Dawlish & District u3a

June 2023

Newsletter

Learning • Laughing • Living

From the Chair

June Meeting – Dr Todd Gray, The Cathedral Yard Fire and Exeter's Historic Buildings

There will be a change in the advertised talk for our June meeting. I know many people were looking forward to learning about the Devon Land Army but unfortunately our speaker, Rebekah Pearson, has had to pull out of this because she is undergoing leg surgery. She promises to come again at a later date.

I have some sympathy with Rebekah's plight as I currently have a leg in plaster and am reliant on crutches (and even more on Lynne!) having torn my Achilles tendon playing tennis last week. It is a good reminder about accessibility to buildings, transport and all facilities, and how we can unexpectedly and suddenly find ourselves unable to do things to which we previously gave little thought.

I have had to engage in the urgent quest for another speaker for June. I am pleased to say that Dr Todd Gray has agreed to give another talk on our local history. His topic this time is *The Cathedral Yard Fire and Exeter's Historic Buildings*. All those who know and love Exeter's city centre and cathedral close were horrified by the fire in October 2016 which devastated the Royal Clarence Hotel and adjacent buildings. It has resulted in a major restoration and rebuilding project which continues today. It has been an opportunity for archaeologists and historians to learn more about the site, and I am sure Dr Gray's talk will be fascinating. I found his talk in November on Devon and the Slave Plantations extremely interesting, contained many surprises and corrected many myths and assumptions. I am sure this talk will also be of wide interest to anyone who knows and visits Exeter.

Guest Speakers and Monthly Meetings

I am currently spending time (my current incapacity gives me no excuses for procrastination) contacting a number of organisations and potential guest speakers for our programme in 2024. While I have quite a few ideas to pursue, if you have any suggestions for guest speakers or topics you would like to know more about,

please let me know. I very much want to put on a varied and interesting programme which has wide appeal.

After several months when attendance at our meetings was greater than at any time in our history, I am sorry to report that the last two meetings have attracted very disappointing turn outs. As you will understand, this is rather disappointing and disconcerting for our guest speakers. Can I encourage members to support our monthly meetings, even when the advertised topic may not be one which immediately appeals? These can sometimes be the ones which are the most unexpected and interesting, and may be on topics on which we need to be better informed. Of course, as well as listening to the speakers, these meetings are opportunities to meet friends and catch up with new and are important parts of u3a life. Please do all you can to make them lively and enjoyable for everyone. Feedback on how we can improve them is always welcome.

John Vick

Monthly meeting report

Exeter City FC – At the Heart of the Community

At our May meeting, members welcomed Nick Hawker, Executive Chair of Exeter City FC Board of Directors, to talk about how the club is managed, and how it has a refreshingly distinctive ethos compared with all of the other clubs in the EFL and Premier League.

Mr Hawker gave a brief history of the club illustrating the precarious nature of its finances since its foundation in 1901. The club clearly enjoys the unlikely fact that they were the first English team to play the national team of Brazil in 1914. Other than that, even their greatest fans would have to admit that for most of their history they have been in the lower leagues and have rarely achieved glory on the national stage. A rare highlight was reaching the quarter finals of the FA Cup in 1931 when they faced (but lost) at home to Sunderland.



The Exeter City F.C. that played Brazil national team at Estadio das Laranjeiras of Rio de Janeiro during its South American tour

A major challenge came in 2003 when the club fell out of the Football League and was relegated to the Conference. This brought about the take-over by the Exeter City Supporters

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Trust which gives all supporters ownership and control over their club. The uncertainty continued for a while but the club enjoyed a moment of remarkable good fortune in 2005 when it was drawn to face Manchester Utd in the FA Cup at Old Trafford. This gave the club a huge boost in revenue (over £650,000), further increased when they drew 0-0 away and were able to have a televised replay at St James Park. This enabled them to stabilise and invest in the club in a way which would have been impossible otherwise. They finally achieved promotion to the Football League in 2008, and was promoted to League One in 2022.

There are a number of distinctive, if not unique, features to the club's philosophy. It will not go into debt to fund its activities, which means that it is frequently outbid in the transfer market and has to be very skilful in its recruitment strategy. It also places a great reliance on developing and caring for its own young players. The upside to this is that it was better placed to weather the storm of the pandemic than many other 'richer' clubs. It will not take any money from gambling organisations – although it has no choice but to accept the Sky logo and gambling sponsorship on its shirt. The club is committed to inclusion in all its activities, so there are active women's teams, disabled teams, walking football teams and much else.

