



Dawlish & District u3a

Newsletter March 2023

It's that time of the year! Happy astronomical spring!



2023 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Hurray it is that time of the year again! I say hurray as it means Spring is almost knocking on our doors.

Membership renewal for all members is due by 1st April 2023.

The amount is £15 for full membership and £10 if you belong to another u3a. You can pay this amount in several ways. At our monthly Tea and Chat which is the first Thursday of each month. At our monthly meeting which is the third Monday of the month. You can bring cash or a cheque with you. Membership renewal forms will be available at both meetings which we will ask you to complete especially if you are a

Gift Aider.

Alternatively, you can pay by Bank Transfer (NatWest) to Dawlish & District u3a, Sort Code: 52-30-22, Account Number: 34078967. Don't forget to give your name as the reference. To download and complete an electronic form please go to our website u3a.dawlish.info and click on the drop-down box "How to Join". You can also print off a form and send it to my address which is at the bottom of the form. As before it is really important to us if you would consider being a Gift Aider and to become one, you need to tick the box on the form before you press submit.

Kate McCarthy, Membership Secretary

FROM THE CHAIR

I was disappointed not to be able to hear Kerry Sherwin's talk on her role as a Prison Visitor but I am grateful to Kate McCarthy for her account of what Kerry's talk. If you were not able to attend the February meeting, I highly recommend that you read this article: I found what Kerry had to say fascinating and illuminating – and at times disturbing. The 'justice system' is just one of many areas of our society which deserves greater attention from all of us. There are big questions about why it is that in our society we feel it necessary to incarcerate a larger proportion of our population than most other European nations, and why those who are in prison are so heavily disproportionately from disadvantaged sections of our society. I know that those who heard Kerry's talk were full of admiration and respect for what she and other prison visitors do.

The speaker at our next meeting will also

focus on a subject of importance to all of us. On Monday 20th March, Justine Geldard will be talking about the work of the Rowcroft Hospice. We have enjoyed some outstanding speakers in recent months, and it has been heartening to see steadily increasing attendances. We have had to ask the caretaker at the Manor House to increase the number of seats he puts out before each meeting to prevent us having to scabble around at the last minute to find additional seats! Who knows, we may have to reopen the conversation about where we should hold our meetings?

John Vick

rowcroft
hospice



Living

Laughing

Learning

PRISON VISITING - AN INSIDE STORY

This month we were treated to a profound insight of the role of an Official Prison Visitor (OPV) visiting prisoners in Channings Wood, a category C male prison based just outside Newton Abbot.

A form of the National Association of Official Prison Visitors was founded in 1813 by Elizabeth Fry who visited Newgate Prison, but it did not receive national recognition until 1924. Its ethos at the time being "Bringing the outside in" which remains the same to this day.

Each prison has its own branch. Applying to become an Official Prison Visitor is a lengthy process. Not for the faint hearted, applicants undergo the full Home Office vetting process which includes a number of interviews. Confidentiality is key, unless there is any indication of the risk of self-harm or harm to others. Being non-judgemental is also vital to the role. As an OPV, you are given the name and number of the prisoner. You would not know the crime committed and once you cease being a visitor to a particular prisoner, you will not receive any updates or outcomes. Equally for your own safety, the prisoners you are visiting will not know anything about you apart from your first name and at no time must other personal details of yourself be shared.

We heard about the personal experience of an OPV walking into the prison for the first time - the shock at the level of noise, wearing a key belt and having the authority of moving about the prison on her own. At no time did she experience a feeling of being threatened due to entering as a visitor and being accepted in that role.

Prisoners can request a visitor through the prison chapel pastoral care service. Sadly, they often have no one to visit them so welcome the opportunity to have a visitor. Generally, they want to talk about common interests, politics, tv programmes; some, if not most, want to keep up to date with the outside world. Many will not be aware of current living costs and will experience big changes once they leave prison. Most conversations include food fantasies as the food is of very poor standard. Generally, conversations are funny and there is a lot of laughter, but there are times when they can be extremely sad. Some have been homeless before they were sentenced and face a huge period of uncertainty when they are released. Hostels are hostile and dangerous places, and for those who experienced drug and alcohol addiction prior to being sentenced, this is not an environment they may want to be in.

A few hard facts: England, Scotland and Wales have a higher percentage of prisoners than the rest of Europe. Channing Wood was

initially built to replace Dartmoor Prison, but Dartmoor remains open to this day due to the number of inmates which is still on the increase. It currently holds 1200 - 1500 prisoners. There are no female prisons in Devon. 40% of prisoners will reoffend within 12 months. Benefits stop once they are convicted.

