
From the Chair: AGM 18th September

It was pleasing to have a good gathering of members at the August meeting. I hope we will also have a good turnout for our next gathering on Monday 18th September. This will be our AGM. All the papers can be found on our website by clicking on this link:

https://u3a.dawlish.info/newsletters-and-reports#Reports_section

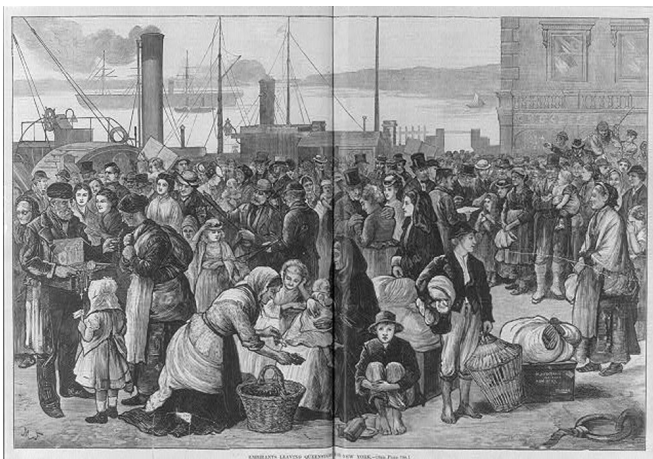
It is important to have a quorum for an AGM so business can be conducted satisfactorily. This is an opportunity for all members to find out what is going on, discuss ideas and plans for the future, and to elect the committee and officers for the year ahead. I hope you will put this in your diary.

John Vick

Monthly meeting report

Marcus Paul: *From Ireland to the Wild West*

I was intrigued by the title of our guest speaker's talk in August, so I was particularly looking forward to hearing what Marcus Paul had to say. I was not disappointed.



Mr Paul used a collection of letters sold at an auction house in New York as a springboard for research into the lives of a remarkable husband and wife team of Victorian travellers and adventurers. These letters were written over many years by Agnes Kinnear Wilson to her sister in Edinburgh about her travels and experiences in America with her husband, James.

James left rural Ireland in the 1840s, like countless others, to escape the 'Great Hunger' and grinding poverty. He travelled to the United States, studied at Princeton, returned to Scotland to study theology, and met his future wife Agnes. Together they moved back to the United States where they settled in New Jersey where James was a minister to a group of churches and was clearly highly regarded.

Agnes was brought up in what might be regarded as a quintessential cultivated and prosperous Edinburgh family. Her life with James took them to places and a life which could hardly be further removed from her home circumstances. Philadelphia and the East Coast of the United States were developing rapidly, and her letters home gave fascinating insights into that exciting and dynamic new world.

The early economic development of the United States was largely on the east coast but there was a restless urge by people that we might describe now as 'economic migrants' to expand westwards, and especially after the end of the Civil War from the 1860s. New territories and states were being settled, and there were seemingly boundless opportunities for those prepared to 'go west'. The government gave incentives to buy land at very low prices to settle in new states such as Kansas. James, from a poor farming family in Ireland, was attracted to go to farm the land but also to follow his vocation as a minister of religion to the settlers of the region.

Agnes's letters record the rigours of travelling by the new railways and tell us enormous amounts about the practical realities and inconveniences – and great dangers – of this experience.

Distances were daunting and there were no established time zones as people moved west. Railways had primitive facilities, the gauges of the many competing railway companies were often incompatible and so passengers had to change trains regularly. Confusion reigned. (This photograph shows a train crossing the featureless plains of Kansas in 1867.) Agnes was travelling



without James for much of the time, and had to carry all her luggage together with her two year old child and a baby just a few months old – but she had no pram! She told her sister of the challenge of caring for a baby in 100 degree temperatures with no opportunity to keep milk and other food cool. Child mortality was frighteningly high but her children both survived.

For those living in these remote and isolated farms, with other settlers scattered across the vast, 'empty' Great Plains, life was tough. The challenge of making a success of the farm was great enough, but the region presented other hazards. We have all seen 'westerns' with cowboys and Indians in conflict, but even films made more with a more sensitive and enlightened perspective rarely give an adequate explanation of the realities of life in the Wild

West. Mr Paul gave a very clear analysis of the three great movements of peoples across the region. There were the native American nations whose home were these great plains and whose whole culture depended on their relationship with their environment and its wildlife, and especially bison. Meanwhile, the 'cowboys' were moving vast herds of cattle up from the

south to meet the newly constructed railways to take them to the west coast, while the new settlers just wanted to farm their lands and did not welcome movements of large numbers of cattle and herdsmen across their lands. It was a recipe for violence and disorder, and for many years there was almost no effective law enforcement.



