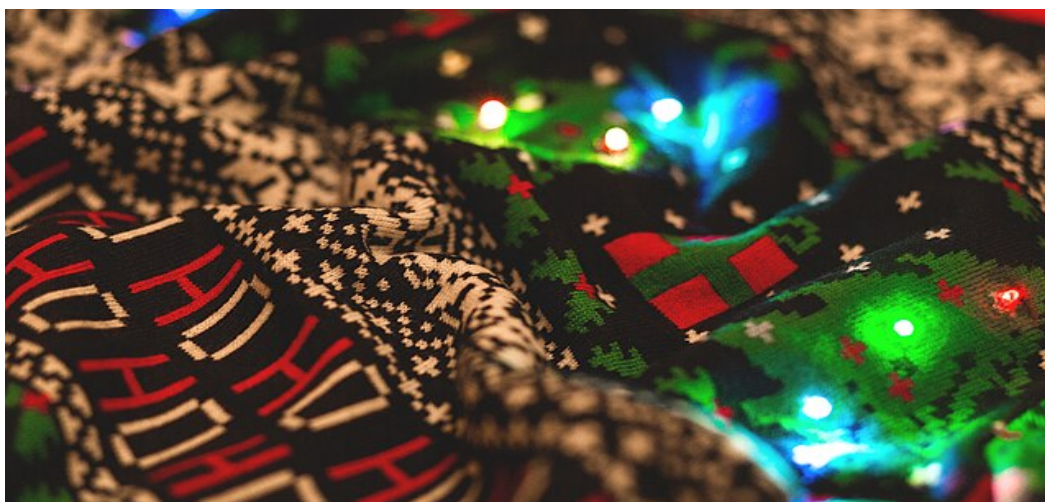

From the Chair

December Monthly Meeting – Christmas Lunch at the Langstone Cliff Hotel

We will not be meeting in the Manor House in December. Instead, we will be having what I believe is our first Dawlish & District u3a Christmas Lunch, courtesy of our newly formed and flourishing Lunch Club. At the last count, over 50 members will be enjoying a festive lunch at the Langstone Cliff Hotel on Tuesday 19th December, so it promises to be a lovely occasion.

Many thanks to Khim Sim for all her detailed planning and hard work on this. Those who have organised an event on this scale, involving bookings, deposits, payment of outstanding money, late cancellations, liaison with the venue and a host of other matters, will recognise how much Khim Sim has had to do to make this Christmas lunch possible. I hope she finds time to enjoy it herself!

If you have them Khim would like you to wear Christmas jumpers to the u3a Christmas lunch at Langstone Cliff Hotel.



Michael Heyden has some valuable advice for those attending the lunch:

Please be aware that if you are driving to the Langstone Cliff Hotel for our Christmas lunch you will need to register your car with the hotel staff on arrival. Their parking is outsourced to a private company, and failure to register your car with the hotel staff on arrival. Their parking is outsourced to a private company and failure to obey their regulations will result in a fine of £60 over which neither the hotel or the u3a have any control, which may spoil your Christmas! I have been a victim of this system, and it's the most expensive cup of coffee I've ever had.

A Polite Reminder to Members

I was very surprised, and certainly disappointed, to learn that one of our convenors has recently had to deal with some rude and unreasonable language from one or two members when trying to organise a group's activities. Can I take this opportunity to remind members that our convenors and committee members are all volunteers. They put themselves forward to help us all to enjoy the wide range of activities which are the core of the u3a. Just occasionally, arrangements have to be altered and being human, we all make mistakes over details of dates which we need to correct. Of course, this can sometimes be inconvenient and disappointing - but such is life. I know most members are very aware that our volunteers have 'other lives' and need to juggle u3a diaries with family life, holidays and other activities. Please show your appreciation and support whenever you can. Remember: without our convenors and committee members nothing would happen!

January Newsletter

Roz Summerton, our Newsletter Editor, has told me that she is happy to edit the January newsletter so that it is available at the start of the New Year. Will convenors and other contributors please send copy to her using the normal email address Newsletter Editor newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info.

Also, please copy all of your emails to the webmasters at webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info so suitable material can be used to create news stories for the website. This is really helpful in our efforts to promote our u3a and ensure that as many people as possible know what we offer to our members.

