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## From the Chair

It seems that the June meeting was never meant to happen! Our scheduled speaker unfortunately was unable to speak because of impending surgery, and then our hastily rearranged meeting was cancelled because we were told at late notice that the Manor House had to be closed for safety reasons.

The good news is that the safety issues have been resolved and the Manor House has now reopened, so our next meeting can take place in the Council Chamber as scheduled on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July. Our guest speaker will be Fiona Gibson who will talk to us about the work of the Dawlish Gardens Trust. This organisation provides vocational training for people with additional needs, sensory and hidden impairments. As an introduction to their work you might like to visit their website [Activities – Dawlish Gardens Trust \(dgtdevon.org\)](http://dgtdevon.org) I hope to see you then – provided there are no more Acts of God to interfere with our plans!

**John Vick**

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## Interest Group news

### Adventure Group

June saw a dozen or so Adventure Group members wielding shotguns as they had a go at **Clay Shooting**.

Most people were beginners and chose to have 25 shots each: an initial practice shot then eight shots at each of three stations. The clays flew first from the left, then away from us up the middle of the shooting ground and finally out of the trees on the right. Although the first two positions were

a tad challenging, by the end everyone had bagged a few clays.



Next month we are hoping to go to **Splat Attack** at Langstone Cliff Hotel. It doesn't open until July 1st but Carolyn is on the case and details will be published in Adventure Group News in due course.

## **\*\* SAVE THE DATE \*\***

We have set the date for our next trip to the **Manor House Hotel near Okehampton** ([manorandashburyresorts.co.uk](http://manorandashburyresorts.co.uk)). A group of 12 of us went last year and had a great time partaking in 33 different crafts, sports and other leisure activities over the three days we were there.

Next year we plan to go for a two or three night break **commencing Monday 11th March 2024**.

All members of Dawlish & District u3a are welcome to join us. If you are interested in going then please make a note of the dates in your calendar to ensure you keep them free. Further information will be published in Adventure Group News ([u3a.dawlish.info/tag/adventure](http://u3a.dawlish.info/tag/adventure)) later in the year.

**Miggie Pickton, Convener**

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### **Art and Crafts Group**

We continue to meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 2pm in The Manor House. All are welcome and please bring along your current project you are working on.

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.

Please email enquiries if you would like to join us as due to work at The Manor House we are not always in the same room.

**Kate McCarthy and Kim Walker, Conveners**



### **Art Appreciation Group**

At the June meeting, Lynne gave a presentation on the French artist Odilon Redon (1840-1916). Lynne told us how she first became interested in Redon when she was studying art at college. While on a tour of European galleries, she saw his painting, *Chariot of Apollo*, and was very taken by Redon's use of vivid colour and striking imagery. When she had committed to writing her dissertation on Redon and started her research, she was rather surprised to find that in contrast to the painting she had first encountered, much of his work was monochrome and the imagery was somewhat disturbing.

In his early career, Redon focused on charcoal drawings and lithographs. His early work is characterised by images such as disembodied heads and eyes masquerading as unlikely objects, for example, hot air balloons. He had a keen interest in the natural world, and many of his works show strange hybrid creatures - part plant, part human. It is no great surprise to find that

later surrealist artists were influenced by his work.

He developed his use of colour in the 1870s and beyond, and his work moved in very new directions. In addition to painting in oils, Redon also used pastel to great effect, appreciating its immediacy and intensity of colour, qualities it shares with the charcoal of his earlier works.



He was a founder member of the Salon des Indépendants, and exhibited alongside impressionists such as Monet and Renoir, and also with Gauguin. Much of his work was inspired by literature and he had a close association with the poet Stéphane Mallarmé and others in the Symbolist movement. Greek and Roman mythology, portraits and religious subjects were frequent subjects for his works, while he also produced pictures of flowers and the natural world. In his later career, much of his work was purely decorative; for example, he was commissioned to produce large decorative panels for the Chateau Domécq and other notable buildings.

Redon had a very considerable reputation in his own lifetime, and was awarded the Légion d'honneur, the highest award for merit in French society. Despite this acclaim, his work is not as well known today as a number of his contemporaries so

Lynne's presentation may have inspired members to find out more.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> July when members are invited to select and talk briefly about a work of art on the theme of 'Water'. As ever, it will be interesting to see what members select.

**John Vick**

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### **Beer and Skittles**

Can I advise all the skittlers that the Brunswick Arms has cancelled our regular slot on the third Thursday, as they have booked 40 in for food! Also, they have changed our start time to 8.30 without consultation, for August. My feeling is to postpone our visits to September, when they might be happier to see us!

**Mike Brandon, Convener**

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### **Boules**

The Boules Group met three times in June, firstly in the Strand Hall for our version of indoor boules, always an occasion for lots of hilarity. Our second meeting was on the Lawn, and then for the last one we travelled to Exminster to play on the council's boules terrain there. The group is open to everyone: you don't need equipment or experience, although the ability to make an exhibition of yourself in public helps a lot.

**Michael Heyden, Convener**

## Dog Walking

The newly formed Dog Walkers Group goes from strength to strength. 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](mailto:enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info) if you wish to be added to the group or just come along and join us.

## Kate McCarthy

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### French Conversation

The French group met just once this month.

