

From the Chair

I was sorry not to be able to join members at the July monthly meeting to hear the talk on the Dawlish Gardens Trust. Fortunately, Kate McCarthy was able to host our guest speaker, and it was especially appropriate that she did so as her son is a client of the DGT and she knows their work well. If you were not able to listen to the talk, I hope you will be interested in her report below. Perhaps you will be encouraged to visit their shop to buy some of their produce – fruit and veg, eggs, plants etc. This is an excellent organisation which does important work for many members of our community. Their produce is also excellent!

Monthly Meeting, Monday 21st August – 'Ireland to the Wild West'

Our next meeting will be very different – but promises to be fascinating! Marcus Paul has written a book with the intriguing title 'Ireland to the Wild West'. One reviewer described it as "A 'true life adventure' which you will find hard to put down: a story of faith, hope and love . . . ". It tells the story of James Kinnier Wilson and his wife Agnes whose life took them from Ireland and the Great Hunger in 1846 across the Atlantic to a new life in the United States via Princeton to the 'Wild West' where they farmed, founded churches, dealt with endemic diseases, encountered many other adventurers and settlers, as well as the native Americans in 'the Last Indian Raid in Kansas'.



The book draws on Agnes' letters and accounts of life on the frontier, impressions of the lives of women, cowboys, servants and life in these extraordinary times and places. If you'd like to get a further taste of this story, you can follow this link:

Ireland to the Wild West by Marcus Paul | Biography
(ambassador-international.com)

Living

Laughing

Learning

AGM, 18th September 2023

Looking further ahead, we will hold our AGM on Monday 18th September. Members have already received notification that this will take place, as well as an invitation to nominate members to serve on the committee or as office holders. You will receive more information about the AGM in the next few weeks.

I hope you will put this date in your diary and come along. The AGM is an excellent opportunity for you to find out what is going on across your u3a, and even to have your say about matters which concern you and where you think we might all do better. It is also the time when members of the committee office holders are elected.

Not for the first time, I urge you to consider taking a turn in these roles. It is very important for the health of our u3a that there are more volunteers prepared to help the organisation to develop and improve, as well as to ensure it runs smoothly throughout the year. Unless we have more members coming forward, we will struggle to offer everyone the range of activities we all hope for. If you'd like to know more about what you might contribute, do contact me or another committee member. Don't be afraid to just have a chat: there would be no obligation to take the matter further but you might be interested to know what committee members spend their time doing!

John Vick

Monthly meeting report

Dawlish Gardens Trust

This month we were given a presentation on Dawlish Gardens Trust (DGT). The presenter, DGT Manager Fiona Wade, had only been in post for three months but gave a potted history up to the present day.

The original Trustees set up DGT as a horticultural day service when Langdon Hospital changed from a place for adults with learning disabilities and was taken over by Devon Partnership NHS Trust (Mental Health Services England). DGT was made available to the clients at the time who found themselves in 'a brave new world', many of whom had not had experience of living and working in the community.

Coming up to DGH's 30th Anniversary there are still some of the original trustees on the Board and a couple of the clients who have worked there since the start.

In 2003 the charity moved to the current seven-acre site close to Langdon Hospital and became a fully operational commercial nursery. One of their outlets is to provide 'specialist grasses' to Knowle Park. Over the years DGT has seen changes in its commercial side but continues to grow these grasses.

DGT now offers placements to up to 40 clients attending each day. The clients may have additional needs, sensory and hidden impairments. Some clients need one to one support.



Offering the opportunity to develop Independent and social skills, DGT runs two schemes.

In the first scheme, classed as Day Centre Activities, clients develop valuable skills in cooking, craft, horticulture, site maintenance, mechanics, woodwork, music and, following lock down, animal care with sheep, ducks, goats, chickens and rabbits which have all been donated. The wood used by clients is also donated. All these activities are available with

each area staffed by both experienced staff and volunteers. Clients and staff also work off site in conservation work and are responsible for the upkeep of several cemeteries in the local area.