John Vick

Monthly meeting report

It's up in the Air!



I was delighted that we had such a good audience for November's monthly meeting. We welcomed Gray O'Hanlon to talk about his career as a pilot, flying for British Airways as well as other airlines through his long career.

Gray started flying as a result of a scholarship he was awarded at school. He started on the small Piper in Oxford and progressed through the Piper Twin Comanche until he became a pilot on the noisy Trident, then the 757 and on to the 777, also known as the Queen of the Skies.

He gave a fascinating tour of his 'office' as he termed the flight deck. (The uninitiated may use the term 'cockpit' but this only applies to military aircraft.) To the layman, there is a bewildering array of dials and controls, but Gray helped us to make sense of the key controls a pilot needs to master. The six primary instruments are the Altitude Indicator (AI), Heading



Indicator (HI), Turn Coordinator, Airspeed Indicator, Altimeter, and the Vertical Speed Indicator (VSI). A modern airliner is a remarkable, complex work of engineering. He gave a

flavour of the many technical checks required before take-off, including information about weather conditions, the checks that all the systems on board are working correctly – and airports en route should there be a need for an unscheduled landing! For those of us who are usually content to just sit for the duration of the flight and not worry too much about what is required to get us safely to our destination, much of what we learned was a revelation – and certainly very reassuring. From all the checks of ID cards and at flight briefing in British Airways nothing is left to chance. Once passengers are on board the flight deck crew will show the safety procedures. The captain will announce take off and only when at cruising level is the automatic pilot activated. Even then, the captain and co-pilot will remain vigilant that all gauges, dials and setting are as they should be. If you are a captain of a 777, there will be up to 380 passengers who depend upon every decision the captain and co-pilot make.

Gray illustrated his talk with a number of photos of parts of the plane we only see from a distance. Quite apart from anything else, the sheer size of these machines leaves a powerful impression: enormous engines, tyres, storage spaces for baggage all dwarf the crews who work with the planes.

Members had lots of questions. Who owns the Black Box? (It's not black at all but orange, and is the responsibility of the CAA in the UK.) How do pilots deal with jet lag and adjusting to different time zones? (For the most part Gray assured us that this is not an issue as the return flights do not allow the pilot the time to become accustomed to a different time zone, although planning sleep does become a real challenge.) How long does the training for a pilot take? (Over a year, and retraining is needed whenever a pilot is transferred to a different aircraft.) What proportion of pilots are women? (Perhaps unsurprisingly, a very small proportion of pilots are women. This situation is changing but there is clearly a long way to go.)

Gray's talk gave us a fascinating insight into the life and work of a pilot, and will add considerable interest to us should we take to the air in future.



John Vick, Khim Sim Tan

Interest Group news

Adventure Group

Climbing St Gregory's Church Tower and Bell Ringing



In November the Adventure Group didn't venture very far. In fact, they visited a place which is very familiar to most of us, if only from the outside. St Gregory's Church tower is one of the most prominent landmarks in the town but I think it would be safe to say that only a very few of us have ever been to the top. The plan was to see the view over the town and surrounding countryside, but also to learn about bell ringing and try it out for ourselves.

Before we embarked on the climb, Deborah Wallis gave us a very interesting introduction to the history of bell ringing, as well as some of the technical aspects involved. Deborah is a member of the bell ringing team at St Gregory's and has been an active ringer since her teens. The style and tradition of bell ringing in this country is very different from most other countries. Elsewhere, church bells are little more than a resounding 'clanging' of bells to announce the start of a church service. In England, however, from about the 16th century, there developed a different tradition whereby the

sequence of notes changes to create different 'tunes'. This contributes to the traditional English 'soundscape' which is so evocative. We also learned something of how bells are made, and how they are hung and rung. Obviously, they are very heavy and safety is a vital consideration, so there is a lot of interesting engineering work involved. Today, there is only one bell foundry still functioning in the UK – Taylors of Loughborough – but in earlier ages, the bells would have been made very close to the church itself as it would be a major undertaking to transport a bell any significant distance.

To reach the top of the tower we had to navigate a narrow spiral staircase. Those who lacked inches on this occasion had an advantage as we had to deal with some very tight doorways and confined spaces. The view from the top was worth it. Fortunately, visibility was excellent and there was no rain or wind, so we could take our time exploring Dawlish from this fine vantage point.