We were given a few examples of the prisoners visited including the sad case of a prisoner who did not have any friends or family to call on for help. Following his committal, he lost his home as the rent wasn't being paid, his car was towed away once its tax and insurance ran out, and most sad of all, his dog, although rescued, died of a broken heart.

During COVID, inmates were locked in their cells 24 hours a day, and everything ceased. It was hard to imagine being locked in a cell measuring 3 x 2 metres for so long and only let out to shower. It was many months until everything went back to as it was before. During this period, 44% experienced suicidal thoughts or self-harmed, which resulted in privileges being removed or prison terms extended. Of concern was that new staff appointed during Covid found it difficult to cope once lockdown was lifted as it was a whole different experience, and many left the job. Worryingly, staff turnover continues to be on the increase, which can result in prisoners being kept in their cells for longer periods.

What may have surprised many of us was to hear that the fastest growing age group are the over 60s which has tripled over the last two decades. The reason for this is that today's technology enables prosecutors to use DNA evidence of historic crimes. It is not unusual to see elderly disabled prisoners moving about with walking frames and spare cells full of hoists. One example of an inmate was an 89-year-old male recently sentenced to 3 years.

Contrary to popular belief It is important to stress that the inmates do not reflect the general public. About half of the population in our prisons suffer from neuro divergent disorders. Approximately 40% of males with a personality disorder land up in prison. 50% have literacy difficulties. Many of us are probably aware that most who abuse others were abused as a child. The fact that there are a lot of ex forces males in the prison system I found particularly harrowing.

It was a humbling experience listening to this particular member of our u3a who I could only admire for her steadfast and empathic approach. I confess I had a lot more questions to ask but I gave the floor to the members and sadly time soon ran out.

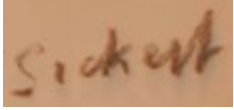
Kate McCarthy, Committee member

DISCUSSION GROUP

Our branch has been lucky enough to have a very interesting and lively discussion group for some time. The group is now temporarily suspended. Recently numbers had dropped, and the convener has decided to stand down

in the hope someone will come forward and give the group a fresh perspective. If you think you would like to become this group's convener, please contact **Barry Baker** via enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info

ART APPRECIATION GROUP



Our February meeting was led by Michael Heyden who gave an excellent presentation on the work of Walter Sickert (1860-1942). Sickert worked in Britain and France, and was influenced by Whistler and the impressionists, particularly Degas, with whom he shared an interest in the same subjects in his paintings. He worked on a number of themes, often alongside each other, such as cityscapes, nudes, portraits, and music hall and the theatre. He made a successful living painting scenes of Dieppe, often bought by tourists to this fashionable resort. In common with the impressionists, the play of light was an important feature of his work. He often painted the same buildings in Dieppe and in Venice at different times of the day and in different lights. Like Degas, his music hall and theatre

scenes often use interesting and unusual viewpoints, and frequently are as much about the audience as the performers. His nudes are unromanticised and captured in intimate, everyday interiors, frequently featuring iron bedsteads, often with a mirror to reflect parts of the scene. His paintings often have a mood of introspection and despondency.

There appears to be a dark side to his character, perhaps illustrated by his painting 'The Camden Town Murder', and his fascination with Jack the Ripper. Some have even speculated that he was himself the murderer.

Our next meeting on Tuesday 14th March will be a presentation by John Vick on Rembrandt's portraits. As usual, we will meet at 2pm in the Mayor's Parlour in the Manor House.

Lynne Vick, Convener



THEATRE

March looks to be a busy month kicking off with a small group of us travelling to Exeter on Wednesday 8th March to see the matinee performance of *When Darkness Falls*. Saturday 11th we are booked to see *Bunch of Amateurs* at Shaftesbury. We will meet in the bar from 7pm. Tickets are booked for both events so contact me if you are interested in joining us and I can let you know our seat numbers. Later in the month we will be at the Pavilions at Teignmouth to see *A Room of One's Own*. Members are also

arranging amongst themselves to see other productions throughout the month. Interested in being added to our mailing list? Email me via enquiries and I am happy to add your details.

