether there were six of us. We had previously decided to discuss monarchy and royalty, prompted by the death of the Queen. As a background, there are seven comparable monarchies still in Europe, with a few more very small ones, so the UK isn't on its own, but probably has the most high-profile royal family, and we talked in general about the principle of a hereditary head of state.

Concern was expressed over the system itself which had led to so much wealth in the form of property and land in the hands of the monarch, and the cost of the system and privileges in tax and other matters afforded to the family. Set against this was the considerable tourist revenues connected to visits to locations connected to the monarchy.

That the late Queen had been a sensible, and on the whole non-political head of state was generally agreed, although some doubts were expressed as to whether Charles, becoming king at the age of 75 would be able to carry through the modernisation and slimming down which was felt to be necessary if the popularity of the institution was to be maintained at its current levels of about 60%.

We talked of the alternatives, and the executive president system of France and the USA was compared to the figurehead presidents of republics such as Ireland and Germany. Our lack of a written constitution was remarked on. The inflexibility imposed



on other countries by out-of-date written constitutions compared unfavourably with the UK in some ways.

The ease with which the country moved from one head of state to the next on the death of the Queen contrasted with the long process required to appoint a new Prime Minister following Boris Johnson's resignation. However, the hugely disruptive period between the death and the funeral seemed out of place in modern society. We wondered whether the drivers of this official period of mourning were the media, doing what they believed were expected of them, or the rather faceless 'courtiers' sometimes referred to. It was noted that Princess Anne's children did not have titles, and it seemed to some that the titles and decorations so freely distributed were only of any interest to the royal family itself.

We discussed flag waving and patriotism, and it was noted that while it often seems acceptable in other countries, in the UK it is frequently dismissed as jingoistic. Whether we should have pride in our country, or just accept that our birthplace was merely a random act of chance was talked about at some length. I think we all felt that we were lucky to live in a democratic society with freedom of speech, health care and human rights, and the freedom to discuss changing our system of government without fear of the state.

We decided to talk about assisted dying next time, unless we're closed down as a subversive organisation in the mean time.

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

Michael Heyden, Convener

TEA AND CHAT

We meet in the Riverside Centre next to the Manor House, on the first Thursday of the month from 2-4pm all welcome. Come along for a friendly chat or if you fancy a board game, bring one along. Most Committee members are present and as many Convenors as possible. New members

and those thinking about joining are strongly encouraged to come along to talk to Convenors and group members about any interest group they may be interested in trying.

No need to book a place: just turn up on the day.



LITERATURE



Macbeth by Jo Nesbo

Hogarth Press invited 6 authors to write a novel based on plays by Shakespeare and Jo Nesbo re-imagined Macbeth set in a lawless, dystopian Scottish city riven by corruption, violence and drugs, the highly addictive "brew".

Macbeth, a recovering drug addict, is in charge of the police SWAT team before being promoted to Head of Organised Crime and his partner, known only as Lady, owns a casino. They have been given back-stories, both are damaged by deprived childhoods, sexual abuse and are burdened with dreadful secrets so it is understandable that they would be drawn to one another and ruthlessly advance themselves to positions of power and authority.

Encouraged by Lady, Macbeth kills Duncan, the Chief Police Commissioner and they frame his guards for the murder. They go on to commit more bloodshed, blackmail

and fabrication of evidence. Macbeth goes back to using brew, becoming increasingly paranoid and suffering from hallucinations. After Lady's suicide he is alone and trapped in a nightmare of his own making. His downfall and death at the hands of those he has betrayed is inevitable.

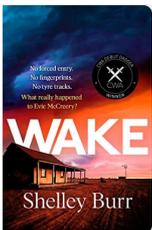
We found it helpful to have refreshed our memories of the source material and the characters in the original play. It was a clever and inventive interpretation, particularly the three witches with their "brew" and their fateful prophecies.

We discussed the many different ways that Shakespeare has been produced. By coincidence some of us are going to see *Macbeth* by Candlelight at the Pavilion Theatre on 2nd November.

As in the play, the book is grim and bloody and would make an excellent Scandi-Noir film, but it was too bleak and violent for some of our group so was awarded only 2/5

Liane Goulding

PAGE TURNERS met in October to discuss 'Wake' which was first published in 2022.