We then had to return halfway down the tower to see the bells at close quarters. It was a challenge fitting us into the chamber, clambering over the supports and squeezing in among the bells. It was certainly an experience to be so close to these bells, some of which were made in the 18th century, and the machinery which makes them all work.

It was then our turn to try it out for ourselves, having been given some excellent tuition. Most of us were surprised by how little effort is required; more important are timing, concentration and teamwork. It was very satisfying to be able to ring the bells at a very basic level, maintaining a smooth rhythm. It is just as well that it does not take too much effort as a full peal with eight bells takes about three hours. Unsurprisingly, ringing a full peal is reserved

for special occasions such as coronations and royal weddings: for more 'routine' bell ringing, shorter sequences are more usual. As part of the tradition of bellringing, a visit to the pub afterwards is customary! It's thirsty work.



There were more members wanting to take part in this adventure than there were spaces, so there are plans to repeat this event in the weeks ahead, so keep alert for information about when this will be. For those not on the Adventure Group contact list, keep an eye out for information on the Adventure Group page on our website [Adventure group - Dawlish & District u3a](#)

Deborah also says that anyone who wishes to have another go at bell ringing, perhaps to consider joining the St Gregory's team, would be very welcome. She would be very pleased if you would contact her if you would like to know more.

John Vick

Date for your diary:

Friday 5th January 2024 at 10am

This is the date and time of our next Adventure group meeting where the group votes on the adventures for the next few months. Attendance is not mandatory but we'd love to see you there at the Mayor's Parlour in the Manor House.

Miggie Pickton

Art and Crafts Group

The Affordable Arts event took place at the Strand in November and many of us went along to support members who had Art on display and for sale.

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. No particular skill is required just enjoy the company of a group with multiple interests and 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

I wonder how many female artists you are able to name. And then, how many female artists would you be able to name who were practising before the late 19th century?

I suspect that the first list might include Berthe Morisot, Freida Kahlo, Gwen John, Barbara Hepworth, Bridget Riley, Tracey

Emin and perhaps Mary Cassat. Very few of us would get into double figures. Most people would struggle to name any artist in the second category but might, eventually, come up with the name Artemisia Gentileschi.

At our November meeting, David Gearing aimed to put this right by showing that there were, in fact, a number of significant female artists at work before the 19th century. Although their talent was unusually recognised in their own lifetimes, in many cases their lives and work have been lost in time, obscured and denied recognition, perhaps because of their gender.

David selected six female artists at work in the 17th century.

The Italian painter Fede Galizia produced still-lives, portraits and religious pictures.

Joan Carlile was one of the first British women known to practise painting professionally, specialising in portraits.



The Dutch painter, Judith Leyster, (self portrait above) produced genre works, portraits and still lifes. Her work was highly

regarded by her contemporaries, but largely forgotten after her death. Shockingly, but perhaps not too surprisingly, her entire oeuvre came to be attributed to the more celebrated artist Franz Hals or to her husband.

Mary Beale was an English portrait painter who was part of a small band of female professional artists working in London. She was more than an 'amateur' artist as she became the main financial provider for her family through her professional work.

Elisabetta Sirani was an Italian Baroque painter and printmaker who died in unexplained circumstances at the age of 27. She was one of the first women artists in early modern Bologna, who established an academy for other women artists.

By contrast, Artemisia Gentileschi is now recognised as a major painter whose works stand alongside the great artists of the period. Her life story is a graphic demonstration of the challenges facing a woman in 17th century Italy – and also resonates with the lives of women today. She was raped and unable to find justice, with the perpetrator able to evade punishment even though his guilt was clearly established in court. This experience clearly influenced much of her work, and can especially be seen in works such as *Susanna and the Elders* or *Judith and Holofernes*. Her paintings frequently challenge the conventional representations of women; they lacked the stereotypical "feminine" traits - sensitivity, timidity, and weakness - and were courageous, rebellious, and powerful personalities.



Judith and head of Holofernes

Elizabetta Sirani

Our next meeting on Tuesday 12th December will be very different. Members are invited to choose a cartoon or illustration, perhaps with a light-hearted theme for our last meeting before Christmas.