The Trust has a substantial commitment to working with the community in ways which go far beyond purely sporting activities. The trust claims their programmes reach more than 45,000 members of the community each year and around 48% of its work is not football related. This includes housing, foodbanks and education projects and much else.

As someone whose football interests lie elsewhere, I will follow the fortunes of Exeter City FC with greater interest and enthusiasm – and respect. Even for those who have little interest in sport, and especially professional sport, the story of this club is an interesting and important one, and one which should give us an alternative to the prevailing narrative which focuses all too often on politics, vast sums of money and ego.

John Vick

Interest Group news

Adventure Group

In a departure from our usual practice, for our May adventure members of the group were treated to a guided tour of Pengelly Caves near Buckfastleigh. With stories of a burned down church, erratic boulders, displaced bats and stolen bones, it was a very interesting and unusual place to visit. A big thank you to Carolyn Hartley for organising this for us.

In June we are going back to Ashcombe Shooting Ground, this time to try our hand at clay shooting. Any member of Dawlish & District u3a is welcome to join us. Check out all the details of the adventure on this web page:

https://u3a.dawlish.info/adventure-group-clay-shooting

Please let me know by email to adventure@u3a.dawlish.info if you are interested in coming along.

Miggie Pickton, Convenor

Art and Crafts Group

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 7th June in the Mayor's Parlour at the Manor House. We will continue to meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 2pm. Kim will be bringing something for anyone who wishes to have a go at painting/sketching a still life. Just bring along a sketch pad, pencils, paints etc. We will also be joined by a lady who will be telling us about the Linus Project.

Kate McCarthy & Kim Walker, Convenors

Art Appreciation

In our May meeting, David Gearing gave a very interesting presentation on the French impressionist Berthe Morisot (1841-1895). She was one of the few female artists that many of us will have heard of, and will be familiar with the beautiful painting of a mother sitting with her baby in a cradle. It was interesting to learn how her career as an artist was affected by the fact that she was a woman.

Both Berthe and her sister Edma were talented artists and had private art lessons, but as women were barred from formal art training. As part of their education, they copied paintings in the Louvre but were not allowed to go unchaperoned. Edma chose not to continue her career as an artist when she married, but Berthe painted throughout her life although her sex meant that she was largely restricted to domestic subjects. She was strongly influenced by her teacher Edouard Manet, and it seems that they had a romantic relationship but he was already married. Berthe married Manet's brother who was very supportive of her career.



From 1874 she exhibited at all but one of the main impressionist exhibitions. Her work reveals a genuinely spontaneous impressionistic technique, painting en plein aire. In recent years she has become the highly priced female artist with her work often selling for many millions of dollars.Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 13th June when I will give a presentation on the French artist Odilon Redon.

Lynne Vick, Convener

Boules

The Boules Group, after a mostly miserable April, have taken full advantage of the sunshine and have played on the Lawn twice in May, as well as one further meeting in The Stand Hall for those who like the ambience of Dawlish Rules Indoor Boules, a spectacle you'll be unable to get out of your mind once experienced. We shall meet again indoors on Wednesday 7th June, on the Lawn on Friday 9th, and I'm hoping that on Wednesday 28th

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we can go to the Exminster boules terrain and play there. Everyone is welcome to all our meetings, no experience or equipment needed, and outside meetings are free as well.

Michael Heyden, Convenor

Dog Walking

The newly formed Dog Walkers Group has got off to a great start. We meet weekly on no particular set day, someone in the Group will suggest the following week's walk, day and time. This is to try and accommodate all dog walkers. With warmer weather forecast, we will be looking at more shaded walks.

Contact enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info if you wish to be added to the group or just come along and join us.

Kate McCarthy

French Conversation

We met twice in May but we were rather short in numbers. The topic was, "Which is your preferred day of the week?" I think most of us didn't really have a preference as now we're retired the weekend isn't so important! The days are much the same and we can suit ourselves what we do and when we do it! Nonetheless some still marked the weekend as a time to relax and have a few glasses of wine. And, of course each had a particular event..class..outing on a certain day so that was something to look forward to.

We also read and discussed a French article on strikes and the French opposition to the proposed retirement age. Lynne had some useful information on the age of retirement around the world and on average it's about 66.

At our second meeting we were four again and the topic was, "What do you like to have in a sandwich?" Answers included smoked salmon and soft cheese, bacon, cheese and onion and tuna mayonnaise.

We also discussed, "Who is the person who knows you the best?" That produced some interesting answers which are probably too private to share!

I brought a short article to read and discuss which was about interesting things in the French language eg a palindrome example is ressasser.