Having a son who attends DGT, I was intrigued by what my son refers to as spending a day in the 'Top Barn'. He would look secretive and shrug his shoulders when questioned about what he did in 'Top Barn'. Apparently, this is very popular with the male clients (although female clients are welcome): the barn is full of old tractors and car parts which they can spend the day happily tinkering with!

The second scheme is a Supported Employment Scheme which is part funded by the Council. Clients are paired 1:1 with a member of staff and gain valuable work experience which otherwise would not be available to them. The scheme encourages those who want to gain permanent employment but need some support to be able to accomplish this. Unfortunately, this scheme is only funded for six months which can create challenges as often clients need support to enter the workplace for longer than six months.

Having tried several ventures selling produce to the public, there is currently a shop open at DGT Monday to Friday from 10am to 2pm. The public can purchase specialty grasses, perennials and items of woodwork. There is also a table selling vegetables at the gate.

An interesting talk, members were encouraged to visit the shop for locally grown plants, fruit and vegetables - and sometimes, if you are lucky, chicken and duck eggs!

Kate McCarthy

Any takers for the u3a Regional Quiz?

We have received an email from David Leyland, the u3a Devon link co-ordinator to give details about the u3a regional quiz to be held at the Withycombe Rugby Club, Exmouth on Thursday 5th October at 2pm.

A poster with entry details is being produced and will be promulgated in due course but I wonder if anyone would like to participate; teams of 4 are needed.

If you are interested then please let Graham Carey know. His email address is gfcarey@outlook.com

Interest Group news

Adventure Group

In August the Adventure Group is welcoming all Dawlish & District u3a members to join us for a town quiz and scavenger hunt. It will take place on Tuesday August 22nd, starting at the Bandstand on The Lawn between 1015 and 1100 and ending at the Brunswick Arms.

All the details can be found in the Adventure Group News on the website:

<https://u3a.dawlish.info/tag/adventure>

Last year we had seven teams battling it out and we're hoping for an even better turnout this year. If you would like to come along then it would be helpful if you let Deb know a few days beforehand by emailing adventure@u3a.dawlish.info.

Miggie Pickton, Convener

Art and Crafts Group

We continue to meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 2pm in The Manor House. All 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 & Kim Walker, Convenors

Art Appreciation

For the July meeting, members were invited to choose a picture on the theme of 'Water'. This produced some intriguing selections showing water in its many moods and forms - and a few surprises.

Few members had heard of the 19th century Russian/Armenian artist Ivan Aivazovsky who in his time had a major reputation across Europe and North America, producing an extraordinary 6000 paintings in his lifetime, many of which were seascapes. *The Ninth Wave* was a mystical, almost religious image of the aftermath of a storm, demonstrating enormous technical skill.

Another artist unfamiliar to most of us is the American painter Winslow Homer, active in the 19th and early 20th centuries. We saw a dramatic sea rescue by the newly invented Breeches Buoy, a scene with swimmers drying themselves on the beach, and a tranquil watercolour showing a

scene of *The Adirondack Guide* rowing quietly on a river.



More familiar were two works by Turner. *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway* showed water in many forms – rain and mist in the atmosphere, a river below the railway viaduct and, above all, the power of steam driving an early locomotive at the height of the 1840s 'Railway Mania'. *The Slave Ship* portrayed the shocking episode of the crew of the 'Zog' throwing enslaved people overboard to enable the ship's owner to make an insurance claim. The artist paints the scene as if from the stern of a ship with the victims struggling in its wake, thus making the viewer feel complicit in the deed.

There was more drama in another painting portraying an historical event. Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* showed a group of survivors clinging to a raft after their ship was wrecked as a result of poor navigation. Only 15 out of over 140 were rescued after 13 days at sea during which they experienced mutiny, murder, starvation and even cannibalism.

Hockney's *A Bigger Splash* presents a completely different view of water – completely smooth in a pristine Californian swimming pool, only disturbed by the column of water and spray after a figure has dived into the pool.

Contrasting with the warmth and sunshine of summer, was Bruegel's *The Hunters in the Snow* where the viewer can almost feel the bitter cold, the snow and ice of the frozen lake.