Lynne Vick, Convenor

Badminton

The Badminton Group will be holding its **Christmas Social Gathering**, at the Marine Tavern again this year. Commencing at **6pm on Tuesday 12th December**. You are welcome to join us even if you're not currently playing.

We have a small seating area reserved at the front of the bar, and nibbles will be provided.

The emphasis is on social, so feel free to bring non-playing family members or friends.

Barry Baker

Boules

The Boules group are well into their winter season, and Dawlish Rules Indoor Boules is flourishing. The Strand Centre has laid a new floor just for us, we'd like to think, not that it seems to have improved our accuracy. Everyone is welcome to come along, no experience or equipment needed, although a sense of the ridiculous helps.

The December meetings will be on Friday 8th and Wednesday 27th at 10.30 in the Strand Hall, which will be a great recipe for Christmas over indulgence.

Michael Heyden, Convenor

Dog Walking



We aim to meet on Tuesdays at 1030 as this is the day that suits the majority of us. Walks this month have been The Obelisk, Teignmouth beach and East Cliff Park, Powderham and Countryside Park. Dogs need to be walked whatever the weather and the walks can be as long or short to suit each dog and dog walker!

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

Kate McCarthy

French Conversation



Unfortunately, the first meeting of the month had to be cancelled as few people were able to attend due to health issues and other commitments. Five of us met for the second meeting and there was much news to exchange, as some of us had not seen each other for quite some time. We updated each other on holidays enjoyed, and exciting holidays planned, family matters and local news.

The topic we had been invited to talk about was the treats we would most miss if we were deprived of them. For one member it was the opportunity to support his chosen football team, Tottenham Hotspur. His loyalty dates from his youth when he grew up in London, and he still travels there regularly to watch Spurs play. He enjoys not only the excitement of the match, but also meeting long standing friends who share his enthusiasm. The other treat he most values is travelling abroad.

Sport also featured in the discussion for another member who misses his involvement in playing rather than spectating. He used to play rugby, but as for most u3a members, the days of being an

active participant are past. He misses the physical activity and the camaraderie which rugby provided.

For another member, his favourite treats are still happily available, a weekly bar of chocolate and a glass of decent red wine. A refreshing tipple was also the treat enjoyed by one of our ladies, in the form of a daily gin and tonic. As a member of the wine appreciation group, it was no surprise to the others that my own treat is also a few glasses of wine at the weekend (preferably a long weekend!). Red or white are equally acceptable, and even a fruity rosé on a summer's day. My other essential luxury is a splash of perfume without which I don't feel fully dressed.

Our next meeting will be on December 7th, the venue to be confirmed. There will be no meeting in the third week of December due to the proximity of Christmas.

Lynne Vick

Gardens and Gateaux

The Gardens and Gateaux group are holding an extra meeting this year on **Tuesday, 12 December at 11am onwards at The Orangery, Powderham.**

We have reserved a table for coffee and cakes then if people have the time and inclination we can stay on for lunch, (served from noon onwards). If you are a member of the G&G group and would like to participate in this gathering, please contact Jenny as soon as possible as numbers are strictly limited and the cafe will require confirmation of attendance for coffee and/or lunch as soon as possible.

Email enquiries@u3adawlish.info

Be sure to add the name Jenny Lancaster to your message so that it is forwarded to the right person.

You can make your own way there by car or join Jenny on the 10.25am No. 2 bus at Brunswick Place, Dawlish bus stop.

Festive good wishes to you all.

Jenny Lancaster, convener

Great Lives

**Isambard Kingdom BRUNEL
(1806-1859)**

Ten of us attended our last meeting when



Tom gave an interesting and detailed account of the life of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the little man with the large hat and even larger ego who undertook an amazing number of projects during his short life.

He was born in Portsea and named after his French engineer father Marc Isambard Brunel and English mother Sophia Kingdom. He had a happy childhood in spite of financial difficulties - his father spending a short time in debtors' prison.

Isambard was a prolific figure in the 19th century. His projects included designing and building bridges, viaducts and tunnels, the development of the SS Great Britain – and of course the Great Western Railway.