The history of this period is littered with broken treaties, bad faith and slaughter – of people and bison - which is truly shocking. As we know, the losers were undoubtedly the native American peoples who were essentially victims of genocide. At one stage her family was forced to flee in fear of their lives as war broke out with the 'Indians', and Agnes's letters do not suggest that her views of the treatment of the historic inhabitants of the region were out of step with most other Americans.

Mr Paul had so much to share about his research and how he did his research. He is a very accomplished speaker and no-one in his audience seemed concerned that he overran the normal time allotted to our speakers! I am now looking forward to reading his book, *Ireland to the Wild West* as I am certain there are so many more tales to tell.

John Vick

Interest Group news

Adventure Group

Eight teams, of varying sizes, accepted the challenge of Adventure Group's second Town Quiz and Scavenger Hunt.

This had been compiled by Deborah and as a twist, all the answers were numbers - participants just had to add up all the numbers and see who got closest to the official total. This saved Deborah having to sit and mark all the answers but did mean a lot of work with a calculator for the teams when they got to the finishing point!

All teams managed to find all the items in the scavenging part of the morning, including a conker, a chip fork and a feather. Only one team managed to get more than seven black swans in their photo, meaning they would have won the tie-break if it had been necessary.

The quiz part was less close, however! With answers in the quiz ranging from 1 to 30308, there was a lot of room for error. Some teams were more than 30,000 away from the official total, whereas the winners were only 2.2 away from agreeing with it and the second place team 2.5 away.

Congratulations to the winners and thank you to everyone who took part and had fun.

Deborah Wallis, Convenor



On September 15th the Adventure group will be having another go at kayaking. We have had quite a few new members since we first went kayaking and there have been a number of requests to do it again. We hope to go sea kayaking from Teignmouth beach but if the sea conditions are not suitable we'll paddle on the River Dart from Totnes instead. Either way, it should be fun. To find out more, including how to join in, check out the Adventure group news at <https://u3a.dawlish.info/adventure-group-kayaking-2023>.

Miggie Pickton

Art and Crafts Group

It was good to see members' entries at the Dawlish Flower Show with many (once again) winning a prize. It was so good to see one of our group members winning first prize for her beautiful Kimono Throw. Many of us had been watching its progress each month and it felt fitting to see acknowledgement of the hours it must have taken to produce such a beautiful artistic piece.

Equally exciting was to see the work of two of our Group Members at the Dawlish Art Group Summer Exhibition where they both won awards for their paintings.

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. No particular skill is required, just enjoy the company of a group with multiple interests with always someone on hand for help if you are stuck.

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

Animals

For the August meeting, members were invited to choose a work of art on the theme of Animals. Yet again, the diversity of choices was impressive, spanning over five millennia of human creativity. The earliest art was of bison and other animals from prehistoric caves in the Dordogne. These images were beautiful and skilfully made, showing an intimate knowledge of the natural world.

We also saw images of fantastic creatures from the fascinating triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch, and Durer's imaginative portrayal of a *Rhinoceros* which was remarkably convincing given that he had never seen a live one!

In contrast, Durer's delicate watercolour of a *Young Hare* was extraordinarily detailed and almost strokable, clearly closely observed from life. Another painting which was completely imaginative was Edward Hicks'

Well known to all of us were Rousseau's evocative *Tiger in a Tropical Storm*, and Landseer's striking *Monarch of the Glen*, reproduced in enormous quantities by advertisers over the past two centuries.

Perhaps the most surprising works we saw were by a little-known Australian artist whose wood carvings are still displayed in the school in France for which they were made as an act of remembrance for the Australian servicemen who died nearby in 1918. They showed Australian flora and fauna, and act as an enduring connection between the two nations.

We ended with some of the most controversial – indeed notorious – images ever produced: Damien Hirst's shark, with the imposing title of *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, and the gentler yet disturbing *Away from the Flock*, a sheep gamboling across a field – but these once living animals are both displayed in tanks of formaldehyde. This provoked an interesting discussion on whether these installations are actually 'art'. There were some strong opinions and fascinating insights into how art has evolved over the millennia, and what really does constitute art in our own age.