This first novel by Australian author Shelly Burr was recommended on a 'good summer read' list and has been generally well reviewed as a debut work of crime fiction. Opinions within the group were divided - a page turner for some

but not worth finishing for others. To some it was well written, taut and compassionate, but for others the format involving transcripts of internet forum conversations was confusing and the characters were unsympathetic. Lies and the withholding of information at the time of the disappearance of a young girl in a remote

community left the case unresolved until a private investigator, with his gradually revealed ulterior motives, uncovers some of the deceptions and eventually solves the complex interconnection of cases. The remote, hot, arid location was generally thought to have been convincingly depicted but the characters less so. Most found it difficult to feel any empathy with either the sister of the missing girl or the detective and his own family horrors. However, it did stimulate discussion of how much you would do to protect your loved ones, how money plays a part in the success or failure of an investigation and whether some people are judged more worthy of sympathy than others.

Deborah Wallis, Convener

BOULLES

The group has met in the Strand Hall twice in October for Dawlish u3a Rules indoor boules, a sport of our own devising. Following the last meeting, giggling in corners and the introduction of non-standard playing items will mean points are deducted. You know who you are, don't you, Alison and Brenda?

We'll be meeting again in the same place at 10.30 am on Friday 11th and Wednesday 23rd November. Everyone welcome, entertainment guaranteed.

Michael Heyden, Convener



THEATRE

On discussion with members of this group, we have agreed that until we have someone willing to organise backstage visits, script reading etc. we will concentrate on attending and enjoying local productions. If any member of the group wishes to visit a theatre further afield, send me the details and I can send an email out to members to see if anyone else wishes to join you. It is much more fun to go with others. We meet on the third Thursday of the month in Daisy's Tea Room. Please contact me if you want to join us.

Lilies on the Land. Five of us went to see this play showing at the Pavilions, Teignmouth. For further details of this performance please see our review on "Interest Group News" on

our website.

Tickets, tickets, tickets.

Productions we are going to see in November.

Candlelit Macbeth Wednesday 2nd November – Teignmouth Pavilions

Watson—The Final Problem Saturday 12th November – Teignmouth Pavilions

Elvis Saturday 12th November – Dawlish Shaftsbury

Mrs Harris Goes to Paris 17th November – Teignmouth Pavilions

Want to join us? Contact me and I can let you know our seat numbers.

Kate McCarthy, Convener



STROLLERS WALKING GROUP



On Thursday 13th October, welcoming Geoff to a taster of our walks, six of us set out to explore the Ridgetop Park between Exminster and Matford. It's only been open for a few

months, signs are non-existent and car parking isn't good either at the moment.

We took the bus to near the BP garage on the A379 (it's got an amazing outside laundromat, do have a look when passing if you haven't noticed it before), and went up a track and steep field to the Park. It's in several inter-connected parts, there's good seating, including some where you can lay back and look at the sky, and the views over Exeter and the surrounding countryside are fabulous. It's a wildlife haven as well- at least Jean says she saw a deer, quite close, but it had vanished by the time the rest of us looked. To finish we walked back to Exminster along a single-track road which passes, at great height, over the motorway,

downhill all the way. The weather was kind, a most enjoyable afternoon.

Our next Dawlish & District u3a Strollers walk is on Thursday November 10th. It's a level circular off-road/footpath walk from Jetty Marsh to Locksbridge Tearooms at Teigngrace on the Templar Way ...have checked ahead and the Tearooms will be open for our refreshment stop 🍷

We will be catching the number 2 Newton Abbot bus which leaves Dawlish at 12.32 pm and Teignmouth at 12.47 pm ...buses back leave NA at 2 & 32 minutes past the hour.

New walkers are very welcome to come along with us to enjoy the stroll and meet up with fellow u3a members...also members are most welcome to bring along a guest with them.

**Michael Heyden,
Jane Gitsham,
Conveners**



The **ADVENTURE GROUP** goes from strength to strength and now has 42 members. Our recent adventures have included archery and a RIB ride; in November we'll be going for a mini break to the Manor House Hotel near Okehampton (billed as the country's only sport and craft hotel); and in December we'll be having a go at line dancing.

