



Dawlish & District u3a

Newsletter January 2023

From the Chair

It was good to see a full house for our u3a Festive Meeting before Christmas. The lure of Graham Carey's Christmas Quiz obviously overcame any reluctance for members to venture out into the dismal December weather.

Those familiar with Graham's quizzes would have had few illusions about how they were going to fare. The team which generously allowed me to join as a late recruit soon realised that I had very little to contribute when it came to identifying any of the twenty celebs hiding behind Santa beards. My knowledge of Christmas song lyrics didn't add much to the team's score either. I had a more sporting chance of getting at least one or two of the True or False questions right. We all came away knowing more about unlikely Christmas customs in Iceland, the ancient origins of the tradition of decorating homes with evergreen foliage, Christmas books and poetry, the opening line of 'Moby Dick', Christmas films and much else. It was great fun, so thank you to Graham for putting all the questions together.

I'd also like to thank the members of the committee for organising the refreshments – the mulled wine was particularly good. Ask Kate for the recipe. We had lots of raffle prizes too (thank you to the donors) so lots of members went home clutching something. It was remarkable how many people I asked to pick out a ticket for the raffle actually chose one with their own number!

Monthly Meeting, Monday 16th January at 3.45pm

Our first monthly meeting of 2023 will be rather different. We will be returning to the continually worrying subject of **Cyber Crime**. We had a talk about this several years ago but as we all know, this issue has only become worse, causing most of

us some anxiety. None of us is immune to being scammed and defrauded in this way. Mick Harrison from Devon and Cornwall Police will be speaking to us and sharing his up-to-date knowledge about what is happening and how we can best protect ourselves. I hope you will be able to attend.

Unfortunately, I will be away for that meeting. Every year at this time, I am involved in interviewing 16-year-old students from a number of East European countries who are seeking scholarships to study for A-levels or the IB in UK schools. In the last two years these interviews have been conducted on-line but I am pleased to say that this year the team of interviewers can return to meeting the students face to face in their own countries – although not to Ukraine or Moldova for security reasons. I have met some extraordinary young people whose thirst for education and experiences outside their own countries is remarkable. This time I will be spending time in Tbilisi in Georgia, and then on to Yerevan in Armenia which I last visited in January 2020, just as we were all starting to appreciate the significance of Coronavirus and the impending global pandemic. At a time when we are rightly preoccupied by the war in Ukraine, it is also important to remember that other European nations are suffering from the effects of war at this time: Georgia has had to deal with separatist conflicts since the 1990s and was invaded by Russia in 2008, while Armenia and Azerbaijan have recently agreed a truce in a war which has been continuing sporadically for over three decades with a further outbreak last year. Meeting these young people in their own countries and learning at closer quarters about their lives, the issues facing their own countries and their hopes for the future, is humbling but also one of the highlights of my year. **John Vick, Chair**

Living

Laughing

Learning

DISCUSSION GROUP

The Discussion Group met on Monday 12th December at the Manor House. Prompted by the World Cup in Qatar we talked about the extent to which we should be prepared to change our behaviour to conform with that of other cultures we visit, should we choose to go in the first place.

We had a wide-ranging discussion and were largely agreed that it was both necessary and courteous to do so. We talked over the extent to which the values of our Western liberal democracies were universal ones, and whether attempts should be made to spread them to other cultures. Our efforts to do so, historically by conquest and more recently through trade had not been noticeably successful.

Our talk ranged through homosexuality being illegal and the treatment of workers in Qatar, through gun culture in the USA to autocratic societies such as Russia and China. Islamic countries views on sex and the position of women in society was mentioned, and the recent outlawing of sex outside marriage in Indonesia was brought up. The huge changes in Western society in the last 50 years was a topic of interest, as not so long ago homosexuality in the UK was illegal and

women's rights were very different.

It was noted that in the West we tended towards an acceptance of the values of other cultures, but this rarely seemed to be reciprocated even amongst immigrants intending to settle in the UK.

We found ourselves at times straying far from the original topic. The East India Company's policy of excluding Christian missionaries from India got a mention, and the view was offered that it was unwise to talk about Donald Trump when on holiday in Florida.

And that ends another year, and we shall start the new one by discussing fair trade, prompted by Dawlish being a fair trade town. With our track record we shall end up speculating about the wisdom of carrying coal to Newcastle.

Michael Heyden, Convener

Please note that the views expressed by the Discussion Group may not represent those of the wider Dawlish and District u3a membership.



THEATRE

December started off with Christmas Gothic at Pavilions. Not only were we rooted to our seats by the stories, but I have often heard it said "*It is not just the story but in the story telling*" we weren't disappointed. Please see our website for further information on this riveting performance.



Panto season is definitely upon us, with members looking at productions at Teignmouth, Dawlish and Torquay.