He undertook a very different project during the Crimean War. Florence Nightingale sent a plea to The Times for the government to help as injured men were dying needlessly due to the poor conditions of the British Hospital in Scutari, which was housed in an old Turkish barracks. Brunel accepted the task to build a temporary prefabricated hospital to be shipped to the Crimea. It included all the necessities of hygiene, access to sanitation, drainage and even rudimentary temperature controls. As a result the death rate dropped dramatically.

However, not all Brunel's projects were a success. There was the ill-fated atmospheric railway, and also his use of broad gauge tracks which were out of step with the rest of the country.

He was apparently a very difficult man to work with, being "always right". He was demanding and with little interest in keeping to budgets.

Brunel had always been a heavy smoker and was diagnosed with Bright's disease. He suffered a stroke and died aged only 33, leaving a widow and three children.

Sadly, although his father was knighted, Isambard never achieved this honour. However, a public poll by the BBC in 2001 to name the 100 greatest Britons placed Isambard Kingdom Brunel second only to Winston Churchill.

Our next meeting will not be until January and the subject has not yet been chosen.

Jill Maynard

In Our Own Write

We had our last meeting on the 13th November and again due to holidays and other commitments there were only three of us. Our topic was, The House on the Hill.

The first could have come straight out of Tales of the Unexpected as Ruth wove a tale of a creepy gentleman keeping a close watch on his young female neighbour. He got his comeuppance when his rotund girth meant that he became wedged and subsequently died in the space he had created in the loft between the two properties when he was intending to murder her.

The next was a woman returning back to an area that she had known well as a child and finding out that a house on a hill that she had been fascinated with then was now available to buy and would become her new home for her family.

The third explored the relationship between an old lady who lived in The House on the Hill and her cleaner who eventually inherited the house.

Our next meeting is on the 11th January and the topic is, The Lost Boyfriend.

Travina White

Literature

Birdcage Walk by Helen Dunmore

We know from the outset of the novel that Lizzie Fawkes recently married, now Mrs Tredevant, is in mortal danger. Diner Tredevant, her husband, had murdered his first wife, Lucie, two years previously and buried her in a shallow grave. He informed everyone that she died whilst visiting her family in France.

He is an architect and property developer, currently building a row of grand houses

overlooking the Avon Gorge in Bristol, but it is 1792 and the French Revolution is causing political and financial unease. People are unwilling to invest in his expensive properties so Diner, having borrowed all the money for his project, is facing ruin. Already damaged and unstable, he becomes controlling and violent.

Lizzie's mother, stepfather and their friends are deeply involved in the Radical Movement, seemingly in favour of the Revolution that will destroy him, so he takes out his frustration and rage on Lizzie. According to custom and law she is his property so her family are powerless to help.

Diner is close to being exposed as Lucie's murderer and the tension builds to a nightmare scene.

This book is part twisted love story, part Gothic horror and partly a fascinating historical novel rich in detail about both the politics of the time and everyday domestic life.

All the characters are vividly drawn and feel very real. Even Diner is not depicted as a one-dimensional monster, being an excellent architect with vision and a desire to create beauty. Lizzie is warm and passionate and, interestingly, shares some traits with her husband. Both are intense and have insecure jealous natures but Lizzie is able to give love and Diner cannot. This was, sadly, Helen Dunmore's last novel before she recently died and we thought we would go back to read her other work. 4/5

Liane Goulding

Lunch Club

We went to the Smugglers Inn. A place well known to most of us. The carvery in the Smugglers Inn was famous through the

years for the variety of three joints and vegetables.

When I went to the Smugglers Inn I noticed the panoramic views of the countryside and ocean seen from the car park.

We have read so many bad reviews about the Smugglers Inn. I decided to go there so we can make our own comments.

The special lunch menu and carvery was good. One slight problem was that there were not enough staff.

Whilst waiting for the food we enjoyed good conversation around the table.

We were not disappointed at all, in fact we were very satisfied with the service and food.



Khim Sim Tan

Quiz Group

The group members met up again for 2 quizzes in November. The first evening we set out to answer questions on It's U, Toms, Closest Capitals, Scientific names, General Knowledge and 'The' groups.

For the first time in the history of the group when it began during COVID in 2020, three subjects gained the same and most amount

of points. However it was a disaster when it came to 'The closest capitals' and I just wonder if the quizzers had been thrown out of the Geography lessons at school 😊

Would you have answered correctly?