Kate McCarthy, Convener



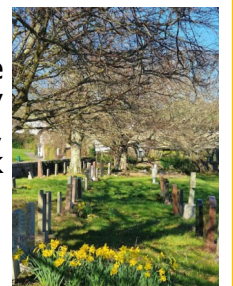
Our next D&D u3a **STROLLERS** walk is on Thursday March 9th. It will be another circular tour around Teignmouth old cemetery where we'll see lots of lovely spring flowers in bloom. After exploring the cemetery it's a downhill walk to town followed by refreshments at the Alice Cross Centre i.e. they have a Heat Cafe on Monday & Thursday afternoons 1.30pm - 4pm with light refreshments and activities available. 🍷 From Dawlish, catch the number 2 Newton Abbot bus leaving from the bus shelter by the railway line at 12.32pm. From Teignmouth, we'll then catch the 13.10pm number 80 Country bus from the bus shelter

by WH Smith's. We get off bus by Hazeldown school then it's downhill to the old cemetery for a stroll around the 12-acre site. As well as interesting memorials, there's also sea views plus lovely trees and early wildflowers to view. NB: most of the cemetery paths are grass, so suitable footwear

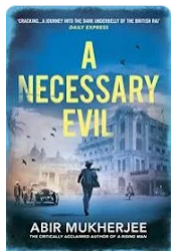
advised! 😊

Our April walk will be arranged ASAP i.e. hopefully during our March walk, possibly another new walk route for our Strollers group?

Jean Gitsham



LITERATURE



A Necessary Evil by Abir Mukherjee

A Necessary Evil is set in India in 1920 against the background of the long struggle for Indian independence.

Captain Sam Wyndham and Sergeant Surendranath Bannerjee, known as Surrender-

Not, of the Calcutta Police Force witness the assassination Crown Prince Adhir of Sambalpoore who had sought their advice on some troubling letters that he had received. At the time of the shooting, the British are trying to fend off the clamour for Home Rule by setting up the Chamber of Princes, rather like the House of Lords. Sambalpoore is tiny but immensely wealthy due to its diamond mines and is seen as a relatively progressive potential ally for the British. Sam and Surrender-Not are dispatched to investigate but having no jurisdiction will need to do so with little local help or support.

The book is an excellent murder mystery with many suspects all with good motives for wanting rid of the Crown Prince. Sam is quite

new to the complexities of Indian politics, power struggles, spiritual life and religious cults. We see through his eyes the extraordinary wealth, a diamond in a beard because the wearer has run out of room elsewhere on his person and a royal train that makes the Orient Express look like a cattle truck. The opulence and exotic beauty comes to life as do the many and diverse characters.

A satisfying whodunit is combined with a fascinating insight into this period of Indian history, and we re-examined some of our preconceptions, particularly with regard to women's lives and the power that they held. Even the women in the harem had more autonomy than we imagined.

We enjoyed this novel, and we liked Sam and his side-kick Surrender-Not. They had courage and integrity suitable for a tale of derring-do, but each had a human and vulnerable side.

An adventure that was very well-written with depth, intelligence, and wit.

4/5

PAGE TURNERS met in February to discuss *'The Thirteenth Tale'* by Diane Setterfield. This was published in 2006 and was her debut novel. It was televised by the BBC in 2013.

The book tells the story of enigmatic author Vida Winter who is at the end of her life and wants to finally tell the truth about her violent and tragic past. She chooses to unburden herself to biographer Margaret Lea. Margaret agrees to take on the commission after being struck by parallels between Miss Winter's story and the secrets of her own past. Gradually the story of the Angelfield family is revealed – a tale of gothic strangeness with feral twins, a ghost, a governess, a topiary garden and a devastating fire. As Margaret discovers more of Vida's past, she also confronts her own ghosts. The book explores issues of identity, loss, and isolation.

For the most part members enjoyed the book, but some found it confusing and several suggested that they might read it again to make sense of it once they knew the secrets that were revealed later in the book. We enjoyed the way it was written – very descriptive and atmospheric. The theme of twins was central to the book and a couple of us with twins in our families were able to share our experience. We also had an interesting discussion trying to pinpoint exactly when the book was set. We felt that some elements of the story were rather contrived but were glad that all ends were neatly tied up in the final chapters.

Deborah Wallis, Convener



SINGING GROUP

We are hoping to start a singing group this year. To facilitate the start-up of this group we have booked a room at the Methodist church Brunswick place, on the second Wednesday of the months February, March, and April.

Although there was a reasonable amount of interest raised when this was first publicised, the first meeting was poorly attended.

Should this group start-up be successful, future times and venues can be changed should the group feel it beneficial.

If you think you may be interested in something along the lines of a Singing for fun group, please come along to the next meeting at 12.30 on 8th of March.