We have tickets booked to see the screening of *Living* on Tuesday 3rd January at 7pm and Andre Rieu Sat 7th January at 3pm, both at the Pavilions in

Teignmouth.

Also, on Saturday 7th January a small party of members are going to the Pantomime at Shaftsbury to see Robin Hood! at 7.30pm.

Four members have booked seats for the acclaimed National Theatre production *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* being shown at the Theatre Royal in Plymouth. This is not until February, but tickets are selling fast.

Want to join us for any of the above? Contact me and I can let you know seat numbers. Or, you may just want to be added to the circulation list for future Theatre performances.

Kate McCarthy, 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 Conveners as possible. New members and those thinking about joining are strongly encouraged to come along to talk to Conveners 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. Next Tea and Chat is on Thursday 5th January.

Kate McCarthy & Michael Heyden, Conveners



SINGING GROUP

This group is for those that would like to sing together for the fun of it. It's due to start in February at the Methodist Church on Brunswick place. (Dates and times to be arranged.)

Anyone interested, who hasn't yet put his or her names forward, please do so this month. Email Barry, via enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info Looking forward to an interesting 2023.

Barry Baker

ART APPRECIATION

For the meeting in December David Gearing designed an intriguing 'Puzzle' which tested members' knowledge. He showed us 13 paintings from the 15th to the 20th centuries, including works by Van Eyck, Seurat, Hockney, Millais, Goya and Whistler. Most were familiar to us. We were then given 39 written statements, which we were challenged to allocate to the correct painting. Only three of the statements could apply to each painting, and all had to be used.

There was some serious head scratching and good-natured debate in the two teams. Both teams were confident about the connection between the 1999 historical novel and Vermeer's 'The Pearl Earring' but their confidence was misplaced when the 1984 hit Broadway musical was attributed by everyone to Toulouse Lautrec's 'Moulin Rouge'. It was, we now know, Seurat's 'Grande Jatte' which inspired Sondheim to write 'Sunday in the Park with George'. Whistler's 'Falling Rocket' provoked a

notorious court case, as well as being an example of 'art for art's sake'. Goya's 'May 3rd' was soon identified as being 'the first great picture which could be called revolutionary in every sense of the word', but we all failed to recognise that it had been kept in storage for 50 years after completion.

Although the Puzzle exposed the limits of members' knowledge, it was a very enjoyable way to look carefully at paintings, dig deep into what we did know – or thought we knew, and learn more about their history. It was a great collaborative and interactive experience. We are grateful to David for the time he spent composing this imaginative challenge, and hope we may be able to do something similar again in the future.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 10th January when Keith Feltham will be giving a presentation on the 20th century expressionist artist, Paul Klee.



Lynne Vick, Convener

STROLLERS



Our next planned D&D u3a Strollers walk is on Thursday January 12th 2023.

Due to concerns re unknown winter weather conditions, we have chosen

a shorter local walk for January 2023.

From Dawlish catch the number 2 Newton Abbot bus at 12.32pm and from Teignmouth catch the number 22 Dawlish Warren bus at 12.22pm to the start of our walk, i.e. from near the bus shelter opposite the Minidab B&B on the Dawlish/Teignmouth Road

We will be walking down Love Lane then exploring the various pathways on Mules

Park and Eastcliff Park ... on reaching the railway bridge, weather permitting, we'll be walking along Teignmouth seafront as far as The Point car park then, if tides permit us, along the back beach and on to The Oystercatcher cafe for our refreshment stop.

The last time we attempted this walk was during the 2022 summer heatwave and temperatures were so high on reaching the seafront we headed straight for a cafe 😞 Looking forward to some new and maybe longer monthly walks for our Strollers group during 2023!

Jean Gitsham, Convener



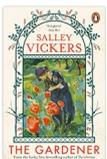
ART AND CRAFT

Good news! After discussions with members, we are pleased to rename our group as Art and Craft. This opens a wider diversity of creativity within our Group. We will continue to meet on the first Wednesday of the month from 1.30 to

3.30pm in room 6 at The Manor House. If we steadily increase in numbers, we will move to a larger room. Interested in joining us? Just come along to the next meeting which will be on Wednesday 4th January.

Kate McCarthy & Kim Walker, Conveners

LITERATURE



The Gardener is set in Hope Wenlock, a village in the Welsh Marches. The wonderfully named protagonist is Halcyon Days, a woman bereft as is often the case in Salley Vickers' books. She, after the end of a love affair, moved in with her dying father to care for him. Following his death, she and her sister Margot buy a rather splendid but run-down house together, in spite of their fractious relationship. Each sister was favoured by one parent, Halcyon by her gentle, academic father and the more glamorous Margot by her domineering, waspish mother.