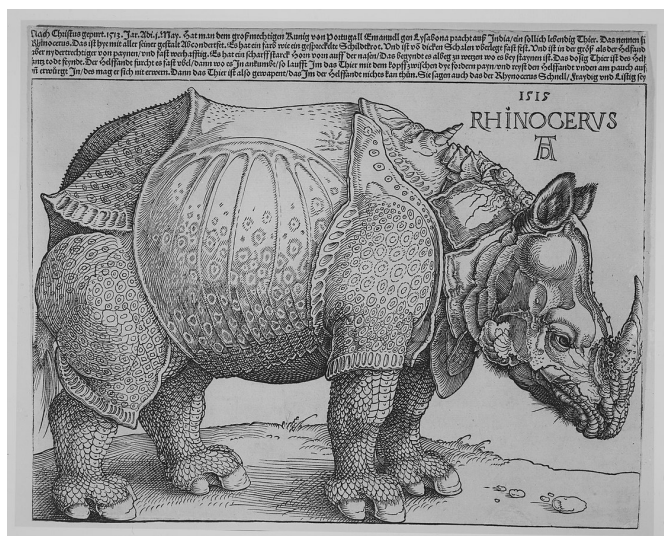
For our next meeting we are looking forward to travelling to Plymouth to visit the Box gallery in Plymouth.

Lynne Vick, Convenor

Badminton Group

As is usually the case at this time of year, the badminton attendance numbers are a little lower than during the rest of the year.

Now might be a good time to come along and give it a go, if you think you would like a

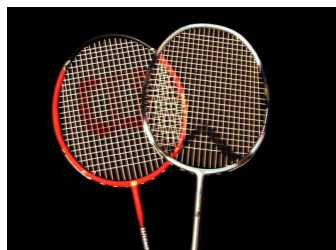


Peaceable Kingdom, depicting a prophecy from the book of Isaiah where all members of the animal kingdom will live in harmony, symbolising peace between the settlers and the native Indians of America. At the other end of the spectrum, we looked at images of



hunting scenes by Desportes and Stubbs from the 17th and 18th centuries, showing with superb realism, man's taming of animals to hunt others.

bit of exercise, with the challenge of having to try to swat a flying shuttle.



As always, we meet at the Dawlish Leisure Centre, Tuesdays at 4.30 for a one-hour's session.

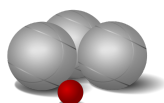
If you are interested, just turn up with some none slip footwear for a free trial.

Existing group members will be having a free session on Tuesday 19th September.

Barry Baker, Convenor

Boules

The weather was kind to us in the last month, and our new schedule of playing indoors, outside on the Lawn and then on the boules area in Exminster has proved very successful. Our indoor boules (cheap juggling balls, in truth) have taken a pounding, and are losing their stuffing, and I've had to invest in some more for the group.



There's always space for more members, we hope to continue our summer dates for September and October.

Michael Heyden, Convenor

Dog Walking

We are currently meeting on Tuesdays at 10.30am as this day suits the majority of us. Walks this month have been to Dawlish Water, Turf Lock, Dawlish Countryside Park and through the woods to Cofton for coffee,

and to the Sports Centre field and then down across the road and through the



woods coming out opposite the Mushroom Farm for a coffee break.

Next week we plan to go to Bakers Park in Newton Abbot so hope the coffee is up to the standard we are now expecting!

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

Kate McCarthy, Convenor

French Conversation

The group met only once in August but we had a good turnout on 17th August. We had a topic (What is the bravest thing you have ever done?) but we chatted so much we have deferred that topic.



Instead, we spent our time having a good old moan about the state of things!

Brexit was to blame for two of our group being unable to get their passports. Long waits,

extra requirements and paperwork which are all very frustrating.

And incidentally, the French for maiden name is "le nom de jeune fille."

We talked about what happened to the vehicles for Dawlish Community Transport (one of our group is a driver). There still is transport as people have been kind and loaned vans and raised money but the vehicles have to be fitted for the disabled so it will be a reduced service until the insurance is settled. As yet, the person responsible for the fire hasn't been found although there is cctv footage.

We talked about the bank closures and what that might mean for people.

Likewise the proposed closure of the booking offices at the train stations.

And the reduced number of staffed tills at supermarkets.