For more information, contact Barry via enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info

GARDENS AND GATEAUX

The Gardens and Gateaux Group have decided to meet a month earlier than previously published, so that we can get started on planning this year's visits.

We will now be holding the first meeting of 2023 on Tuesday 14th March, in the Strand Centre at 12.30pm. The group experienced

some very enjoyable trips last year, and we are looking forward to this year with anticipation.

If you would like to join us, you can just come along to one of our meetings at the Strand Centre, on the second Tuesday of the month. You can also contact us in the usual way via enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info

FRENCH

The **FRENCH CONVERSATION** group - six on this occasion - met up at a member's home for their first of the February's get-togethers and enjoyed conversing on the subject of '*Do You Like Surprises?*'

The subject evoked lots of reasons why they did or did not like surprises. One member said he disliked television programmes based on surprises, such as 'Surprise, Surprise' although he did rather like 'Candid Camera'. Another member accounted the occasion of his 40th wedding anniversary at a desirable restaurant in Paris when various members of his family suddenly descended upon him and his wife from different parts of the world! Another member will never forget the surprise she had when she was living in France and her fiancé was studying in England. He was due to be with her for Christmas. She had bought him a very nice

electric shaver for a Christmas present. When she met him at the airport he was bearded ... and has been ever since! Another member said that she didn't like surprise visitors turning up without warning and, therefore, did not like surprises. Another member recalled various surprises, usually being taken to a special restaurant and on one occasion her son appeared, having flown over from Australia especially! Another member said he had been on holiday and when he arrived 'home' his parents had moved!! only joking! It was an enjoyable get-together with plenty of laughter.

Due to member unavailability, the second meeting was postponed. Therefore, for the first meeting in March, the topic will be the same...

Bridie Cushion, Convener

The **BOULES GROUP** have met twice in February in the Strand Hall to play our own version of indoor boules, to the accompaniment of laughter and insults. We shall be doing the same again in March, after which we

shall meet outside again, if it ever warms up!. Everyone is welcome, no experience or equipment needed, details on the website.

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 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 2nd March.

Kate McCarthy & Michael Heyden, Conveners

GAMES GROUP

Just a reminder that you can become a member of our games group by contacting members and arranging your own times and venues, playing your favourite game.

Why not come along to one of the Tea and Chat meetings and see what's going on. There is a regular Chess table and usually a couple of other games being played.

Barry Baker

BADMINTON

The Badminton group are hosting an open session on Tuesday 7th March.

This will be free to all existing and new members; everyone is invited to come along and have a go regardless of experience or

fitness level. It's just for fun and we can lend you a racket. You will need no-slip footwear. Existing members will be able to play as usual so come along and take advantage of the free courts.

Barry Baker



NEWS FROM THE QUIZ GROUP

Before we adopted the Latin name for our second month, old English used much more vibrant names to describe the month now known as *February*. The most common Old English name was *Solmonath*, which literally means "mud month."

A lesser-used term was *Kale-monath*, which meant "cabbage month." Perhaps the medieval English were eating a lot of cabbage in February? Strange. Well before you ask, there are no cabbage heads in the quiz group and no members were stuck in the mud when it came to answering the questions in the two quizzes that took place; on the Alpha and Omega Mondays of February; 6th and the 27th.

The six round of questions on the 6th centred round Capital rivers, Islands of the world, Fast foods, Jewellery, Modern Classics and General knowledge.

Three jokers were played in the Capital rivers round and only one in the Jewellery round. However, Jewellery came out as the best subject. In fact, four teams had their best score in that round. They are obviously used to diamonds and gold 😊

Modern classics was bottom of the class and I suggested that the group members took a trip to the library to loan out a few books. We mentioned titles such as *'The Road'*, *'The*

Kite Runner' *'Westworld'*, *'Fear and Loathing'*. So, which four authors wrote those books?

After a three week break to recharge the batteries, the group admirably answered the set questions; this time on General Knowledge, All you need is love, Murrays, It happened in February, Mr. Shakespeare and What's the occupation? Another sixty questions answered, more facts gleaned; the outcome was that the best score was in the *'It happened in February'* round. However, poor old Will may be turning in his grave as Mr Shakespeare was by far the weakest link. Perhaps more attention should have been paid to the English Literature teacher! 😊

Do you know many times the Beatles used the word love in their songs or what the occupation of a Vulcan in times gone by is called now? In the Murray round, the quizzers were asked in what year did the Murray mints too good to hurry mints, arrive on the UK confectionery market.