The overgrown neglected garden that Halcyon, known as Hassie, takes charge of is a good metaphor for her sorting out her life and embarking on the process of healing. She is assisted by Murat, an Albanian man, separated from his British wife, who is also struggling to make a new beginning.

The book is a small pretty hardback and it is easy, at first, to be deceived into thinking that this is going to be a simple and sweet story but there is much more to it. The

village seems lovely and is described beautifully yet it is no idyll. There are abusive relationships, neglected children, racism and even the amiable vicar is not caring for himself after his wife's death and is having a crisis of faith.

There appear to be mysterious pagan forces in the woods and a haunted pond but are they real or the product of emotional distress? Salley Vickers was trained as a Jungian psychotherapist.

An attack is blamed on Murat who then has to hide, helped by the redoubtable Miss Foot, Halcyon's new friend.

Some found the end a little unsatisfactory, but the sisters are reconciled and Halcyon is beginning a new life. Quite literally as she has a baby. There was some debate in the group about the identity of the father.

The book was thought to have sagged a bit in the middle but, overall, we found it enjoyable and well written. The story widened out and encompassed history, nature, love, heartbreak, loss, sex, fantasy, family troubles and recovery.

Most of us agreed that we would be happy to read more novels written by the author and awarded this one 4/5.

In December the **PAGE TURNERS** met early in order to avoid the Christmas festivities and as a result not everyone had time to finish the book but a lively discussion was still held.



This month the book was *'The Keeper of Lost Things'* by Ruth Hogan. This is the author's debut novel from 2017 and is a heart-warming tale of love, loss, redemption and healing. Anthony Peardew is the keeper of lost things. Forty years ago, he carelessly lost a keepsake from his beloved fiancée Therese

on the very same day that she died unexpectedly. As a result, he dedicates his life to rescuing lost things, with the hope of reuniting them with their owners. The book interweaves a lively cast of characters and includes love stories, humour, farce and even a ghost. Whilst most of the group enjoyed the book, some found it all a bit too much.

One member of the group revealed that she had been at school with the author and had recognised descriptions in the book of experiences they had shared.

Deborah Wallis, Convener

QUIZ GROUP NEWS



They say that some people are gluttons for punishment. Well, I trust that those who survived the main u3a quiz on the 19th did not view the group quiz on the same evening punishment but rather festive fun!

The 60 questions were all Christmas related with the chosen subjects being Royal Christmases, Christmas Music, Snow and Ice, Christmas Science, Pantomimes, and a Christmas mix.

A few of the members were absent; one undertaking a 3-month tour of Asia and another

couple en route to Sweden. Then the computer gremlins unfortunately stopped two teams competing as they were unable to link into the zoom. However, this said, those who were able to take part enjoyed the fellowship and hopefully the questions. The Christmas number one quiz wise was Christmas science and the Christmas blues came in the form of the Christmas music questions.

Our first quiz in 2023 will be on Monday 9th January followed by another on 23rd January.

Graham Carey, Convener

The **BOULES GROUP** will be meeting again in the Strand Hall over the winter months, starting on Friday 13th January. What could possibly go wrong? Do come and join us, all you need to bring is the ability to laugh at other people making fools of themselves. And not to stick strictly to the rules you know...



Michael Heyden, Convener

FRENCH

We met at my house in Teignmouth on 1st December and talked about Christmas plans. Some had family coming, some were visiting family and one was choosing to do very little...or hadn't yet decided. One was worried about the traffic and driving and is getting a taxi a long way.

We talked about presents and one wanted a Françoise Hardy CD. Françoise H. is very ill at the moment. Another one was buying a case of wine for the family...

As we talked more about Christmas at the last meeting maybe everyone had had enough?

We did talk about some personal issues and ill health but that's not suitable for the newsletter!

On the 15th we met in Dawlish for a French Quiz. It seems everyone is up for it at this time of year. The questions were all Christmas-related and the few of us who attended did very well. Can you answer them?



Where did the first Christmas tree appear? Where do Australians like to meet for Christmas dinner? What nationality was the composer of the song, *Oh, Christmas Tree*? Where can we find the nativity figurines called *santons*? In what country do children watch for the appearance of the first star on 24th December as a sign that the festivities can begin? In a famous place, the Christmas log is replaced by the *President's Cake*; where is this? In what country do children leave a glass of sherry and a mince pie for Father Christmas? In what country is the special starter a pickled herring with onions served with blinis and cream? How many reindeer pull Santa's sleigh? What is a glögg? Who was Saint Nicholas? Noel comes from what Latin word? In what country did Father Christmas make his first appearance? What do the baubles decorating a Christmas tree represent?

We hope you will enjoy the challenge. Our next meeting will be on the 5th January, but we have no clear plans for it.

And so, we start a new year, with the same hopes of peace and good health, of friendship and good cheer, in our families and as members of the u3a.

Live, laugh and learn, everybody!