We agreed that face-to-face customer service is needed for many people who have difficulties managing machines and the internet.

And, of course, we had a moan about the availability of doctors and dentists and the proposed buildings in the area ... who will need these services!

An enjoyable session!

Bridie Cushion, Convenor

Gardens and Gateaux

The group had a lovely trip to Mount Edgcombe this month.

I would like to say a big thank you to Dawlish Community Transport service, for providing us with the minibus, and to Bob for some excellent driving around a couple of very tight corners during some diversions.

The weather held out during our visit, only raining during the final stage of our return.



The parklands and gardens were very pleasant to walk around, assisted when needed by a very busy land train up and down the steepest part of the grounds.



I personally liked the grounds, shrubbery section, and many of the old structures as much as the beautiful flowers.

With formal gardens and views across the Tamar

it was a great day out, with the little extra interest of catching the Torpoint ferry on the way back.



Obviously, there was tea and cake, and a number of the group managed to find time to visit the pub, Something I would definitely put on my schedule had I known it was there.

All in all a great day out.

Next month's trip is to Forde Abbey and should also be an interesting day out.

If trips like this appeal to you, why not consider joining our group, to become part of next year's flowery adventures.

Barry Baker, Convenor

In Our Own Write

For a variety of reasons there were only three of us at our last meeting on the 14th August. Our topic was "A feel good story" to

compensate for the excess of funeral stories in our July meeting.



It is so interesting how each of us interpreted this. We had a cloud having a silver lining when a couple's landlord served them notice to quit and they ended up buying a property that they had always loved although it needed a lot of work to make it habitable. Coincidentally they then found out that it had many years ago belonged to an ancestor.

The second was a couple of fishermen following a dog that they thought was rabid. Soon after they did their civic duty and reported this to the police they discovered that the dog was a frequent visitor at the nearby pub, drinking unattended pints. They made a very quick exit before the arrival of the police.

The third was about a dog who, following the death of his owner, was adopted from kennels by an old family friend.

Our next meeting is on Monday 11th September when the topic will be "An old ring."

Travina White, Convenor

Lunch Club

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Khim Sim Grace Tan-Mepham. Please call me Khim Sim. I am from Singapore. I came to the UK as a student and teacher in 1991. I am a retired reception and SEN teacher. I taught in the UK for 31 years and in Singapore for 15 years. I was a supply teacher for 18 months in Devon after I moved to Dawlish to join my husband in August 2020.

I will be your new lunch club convenor. We will meet on the third Tuesday of the month.

Our first lunch will be at 12.30-2.30pm on 19th September at *Sticky Rice*, 2, The Lawn, EX7 9PW



I went to *Sticky Rice* with my family last Saturday. *Sticky Rice* serves traditional and authentic Thai food. There are starters, mixed plate platter, soups, Thai curries, pan fried dishes, noodles, vegetarian and fish dishes.

I look forward to meeting all you lunch club diners. Please let me know if you want to come to *Sticky Rice* by contacting me by Friday September 8th via enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info.

I would also be pleased to hear from you if you would like to share with me your favourite restaurants so we could plan for October to December 2023.

Khim Sim Grace Tan-Mepham, Convenor

Literature

***Winter in Madrid* by CJ Sansom**

Winter in Madrid is set in 1940 during the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War with General Franco on the verge of siding with Hitler.

It is basically a spy novel. Harry Brett is sent to gain the confidence of his old school friend Sandy Forsyth, but he is inexperienced in espionage, traumatised from Dunkirk and reluctant to take on this mission.

Forsyth lives with Barbara Clare, an ex-Red Cross nurse who was in love with another of their school friends, Bernie Piper. A committed communist and member of the International Brigade, Bernie is believed killed in action but is in a grim prison camp. Barbara is trying to discover whether he is still alive with the intention of rescuing him.

Sandy Forsyth is engaged in very shady business dealings and Madrid is a dangerous place in complex political upheaval. The inhabitants are impoverished and close to starvation living under a repressive regime.

As in his Tudor novels, SJ Sansom writes with clarity and great compassion about the suffering of the people. Orphaned children in particular who have witnessed death and horror are living in the ruined streets. Cold, starving and in shock they are treated with cruelty and contempt by those who should be caring for them.

Most of us found it to be, overall, a good story, though perhaps it did drag in parts and some aspects were a little predictable.