The Fall of Icarus by the same artist is an almost comic portrayal of Icarus – or rather just his legs – as he fell into the sea having unwisely flown too close to the sun with his wings made with feathers and wax. His fall goes unnoticed by those going about their daily lives ploughing the fields, tending their sheep or fishing nearby.

Ford Maddox Brown's *The Last of England* is a very famous image from the mid-19th century, showing an anxious young family on a journey to make a new life, probably in the Americas or colonies. It is particularly topical as we see so much about the experience of migration across dangerous waters by people taking risks to make a better life for themselves and their families.

For the next meeting, members are invited to choose a picture on the theme of animals.

Lynne Vick, 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.

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

Kate McCarthy

Boules

In the last month the Boules group has played inside once, then had our meeting on the Lawn rained off, before finally getting a game in at the boules area in Exminster just before more rain set in on the last Wednesday of the month.



We have decided to meet at Exminster once a month as a regular venue from now on. Everyone is welcome to our meetings, no experience or equipment needed, although an ability to laugh at yourself is very helpful.



Michael Heyden, Convenor

French Conversation

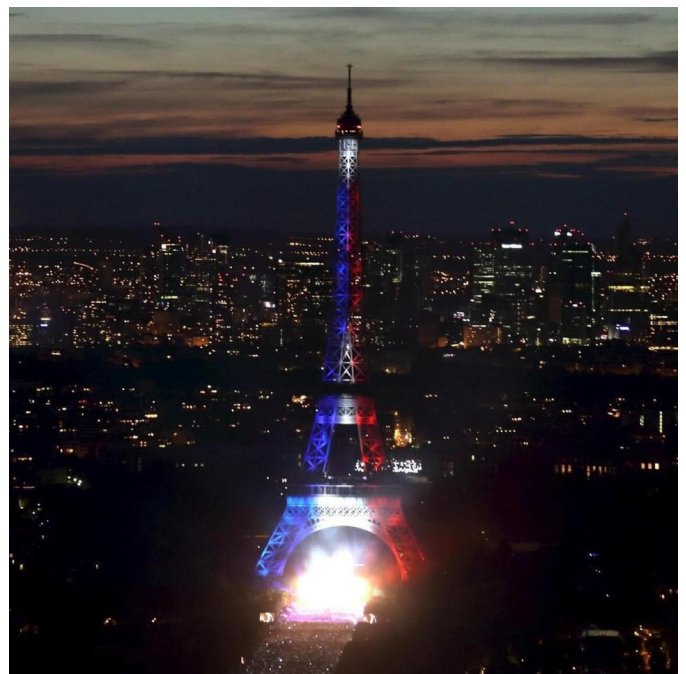
We met twice this month each time with four of us.

The topic for the first meeting was "When were you last deliberately annoying?" This proved a difficult topic as we're all so good we couldn't think of anything! I think all we managed was to smile sweetly and wave at a cross motorist who beeped us!

One mentioned an irritating habit of being sarcastic which not everyone gets! Another mentioned something that had irritated her when she carefully hid her purse rather than carry too much when she went out. On her return she could not find it! Eventually she went to the bank and cancelled her cards. Guess what happened when she got home! You guessed. She found it!

We also listened to a Françoise Hardy song and had the words to follow it. It's a sad song called "Tant de belles choses" written when she thought her son was dying.

At the second meeting we welcomed a new member, Kate, so we introduced ourselves and talked about France and Paris. There was interest in the work at Notre Dame.



Trevor talked about his trip to Iceland and showed beautiful photos. The trip was hard

work trekking through tough and often wet terrain.

We read an article "Age is just a number", which provoked a lot of discussion. We all like to think we're younger than we are and we certainly do more youthful things than our parents.

Finally we listened to a more familiar Françoise Hardy song "Tout Les garçons" and had the words to sing along!

We did have a topic but we didn't get around to discussing it.

Bridie, Convener

Gardens & Gateaux

June Visit: Fursdon House

Fursdon House is tucked away in the splendid Devon countryside (near Cadbury) and we admired the views on our mystery tours down winding country lanes as we tried to find the way. Our efforts were rewarded on another beautiful sunny day as we parked under shady trees and eyed up the home-made cakes, cream teas and estate bottled apple juice in the café before exploring further.