The Ulster Democratic party was established in June 1981

Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury was murdered in the 12th Century

The nearest capital to Stockholm is Tallinn

The scientific name Pan Troglodytes means Chimpanzee

Coal mining puts one at risk for the Black lung disease

The song 'Turn, turn, turn' was sung by 'The Byrds'

It was a close call regarding the scores with one team winning by just 2 points.

The list of subjects on the 27th focused on English to American, The Common Link, Queens, That's old, Cocktail ingredients and General Knowledge. Test yourself with a question from each round...

What is the American term for Rape seed oil?

What links Swiss, Mouse trap and Macaroni?

Who was known as the 'Queen of soul'?

In which musical did the song 'Old Man river' appear?

If you combine brandy and white crème de menthe, what cocktail would you make?

What career did Adolph Hitler pursue before turning to politics?

So, 5 out of 5 ??

The teams excelled themselves when it came to the British to American terms round but didn't get to grips with the Cocktails. Probably wine connoisseurs.

Our last group meeting of 2023 will take place on **Monday 18th December at 7pm** when we will be having a Christmas special. If you would like to join us for this seasonal evening then just let me know.

Graham Carey

Strollers Social Walking Group

Having survived traversing mud and water, plus gate and stile climbing during our adventurous new walk to Old Walls Vineyard in November; we're planning something a little tamer for our December Dawlish & District u3a monthly walk on **Thursday Dec 14th**

I'll be coming to Dawlish on the number 2 Exeter bus i.e. leaving Teignmouth at 12.13pm and hopefully arriving Dawlish at 12.27pm ...in time to meet up with our Strollers group under the railway viaduct at 12.30pm.

As not sure about weather, tide times/conditions or if sea wall route is fully open again after storm damage, we have



plan A and B ready for our Dawlish to Dawlish Warren walk

Depending on the weather and route decided on the day our planned end of walk and refreshment stop will be either the Langstone Cliff or Ryders Bakery for a hot drink and festive mince pie.

New walkers are always welcome to join our monthly walks.

Jean Gitsham

Tea and Chat

Our next Tea and Chat will include mulled wine and mince pies so come along with your festive spirit and hat or jumper and join in the fun.

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 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

Theatre

This group has now joined Tea and Chat on the first Thursday of the month.

This month 8 of us went to the Pavilions to see Cecil Beaton's Diaries delivered by an extremely accomplished actor who not only looked like Cecil Beaton but sounded as you would imagine.

Being a great fan of Cecil Beaton, a multi-talented, often misunderstood, slightly bitter and utter snob, I found the performance of this complex character did not disappoint.

He is best described as one of the greatest Photographers and Illustrators for Stage and Costumes for Hollywood.

His earlier photographs included the Queen Mother (and then later becoming Queen Elizabeth's official photographer), Audrey Hepburn, Marilyn Monroe, Vivien Leigh to name just a few, and of course his great love Greta Garbo who's friendship although spanning the decades disintegrated when he released some private photos of her to a Fashion Magazine followed by publishing a book.

It was as if he had a self-destruct button at times and his jealousy destroyed many friendships. Although he photographed them both, he treated Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor with utter disdain, and of Elizabeth Taylor he is recorded as saying "she is a monster" and "everything I dislike".

He was not on good terms with Laurence Olivier which only got worse when "Larry" who had been a source of irritation to Cecil for many years married Vivien Leigh, who up to that time he considered one of his closest friends.

Nonetheless, he remains one of the greatest Photographers of the century. His creativity with fashion and set design and in the days before the internet his photographs in Vogue, are what showed the world the glitz and glamour of the world of fashion and major films from Hollywood.

I could go on but a brilliant performance portraying a brilliant character.

Elsewhere some members went to the Shaftsbury for one of the film club's chosen films. There is no need to be a member, the cost is £5 at the door.

This month we look forward to Andre Rieu's White Christmas just in time to get us in the festive mood. And some members will be making arrangements for Panto season.

Kate McCarthy, convenor

**It only remains to wish all our members
a very Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.**



Contact us:

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

Newsletter Editor: Please contact Roz Summerton 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.