It was another evening of fun, with a full house of quizzers participating. The next quizzes will be held on the 13th and 27th March. Then on the 10th and 24th April. The 10th of April is Easter Monday and hopefully there will be sufficient players around that evening.

GRAHAM CAREY

METAL DETECTING

Metal detectors are in common use across the country and our u3a branch has some members who would like to start a small group of enthusiasts, that might like to travel

to various sites together, discuss techniques, hunting grounds and finds.

If you are interested in being part of such a group, please contact Barry Baker via enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info

ADVENTURE GROUP

On February 17th the Adventure Group held one of its occasional meetings to decide on our next few adventures. Based on the number of votes cast, over the next few months we will be choosing from the following pool of activities:

Forest skills / foraging / mushroom identification

White water rafting

Axe throwing and Crazier golf

Bell ringing in Dawlish

Clay pigeon shooting

Pony trekking

Racing simulation

Segwaying

Town quiz and scavenger hunt

Go karts

Pengelly Centre cave walk

Splat attack

Virtual reality games

Windsurfing

We are hoping to start with Axe throwing and Crazier golf in March but if you are interested in any of these just check out the website

(<https://u3a.dawlish.info/tag/adventure>) for further information and how to join in.

In addition, we said a big "Thank you" to Ann who has stepped down from organising adventures and welcomed Carolyn Hartley and Deborah Wallis who have kindly volunteered to take Ann's place. I am grateful to all of them.

Miggie Pickton, Convener

IN OUR OWN WRITE

We had a very entertaining meeting of our creative writing group on Monday 13th February, welcoming another new member. The topic was "*A moment that changed my life*" and again it is amazing just how diverse the short stories were. We had a kidnapping; a widower finding love again after volunteering at a Christmas event; a woman afraid of flying doing a wing walk; and how the purchase of an inexpensive gift voucher led to winning an expensive car.

Two other members produced alternative work with the true story of a feral cat finding a safe haven to give birth and also a story about a lone woman who seemed to have survived some event which made you want to find out more.

Our next meeting is on Monday 13th March from 2-4 p.m., when the topic will be "*The newcomer*" although, as we are now at capacity, we do not feel that we can welcome any more!

Travina White

NATURAL HISTORY GROUP *Birds of the Exe Estuary*

Visiting Devon Wildlife Warden, Jo King, delivered a mind-blowing presentation on the above topic to the D&D u3a Natural History Group on 15th February. Such was the enthusiastic reception that her 45-minute talk lasted the full 2 hours, and it could have continued. It's a matter of some regret that this talk was not made available to the entire u3a.

Generally, there has been a reduction in species over-wintering in the Exe Estuary, which is not yet fully understood; but is likely to be an unintended consequence of the great increase in the human population in the area and their interest in the environment.

Jo focussed on her experience as a volunteer reader of bird ringing, in which she was assisted both by high powered digital photography and, especially, social media. Thus enabled, she had discovered the remarkable longevity of individual birds; and the sighting of birds originally ringed in Finland, the Netherlands or Poland.

In the UK, the British Trust for Ornithology was founded 90 years ago; but bird ringing with metal rings on behalf of the British Museum of Natural History (BRITNATHISMUS), with a unique number pre-dates that by 10 years. Until the advent of digital photography, the only way the rings of live birds could be read was by trapping. This was often traumatic and Jo had misgivings about some of the techniques. The development of coloured

rings; and, more recently, the satellite tagging of fledglings is not only preferable for the birds' welfare, but more informative for science in general.

The 1954 Protection of Birds Act prohibits the taking of any wild bird, except for the purposes of ringing or examining a ring, and releasing it. The BTO trains and licences all bird ringers in the UK. <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/ringing/about>

An item for discussion even in January was the furtherance of the biodiversity of the Churchyard of St. Gregory's. I'm particularly anxious the group's efforts of last year, in preparing plots and seeding them with Yellow Rattle, plus Tony's preparation of his 'allotment', should not be nullified by the Spring strimming (probably March) by TDC. Although it is too early to expect any of our autumn 2022 sowing to have appeared, though some new growth in Tony's 'allotment' is manifest; and there is even a primrose in flower elsewhere. I propose to re-establish the churchyard maintenance every Wednesday and Friday from 0930 from March; and have requested TDC not to carry out Spring or Summer strimming in the area sown with Yellow Rattle. All help gladly accepted: preferably with secateurs or scrapers (for ivy on tombstones); but only to use shears away from Yellow Rattle seeded area. If you are able to assist with this field work, please reply by email.

George Lipscomb