There are formal gardens at the back of the house, flowing into informal areas which lead down to woodlands, wild areas and a large pond had been made in a low-lying boggy area.

Fursdon is unusual in that it is one of the few houses that is still privately owned and continuously lived in by the Fursdons for over 750 years. The current house is in a

Georgian fashion with a formal colonnade on the front with a beautifully balanced interior.

We all took a tour of the house and museum and discovered that in 1860 (due to the heir apparent being deemed as unsuitable to take charge of the large estate) a younger Fursdon brother who was living in Dawlish at the time, working as a vicar, was handed stewardship of Fursdon. He turned out to be rather unpopular as his views on alcohol meant that he closed the attached brewhouse as well as the local pubs and banned drinking. Apparently this view of him may not have been the same in Dawlish as local people signed a leavers card expressing their gratitude and sadness that the Reverend Edward had to leave!

A delightful way to spend an afternoon.

July Visit: Knightshayes

The Gardens & Gateaux group were very grateful because the Dawlish Community Transport office were able to provide a vehicle and driver for our visit to Knightshayes despite the recent arson attack on their buses.

Upon arrival we scuttled for shelter due to some untimely rainfall and found shelter in the shop, cafe or house. Unfortunately, although ready to be re-opened, the upstairs of the house remains closed due to the lack of volunteers so the rain meant that the downstairs was a little crowded with visitors. However, the volunteers present were very knowledgeable and brought the history of the house and rooms to life.

We learnt that in 1868 Sir John Heathcoat-Amory commissioned the architect William Burges to initiate the plans and building in the Victorian Gothic style. However, Burges was fired part way through

and the building was finished in a less extravagant manner, although there are still plenty of magnificent ceilings to admire.

Sir John was the grandson of John Heathcoat who owned the lace making factory in Tiverton - still visible from the front of Knightshayes. The last piece of lace to be made on the old style machinery (now in a museum) was incorporated into Princess Diana's wedding veil. Nowadays the factory has moved with the times and makes innovative fabrics, some of which go into space or lining our car tyres.

The last family member to live in Knightshayes, until her death in 1997, was Joyce Weathered, Lady Amory. She was a renowned golfer of her time and was responsible, along with her husband - another Sir John - for developing the woodland garden area which was planted with many new and rare plants.

The walled kitchen garden was also designed by Burges, with turreted walls, to contain a productive vegetable, fruit and flower growing area. Sadly today, with a lack of volunteers, the kitchen garden is a shadow of its former glory and large areas have been planted with ground covering green manure plants like chicory and clover. However, the rhubarb was flourishing and new fruit trees were being planted along a wall to be fan trained in the future.

Happily, the sun shone later in our visit and we were able to enjoy the formal gardens, laid out by the landscape designer Edward Kemp - and even catch a few of our members posing by the large lily pond for a photo whilst they discussed the merits of the visiting damsel and dragonflies.



Another successful outing for the Gardens & Gateaux group!

The next G & G members meeting is on Tuesday, 8th August in The Strand Hall, Lawn Hill at 12.30pm, where for the small entry fee of £1 tea or coffee is provided whilst we discuss the details of the next outing on Friday, 25th August to Mount Edgcumbe; along with other ideas.

Jenny Lancaster, Convener

In Our Own Write

Having missed the last meeting due to visiting family in Sweden it was very nice to catch up with four of my fellow members of In Our Own Write.

The subject was "He/she walked into the room" and as usual we wrote about a diverse range of subjects. Two involved people attending funerals/the reading of a will; one a devoted husband visiting his dying wife in hospital and another a couple having an affair. I will admit that my very short story of a woman meeting her father for the first time after doing an Ancestry DNA test felt really quite ordinary.

On the basis that we felt that death had featured rather too heavily in this meeting

we have opted for a "Feel Good" story as our next topic. Our next meeting will be held on Monday 14 th August from 2-4 pm.