Bridie Cushion, Convener

Gardens and Gateaux

Visit to Cadhay Manor near Ottery St Mary, Friday 26th May

Beautiful weather accompanied our members to this Tudor Manor House, some of whom took the opportunity to have a guided tour and soak up the history.



The gardens have examples of designs through the ages, containing some formal areas with two medieval stew ponds complete with water lilies and golden perch. The old walled kitchen garden is now home to allotments and the tea room. A scented wisteria decorates the front of the Manor House with seating available to sit and admire it before turning the corner into the 120ft herbaceous borders. A delightful way to enjoy a sunny afternoon.

The next gathering is Tuesday, 13th June, 12.30pm at the Strand Centre for a chit chat and hopefully arranging the next afternoon outing to Fursden House near Exeter on Thursday, 29th June but this trip is dependent on willing car drivers as today's three drivers are unavailable.

Jenny Lancaster, Convener

Great Lives

Eight of us met for our May meeting when June gave a very interesting talk about Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) giving a good insight into her many achievements.



She was certainly not just a writer and illustrator of children's books but also an astute businesswoman, conservationist and prize winning breeder of Hardwick sheep.

She came from an upper middle class family and was brought up in London where she was taught by governesses. She was isolated from other children but spent many holidays in Scotland and the Lake District where she closely observed and painted the landscape and local flora and fauna, including her many pets. From her painting of fungi she became widely respected in the field of mycology.

After receiving rejections from publishers, she self-published her first book, "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" but went on to write over 60 books, published by Warne & Co. She was also a pioneer of character merchandise.



From the sale of her books and a legacy, she bought Hill Top Farm (which was left to the National Trust) in the Lake District. She continued to buy up more land and farms thus preventing developers from spoiling the landscape. At age 47 she married a local solicitor who was also interested in land preservation. She continued to write and illustrate, and to design spin-off merchandise until her failing eyesight prevented her.

As a woman of any era Beatrix Potter was exceptional, but as a woman brought up in a conservative Victorian household she really was "ahead of her time".

Next month Barbara will be talking about Ernest Bevin, British statesman, Trade Union leader and Labour Party politician.

Jill Maynard, Convener

In Our Own Write

Our next meeting will be on 12th June when the chosen subject will be "He/she stepped into the room".

Travina White, Convener

Literature

***The Woman in the White Kimono* by Ana Jones**

In present day America journalist Tori Kovac is disturbed to discover that her much loved dying father, Jimmy, seemingly abandoned a pregnant woman when he was stationed with the navy in 1957 Japan. She goes there after his death to try to find out what really happened.

We are told the story through Naoka, the woman herself, and it transpires that the young couple, he was only 19 years old and she only 17, genuinely loved one another and were married in a religious ceremony but the necessary paperwork that would have enabled them to return to America together was not signed off. To her father, a marriage to an American was out of the question and his commanding officer also refused. Japanese brides were not welcome in the States. Also, Noaka is already betrothed in an arranged match to the son of a business owner which is to a great advantage to her family.

Jimmy, called Hajime by Naoka, leaves and she in disgrace is sent to a home for unmarried mothers where the women are kept half-starved and their babies, considered less than human because they are of mixed blood, are murdered at birth. They are buried with none of the necessary ceremony to ensure they pass over to the afterlife which, in Japanese religion, condemns them to a form of limbo.

Naoka escapes but it is too late for their daughter who is born but fails to thrive.

Ana Jones is a journalist and her father went through a similar experience in Japan when his relationship with a Japanese woman was forbidden by her family.

By telling the story of the fate of so many women, brought to life the grim statistics that 10,000 plus babies were born of mixed parentage, women were raped, often tricked into believing that their American boyfriend was going to marry them, or, like the couple in the book, in love but thwarted. Most of the babies did not survive.

We found the novel very moving. Tori and Naoka meet and Tori is touched that her half-sister was always referred to as Little Bird which is the meaning of her own name.

4/5

Liane Goulding, Convener

Page Turners

Rose Tremain, *Lily: a Tale of Revenge*

The Page Turners' book for May really polarised opinion with half of us liking it and the other half feeling quite the opposite.

We read *Lily: a Tale of Revenge* by Rose Tremain. This 2021 novel by a much-acclaimed author is set in the 1860s and tells the story of a young girl raised by a foundling hospital after she was rescued from wolves as a new-born baby by a passing policeman. As was the custom, she was fostered by a family in the countryside for the first years of her life, before being returned to the harsh reality of the hospital where she learned that she needed to atone for the assumed sins of her mother.

When the book opens, we learn that Lily has become a very skilled and valued apprentice wigmaker. However, she has committed a murder and fears the hangman's noose. As the book unfolds, we learn her tragic story and find out who she murdered and why. We are left wrestling with questions such as whether murder can be justified and why taking revenge may not satisfy the wronged person.