Of the main characters, Barbara proved to be the most interesting in the way that she grew in resourcefulness, confidence and strength.

We realised that our knowledge of this complex period of Spanish history was very sketchy. The useful notes at the end of the book would have been better at the beginning, we felt.

4/5

Liane Goulding, Convenor

Page Turners

In August the Page Turners read and discussed Bonnie Garmus's 2022 best-selling debut novel *Lessons in Chemistry*.

The heroine of the book is Elizabeth Zott who would be a research chemist if it weren't for the overt sexism of the 1960s American scientific community. Instead, she takes a job as the presenter of an afternoon television cooking show. Soon her revolutionary approach to cooking and to life grab the nation's attention and a legion of overlooked housewives are taking her lead and challenging the status quo.

A television series of the book is due to launch on Apple TV+ in the autumn.

Most of us found the book a funny and enjoyable read. Some of us found the punchy style of writing hooked us from the first page while others took a while to settle into it. The characters, including a very intelligent dog, all tend to be larger than life caricatures of their type and many range from abrasive to downright infuriating but this also provides the humour in the book.

Perhaps we had forgotten just how difficult a woman's life could be in the early 1960s? This book reminds us in no uncertain terms and shows us how far we have come. We enjoyed a discussion about women's rights and equality in the modern world where some of our top scientists are women, getting credit for their own work.

Several of our members would like you to know that once we have read our books we would be happy to swap them with another book group or an individual so if you are ever tempted by our reviews, please get in touch and exchange our page turner for one of your own.

Deborah Wallis, Convenor

Quiz Group

Despite being a holiday month, we were able to hold our two quiz evenings. As it was Carnival Week in Dawlish, the first round saw the quizzers tackling the subjects of Fun of the Fair, followed by Two To Do, Compass Points, Red or White, General Knowledge and Cartoon Villains.

The scores were tight with the winning team gaining just one point more than the silver medallists. Overall, It is evident from the results that the quiz group members are certainly wine buffs but not so hot on the 'Two To Do' questions.

Here is a question from each round and see if you would have come up trumps..

- What is another name for the Carousel?



- Which is the only European country to have an average altitude above 1,500 metres?
- What was the land of the Norse Gods?



- Which two of the Bee Gees were twins?
- On which underground line is North Ealing?
- Nebbiolo wine – Red or White?
- When was Netflix founded?
- Which cartoon did Dr Claw appear in?

- What is the medical name for your big toe?



It was back to the drawing board on Bank Holiday Monday. The chosen themes were Independence from whom, The only European country that..., Mythical Lands, That's Big, Happiness and General Knowledge.

Top of the pops this time by a wide margin was the subject of Independence from whom? Bottom of the pile where the quizzers struggled was the only European country to...

So let's see if you would have won the Bank Holiday Monday Jackpot....

- Who did Eritrea gain independence from in 1993?

- Who said that 'Happy families are all alike'?
- On which planet was Superman born?

The quiz evenings for September will take place two Mondays on the trot, the 18th and the 25th. All are welcome!

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. Come along for a friendly chat or if you fancy a board game, bring one along. Most



Committee members are present and many Convenors too. 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

Theatre Goers

Theatre Goers enjoyed *Twelfth Night* at Powderham (see website for our review), *Lady Killers* at Shaftsbury and a small party went to see *42nd Street* in Plymouth. Six of us are booked to see Andre Rieu screened at Pavilions. Keep an eye out for Film Club at Shaftesbury.



Kate McCarthy, Convenor

Enjoy our u3a Christmas Lunch! *19th December 2023, Langstone Cliff Hotel*



Our new Lunch Club convenor, Khim Sim, has been looking at the Langstone Cliff hotel for a possible Christmas midweek lunch. This hotel is very popular and gets booked up quickly, so we need to make a booking early if we want to avoid disappointment.

You can see the menu here for midweek lunch.

<https://www.langstone-hotel.co.uk/content/uploads/2023/07/Christmas-and-New-Year-2023.pdf>

The Christmas lunch is open to all Dawlish & District u3a members and will cost £29 per person.

If you wish to attend please take a look here for how to secure your place: <https://u3a.dawlish.info/lunch-club-christmas-meal-2023>.

Khim Sim hopes you can join her for what should be a very enjoyable occasion. Having our own Christmas lunch is well overdue!

Contact us:

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

Newsletter Editor: Please contact John Vick 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.