Travina White, Convenor

Great Lives

Captain George Peacock (1805-1883)

Eleven of us attended Great Lives in July when Mary gave us an extremely interesting talk about Captain George Peacock, a Naval Officer and inventor who was born in Starcross. George's father was a former Master in the Navy and owned merchant vessels. George was apprenticed from the age of 13 and by 1828 had obtained his full Master's ticket. He joined the Royal Navy as an engineer on the paddle steamer HMS Echo.

George had always been a keen inventor – his first invention was a screw propeller for his father's boat, which he designed when he was just 17. Among his many other inventions he patented an ingenious method of making fresh water from salt and designed an anti-fouling paint for iron ships. He invented an invulnerable floating battery and a refuge buoy beacon.

He was clearly particularly interested in health and safety issues and designed a granulated floating poncho – termed a "life, limb and treasure preserver" and the Nautilus Bathing Dress, the top half of which was inflatable and designed for "Swimming in Safety with Decorum"; it even had decorative frills around the neck!

George Peacock was away at sea a lot and led an exploration to the Spanish Sahara under the patronage of Napoleon III to search for guano and mineral deposits.

Nevertheless, he remained a faithful and very romantic husband – some letters to his wife remain – although he did have to complain at times about the lack of letters he received from her! He also apparently wrote poetry.

In his later years George Peacock designed a private 10-berth yacht with the appearance of a giant mute swan (four smaller vessels called Cygnets would transport passengers to the Swan). One Cygnet only remains in existence in Topsham Museum.

Mary described a very likeable and enthusiastic man who didn't seem to make a lot of money but just enjoyed inventing things. He died a few years after his wife in the house of his son-in-law Henry Cookson in Liverpool, but he was buried in Starcross.

Our next meeting will be on Friday 25th August when Barbara will be talking about Ernest Bevin, Trade Union leader and Labour Party politician, who also has some West Country links.

Jill Maynard, Convener

Literature

Cloud Cuckoo Land by Anthony Doerr

This is a novel about the stories of five very different characters. There is a girl who flees from the fall of Constantinople, a young man dragooned into working for the Ottoman army, a Korean POW, now an old man in a library with children in his care and a bomber downstairs, an autistic teenager coerced into eco terrorism and a fourteen year old girl, possibly the last human being alive, hurtling through space on a mission to find a habitable planet.

All of these people facing great danger find a way through their crises to, as the book puts it, slip the trap.

Any of these adventures could have been a novel in its own right, but their lives are interwoven by a tale from a manuscript from the second century. They read this to others to comfort them, or they preserve the manuscript, or it piques their curiosity to learn more. One character uses it to feel a connection with someone they loved and goes on to write it as a play for children.

They each show astonishing courage and fortitude in seemingly hopeless situations and there is also a theme of homecoming or finding a home and love.

This was a book that we all found difficult to get into and it polarised the group. Half of us, once we got past the first forty or fifty pages, really enjoyed it, gave it 5/5 and said that we would be happy to buy a copy to re-read. Others found they couldn't get into it all, finding it too confusing with so many different timelines or found it too fantastical for their tastes.

Liane Goulding, Convener

Theatre

Tickets have been booked for Twelfth Night at Powderham, Lady Killers at Shaftsbury and currently taking bookings to see Andre Rieu screened at Pavilions. All these productions are in August.

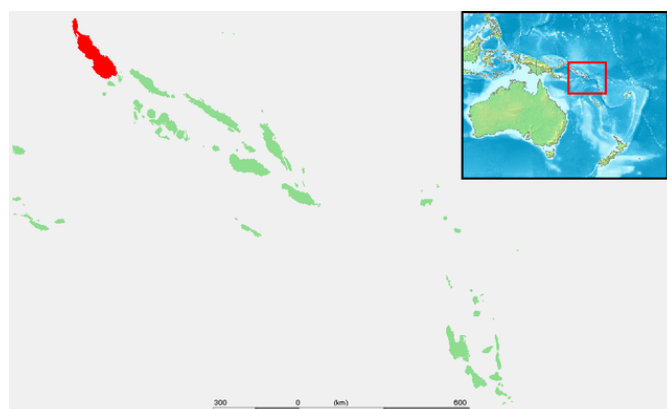
Kate McCarthy, Convenor

Page Turners

***Mr Pip* by Lloyd Jones**

In July the Page Turners read 'Mr Pip' by New Zealand author Lloyd Jones. It was short-listed for the Man Booker prize in 2007.