Some of us felt this was an engaging and well-written book; others felt it was unremittingly miserable and over melodramatic. We will leave you to read it and decide for yourself!

Deborah Wallis, Convener

Quiz Group

Due to the three Bank Holidays in May, the Quiz Group met on back to back Mondays - the 15th and the 22nd.

The first quiz saw the members tackling subjects on The World's First, Plymouth, Doors and Windows, It's Instrumental, Single Letters and the regular General Knowledge Round. The Single Letter round was the best with one team getting a maximum 10 out of 10; I'm sure it was not a fluke! However, the Doors and Windows subject proved to be the weakest link.

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, three of the quizzers were unable to join us for the second half but the others soldiered on. There was just one point between the first and second placed team.

Here is a snapshot from each round:-

- Who was the first US President to appear on TV?



- When was Plymouth granted city status?
- 'Green door' was a hit for which singer in 1981?
- How many pedals are found on a concert grade Grand piano?

- Most worldwide cities begin with which letter?
- In the military what would be kept in a frog?

So it was a week to recover before the second quiz. This time the questions focused on General Knowledge, Historical Events, Know Your Insects, Little Things, Mobile Phones and Hitchcock and his Films.

The quizzers' knowledge of history fared them well and the Hitchcock Round was better than anticipated with one team gaining a maximum 10 out of 10. However it was clear from the scores that mobile phones are better used than working out the technicalities!

Here are four of the questions asked:-

- So what song do you associate with Billy Bones?
- Which company introduced the first mobile phone?
- What is the fastest flying insect in the world?
- Which two actors starred in the film 'Little Fockers?'

The quizzes for June are scheduled to take place on Mondays the 12th and the 26th, with the quizmaster zooming in from Madrid. All good fun! The 12th June quiz will be the 100th since the group commenced during COVID. 6,000 questions and hopefully not all useless information.

Graham Carey, Quiz Master

Strollers Social Walking Group

Information for new and "old" Strollers:

- due to mid day start of our walks do feel free to bring your own snacks
- please wear suitable walking shoes and remember to bring your cold drinks, sun hats etc
- we are dependant on buses so please be prepared as they are not always on time ...bus passes are very useful otherwise single bus fares are £2 single until October
- I will bring my bus timetable so we can find out times of return buses !

Thursday 8th June - Level walk along lanes and Exeter Canal tow path

From Teignmouth catch the number 2 Exeter bus from WH Smith bus stop in town at 12.11pm and same bus from Dawlish Brookdale Terrace at 12.25pm



The plan is to get off the bus at the Swans Nest stop, Exminster. We'll then walk on to the canal towpath ie route if dry underfoot via the grass pathways in the RSPB reserve; otherwise via the country lane.

For a change we'll take a left turn and walk along by the canal to Double Locks - our refreshment stop!

Then, depending on time, we'll either walk down the lane to get our bus home from the

bus stop at the far end of Exminster OR we may choose to walk further on to Countess Wear, which conveniently also has a bus stop nearby.

Thursday July 13th - Level circular walk with a couple of very short uphill stretches: Kingsteignton/Hackney, Marshes/Passage House Inn

From Dawlish catch the number 2 Newton Abbot bus at 12.32pm from bus shelter by railway line and from Teignmouth catch same number 2 NA bus from Seaview Diner stop at 12.47pm.

We get off the bus at the stop after Wear Farm. Our route is via part of Kingsteignton then onto Hackney Marshes. Hopefully, we'll find the correct route which leads us to our refreshment stop at the riverside Passage House Inn!

We then walk across the fields via the public footpath back to our bus stop for home journey.

Jean Gitsham, 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 are 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. Next Tea and Chat is on Thursday 1st June.

Kate McCarthy & Michael Heyden,

Convenors

Theatre

Some members went to see *Sunshine on Leith* on Friday evening, 12th May. We have seats booked to see *Barefoot in the Park* on Saturday 10th June. This is also at the Shaftesbury.

Some members are looking at performances in Plymouth; this trip will be by train and taxi, with lunch before the matinee. Bookings need to be made months in advance as this is a popular venue.

Watch this space as we look at performances in the forthcoming months and simply email enquiries if you fancy joining us.

Interested in joining a group of Theatre goers? If you fancy going to an event and don't fancy going on your own, email me via enquiries.

Kate McCarthy, Convenor

Contact us:

You are invited to send us all your group news and updates.
Newsletter Editor: Please contact the Newsletter Editor via newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info.
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