We have a list of topics we can discuss but only one conscientious person had done some preparation for our meeting.

The topic was, "When did you last let your hair down?" I don't think we got very far with that. We've all become risk averse!

Our conscientious member told us about a very interesting dream she had many years ago where she met and chatted with her idol.

She also told us about what her worst job would be ... a chef, and mentioned wise parental advice she had received. I think it was "You can fool everybody else, but you can't fool yourself".

We then listened to and read the words of a song /poem by George Brassens. A sad tale of an old oak tree.

We are due to meet again July 6th when we look forward to hearing about Trevor's trip.

## Bridie Cushion, Convener

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### Literature

#### *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* by John le Carré

This is the first in le Carré's trilogy featuring spymaster George Smiley and his Russian nemesis Karla and was written at the height of the Cambridge spying scandal.

There is a mole working for Moscow Centre in the British Intelligence Service who is so highly placed and powerful that anyone who gets close to proving this is either disbelieved, forced to retire or declared persona non grata.

Jim Prideaux, dispatched to Czechoslovakia to, supposedly, find the identity of the mole had been set-up and walks into a trap. He is shot, captured and tortured before being exchanged in a prisoner swap.

The whole department was discredited and disbanded but Smiley is covertly recalled to unmask the traitor with some trusted aides.

They succeed in this and, although the main characters are vindicated and reinstated, the betrayal feels so deeply personal and



wounding that there is no sense of a happy ending.

This was a dense and complicated book and some of us got confused with the timelines. It was a definite advantage to have watched the TV series or the film.

But the atmosphere and sense of time and place was well-written and we were in a very different, shady world where everyone had to be hypervigilant and extraordinarily skillful in their spycraft. Much of the story hinges on George Smiley's uncharacteristic slip during his earlier interview with Karla when, hot, exhausted and underestimating the man sitting in front of him, reveals his one weakness. This lapse had devastating consequences.

A mixed reaction to Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy and well done to the one member who quickly guessed the identity of the mole.

2.5/5

### **Liane Goulding, Convener**

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#### **Page Turners**

#### ***A Life in Secrets: Vera Atkins and the Lost Agents of SOE* by Sarah Helm.**

In a break with tradition, this month the Page Turners read a non-fiction book – '*A Life in Secrets: Vera Atkins and the Lost Agents of SOE*' by Sarah Helm.

During World War 2, Vera Atkins worked for the Special Operations Executive's French Section and was responsible for preparing and looking after the female agents who were parachuted into France to work with the resistance movement. At the end of the war she worked to uncover the fate of twelve of those women who never came

home. The book looks in detail at this work but also attempts to solve the mysteries of Vera's early life.

The book, published in 2005, had been well reviewed and described as 'fascinating' and 'compulsive reading' and the subject matter seemed interesting and one we would like to learn about. However the word that most of us used to describe the book was 'disappointing'. We found it to be too long and very dense. It was confusing to read because it had a large cast of characters (and it seemed like more because many had both a real name and an undercover name) and none of them were sufficiently well portrayed to enable the reader to form a relationship with them. For habitual readers of fiction this was difficult. We also did not like the way it jumped about as the journalist author followed different lines of enquiry.

Of course, we did learn new things about the stories of the women who parachuted into occupied France and we were able to discuss their incredible bravery. However, we were shocked by the actions of their British officers who consistently failed to take heed of the fact that radio operators were sending messages without their secret 'safe' word, and therefore continued to send operatives and equipment straight into enemy hands.

All in all, we would not recommend this book for your beach read.

### **Deborah Wallis, Convener**

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#### **Quiz Group**

Our one and only quiz in July marked the 100<sup>th</sup> time we met as a group since its inception, some time during the COVID lockdown.

Despite a few quizzers being away, three teams battled it out, answering questions on The Middle East, General Knowledge, Birds of Prey, British Prime Ministers, Saints and Water. The teams' total scores indicated that top of the class were the British PMs. However the knowledge of the Middle East was the weakest link.

Here's a question from each round and I wonder if you would have known that...

- The Southernmost country of the Arabian peninsula is Yemen
- The unlucky number in China is 4
- The Peregrine Falcon is able to exceed 242 mph when diving in a hunt



- Harold Wilson was struck in the eye by a stink bomb in 1969



- St Luke is the patron saint of doctors

- The WD in WD40 stands for Water Displacement.



We hope to be able to continue the quiz throughout the summer months and next quizzes are scheduled for Mondays 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> July.

## **Graham Carey, Quiz Master**

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### **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 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.

### **Kate McCarthy & Michael Heyden**

### **Conveners**

## Theatre

Productions we have been to see this month were *Barefoot in the Park* which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who went, and some members travelled to Plymouth to see *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. Short summary below:

Three of our group went to the Theatre Royal in Plymouth for a matinee production of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*. It was extremely well acted, and the special effects were stunning. The play was very moving but ended with a feeling of hopefulness.

**Kate McCarthy, Convener**

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## Contact us:

You are invited to send us all your group news and updates.

**Newsletter Editor:** Please contact the Editor via [newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info).

**Webmasters:** If you would like your news to be displayed on our website please send it to Dave and Miggie Pickton via [webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info)

Want to know more about Dawlish & District u3a? Check out our website: [u3a.dawlish.info](http://u3a.dawlish.info).