The book is set against the backdrop of the civil war on the island of Bougainville in the early 1990s. It is told through the eyes of thirteen year old Matilda. Mr Watts, the only white man remaining on the island, offers to take over the running of the village school and reads Charles Dickens 'Great Expectations' to the children. Despite it being worlds away from their own experience the children forge a connection with the story and with Pip. The storytelling also brings the children's parents into the classroom to share their life experiences, including Matilda's mother whose zealous Christianity is at odds with the views of Mr Watts. When soldiers enter the village they become convinced that Pip is a rebel who is hiding from them and when he cannot be found the reprisals are serious. Matilda obviously survives to tell the tale and through her studies of Dickens learns to understand more about both her former teacher and herself.



Whilst some of us did not enjoy the book at all, the majority of us found it interesting. We enjoyed the way the story telling gave the characters a chance to escape from the

realities of their everyday life – isn't that something we all get from a book? – and we liked the way parallels were drawn between the lives of Pip, Mr Watts and Matilda. There were brutal episodes in the book but we felt that they were not dwelt upon but dealt with briefly and factually because they were told from the perspective of a thirteen year old. In addition the book gave us the opportunity to learn about a part of the world and an episode in its history that we knew very little about. We spent some time in our meeting looking up the island and its history and finding out about the background to the book. There is so much to learn about the world we live in.

Deborah Wallis, Convenor

Quiz Group

Two quiz nights took place last month and both evenings were full of good banter and a real stretching of the brain cells.

The first set of questions focused on Germany, Before or after 2000, General Knowledge, Something Fishy, Simons and Dawlish. Something Fishy came up top trumps with the quizzers. However all the quizzers who live in Dawlish need to brush up on their local history and facts. So how would you have fared? Here is a taster from each round:

- Over 70% of all footballs in the world are made in which Asian country?
- What kind of fish was 'Nemo' in the film 'Finding Nemo'? Did the iPad come before or after 2000? The song 'Simon says' was a no.2 hit for which group in 1968?
- The name Dawlish derives from a Welsh river name meaning what?

- In which German city is Museum Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site, situated?



After a two week breather the quizzers zoomed again and this time tackled the subjects of Border Crossings, Oh Crumbs, Disasters, General Knowledge, Kings and Pilgrims.

The results clearly indicated that because of the jokers played General Knowledge just came out on top. This said, it was a different matter when it came to answering questions on various people with the surname King.

Would you have known that...

- Travelling West from Uruguay you arrive in Argentina?
- National Biscuit Day is celebrated in May?
- Billie Jean King won six Wimbledon singles titles?



- The Bubonic plague is the deadliest natural disaster in recorded history?
- Mecca is situated in Saudi Arabia?
- The NSPCC was founded in the 1880s (1884)?

We have scheduled two quizzes for August: 14th and 28th. Hopefully there will be sufficient players around on 28th August (Bank Holiday Monday) to make a go of it.

Graham Carey, Quiz Master

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.

Kate McCarthy & Michael Heyden, Convenors



Graham and Jenny Pestrige

Many members were deeply saddened to hear the news that Graham Pestrige died in July. Graham and his wife Jenny joined the u3a when they moved to Dawlish after their retirement, and spoke so positively of their experience as members, and the many friendships they made in our community.

Jenny was a leading member of the book group Page Turners, while Graham was an enthusiastic convener of the Wine Appreciation Group. Graham also served on the Committee and contributed much through his wise advice, calm demeanour and warm sense of humour. It was a terrible blow to Graham when Jenny died a year ago after falling ill so suddenly. They are both sorely missed and we send our condolences to their family.

John Vick

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.

Webmasters: Please contact Dave and Miggie Pickton via webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info

Want to know more about Dawlish & District u3a? Check out our website: u3a.dawlish.info.