Any member of Dawlish & District u3a is welcome to join in our activities. They are all advertised on the Adventure Group news

(<https://u3a.dawlish.info/tag/adventure>) but group members also get advance notice via email.

We are in the early stages of arranging the line dancing but it will be taking place at Danceworks Devon in Newton Abbot on Wednesday December 14th at 3pm. If you would like to come along, contact me on adventure@u3a.dawlish.info.

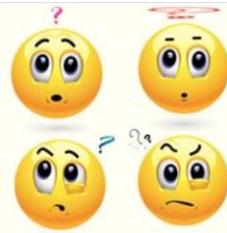
Miggie Pickton, Co-convener.

QUIZ GROUP

The Quiz Group met two weeks on the trot and some of the group members have returned after their Summer. Our first evening started with a round on Cockney Slang and this proved to be top of the pops. I reckon that afterwards the men had a Chas and Dave and went to have a butcher's hook for harper and queens.

The remaining rounds were Names, Gary/Garry, Science, Monsters and General Knowledge. One of our group is called Garry and so he must have been disheartened to realise that the result from that round was the worst of the evening.

The following Monday the set questions were General Knowledge, State Capitals, Sleepy/Dreamy, The Noughties, Bella Italia and Art and Literature. The quizzers excelled in the General Knowledge round but must have fallen asleep during the Sleepy/Dreamy



round.

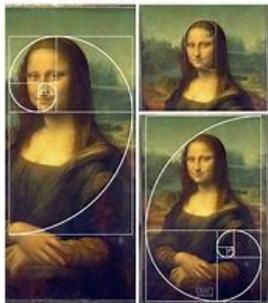
The last round on Art and Literature proved to be controversial as the quizmaster was challenged as to the answer. The question was "Which of Shakespeare's plays has a title which is also a proverb?". Answer - 'All's well that ends well'. One of the participants unmuted and stated that it was also 'Much ado about nothing'. Others said that was correct..

Humbug! 😊 If you care to take a look at the list of 300 proverbs (yawn) you will note that 'Much ado about nothing' is not listed, hence it is a quote or saying not a proverb. You just can't get the staff these days. We parted friends as there is always a lot of banter during the quiz evenings.

The dates for the next quizzes have been set for the 14th and 28th November and the 5th and 19th December. All are welcome!

Graham Carey, Convener

ART APPRECIATION



In our October meeting, Molly Doyle shared some of her experience as an artist and teacher, to show members about the techniques used by Renaissance painters.

We learned about the labour-intensive processes used to produce frescos (painting directly onto fresh plaster), paintings on wood, velum and canvas, and the problems and advantages of each medium. Artists were apprenticed for many years from childhood to learn how to grind pigments and prepare surfaces, as well as learning to draw and paint. This was a far cry from being able to buy a tube of acrylic or a canvas as artists in much more recent times have been able to do.

We also learned about some of the complex mathematical theories which influenced composition, such as the Golden Ratio and the Fibonacci Sequence. Molly gave illustrations of how the Fibonacci Sequence occurs in nature, and how these proportions can be traced in paintings we are familiar with produced by some of the great artists of the Renaissance. This prompted much

discussion amongst the group as to what extent the artists deliberately used mathematics to produce a harmonious composition as opposed to instinctively understanding that these 'rules' produce a pleasing effect. We also wondered how much these devices for composition were employed by artists in non-Western cultures. Finally, we looked at the employment of the camera obscura and lenses to enable artists to produce accurate, finely detailed depictions of complex forms. This has been a subject of much investigation and research in recent years, notably by David Hockney.

It was a fascinating talk and left us all marvelling at the achievements of old masters such as Caravaggio, Da Vinci and Van Eyck.

Our next meeting has been moved from our normal slot of the second Tuesday of the month, to 2pm on Monday 14th November in the Mayor's Parlour at the Manor House. This is for one month only. Members have been asked to choose a work of art which suggests something about 'Family' or 'Relationships'. It will be interesting to see what variations on this theme we can come up with.

Lynne Vick, Convener



CRAFT

We are a small group that meets on the first Wednesday of the month from 1.30 to 3.30 in room 6 at the Manor House. Please come along and join us and bring

your current project or, just come along for some inspiration.

Kate McCarthy, Convener

