

## From the Chair

What a lovely way to end our u3a programme in 2023! The Christmas Lunch was a great success, and we all owe the organiser, Khim Sim, our considerable thanks – not to mention admiration for the many hours of tireless work she put into this project over a great many weeks.

Well over 50 members attended, and it is clear from all the photos that they had a really enjoyable time. It makes me wonder why we have not had a Christmas lunch in previous years, but now we are launched I think this will become a regular



feature of our programme.

Anyone who has ever organised an event of this sort and on this scale will have some idea of how many phone calls, emails, lists, messages to the caterers, publicists and who knows what else this entails. Khim Sim did this with her customary energy and efficiency - and good humour, and it all went without a hitch.

Living

Laughing

Learning



I just hope Khim Sim was able to enjoy it herself! She certainly deserved a good time.





## **Burns Night, 6.30pm on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024, Strand Centre**

As we are digesting our turkey and Christmas pudding, some of us are turning our thoughts to further culinary delights of haggis, neeps and tatties – and whisky! Yes, Burns Night is on the horizon, and Khim Sim is encouraging us to get involved.

As has happened in recent years, there will be a Burns Night celebration at the Strand Centre (32 The Strand, Dawlish) on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January. The celebration of the birthday of Robert Burns will be a couple of days later than the 'correct' date but that is not really a problem.

I enjoyed the occasion last year (possibly a little too much?) and am looking forward to going again. Further details will be available nearer the time but in true Strand Centre fashion it is sure to be very relaxed and informal – and great fun! Guests are welcome to come dressed for the occasion but kilts will not be obligatory! There is sure to be a piper, a rendition of Burns' *Address to a Haggis*, but I am not sure whether there will be dancing. There will be plenty to eat but haggis, neeps and tatties will not be the only treat on the menu, and I believe guests are asked to bring their own liquid refreshment, whisky, wine or whatever you prefer.

Khim Sim plans to reserve a table for 10-15 members and any guests. If you would like to be included, please email Khim Sim on this email [khimsimt@gmail.com](mailto:khimsimt@gmail.com)

If you wish to join the party, you will need to buy a ticket from Paul at the Strand Centre, for the very modest price of £5. Due to previous no shows, the tickets must be purchased before the event.

For those who are not very familiar with the work of the Strand Centre and the important and distinctive role it plays in the life of the Dawlish community, here is a link to its website for you to learn more: [Home - The Strand Centre – Support in the centre of Dawlish](#). It really is a good cause and benefits us all.

Khim Sim, John Vick

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## **Interest Group news**

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### **Adventure Group**

Adventure group members, existing and new, are warmly invited to our group meeting on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January at 10am in the Manor House, Dawlish. We will be voting for the adventures that we will have in 2024 and it is really important that you have your say.

Further information can be found on the website in Adventure Group News:

Adventure Group's latest trip took them to the Apex Racing Centre near Cullompton. We were told we could have access to eighty-five different cars on over a hundred different tracks and full instruction and support to use the state-of-the-art racing simulators.

Eight of us were ushered into a darkened room where there were four car seats with steering wheels and pedals, each surrounded on three sides by large computer screens. We were given an introductory talk

and then it was time to choose our cars and circuits for the first race. We took the advice of our instructor and went for an entry level car – the Honda Civic - and a shortened version of the Silverstone track. The first four people took to the chairs and soon they were heading out on track. I was a spectator this time but it was still exciting to watch the overtaking and the crashes.

Soon it was my turn and I climbed into the seat, donned a headset so that I could communicate with the other three racers and the instructor but not be distracted by the rest of the room, and gripped the steering wheel.

There were only two pedals to use – the accelerator and the brake – so I pressed the accelerator and steered on to the track. The screens around me showed the track and its surroundings as well as information about my lap times and I had a rear-view mirror so that I could see other cars coming up behind me.

The track had a path of green arrows on it which showed the racing line and at the corners the arrows went red which gave me a hint that I should be slowing down. I didn't always take enough notice of that and soon I was spinning round and crashing into the barriers. Fortunately, I was unhurt and any damage to my car miraculously repaired itself and the green arrows were very helpful in reminding which direction I should be facing as I headed back into the race.

I sped off and could see one of the other cars up ahead of me. The label said it was Michael. I chased him down but he was determined not to let me overtake and eventually he got away from me when I crashed again.

At the end of a thrilling race, we were told that we had been driving at speeds in excess

of a hundred miles an hour! Dave had done the fastest lap in one heat and Barry in the other.

Some of us felt a little bit queasy after our first race and even with the side screens turned off, one of our group decided to opt out of the second race. The rest of us had another exciting time on track, this time racing a Nissan car around the Brands Hatch circuit, with Barry taking the honours.

Once we had returned home, we were each sent our individual telemetry.

The email told us that professional drivers can spend as much time looking at their race data as they do driving, as this is the key to continuous improvement. To be honest it was a lot of complicated graphs and didn't really mean a lot to me. We were also sent the overall results of our championship. Congratulations go to Dave and Barry who took joint first place with sixty-three points each.

I really enjoyed this adventure but I don't think I will be challenging Lewis Hamilton for his Grand Prix car anytime soon!

Deborah Wallis

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## Art Appreciation

For our pre-Christmas meeting, members selected a cartoon or illustration. Not surprisingly, there was plenty of variety in the selections ranging from illustrations in novels, magazine covers, comic characters - much loved by children and adults alike - and cartoons commenting on contemporary life and politics.





Norman Rockwell's paintings illustrating contemporary life were much loved and admired by the American public and appeared on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* for over five decades until the 1960s. The front covers of the British magazine *Vanity Fair* (1868-1914) were famous for caricatures of the celebrities of the age. Both magazines provide a real insight into the life and times of these eras and societies.

As we were approaching the festive season, it seemed appropriate to look at illustrations from Charles Dickens' 1843 novel, *A Christmas Carol*. The original cartoons by John Leech have been followed by many others including Arthur Rackham, Ronald Searle and, of course, *The Muppets*! The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of great illustrators, of whom one of the finest was John Tenniel whose images of *Alice in Wonderland* have endured to this day.

The Second World War figured strongly in the fantastic inventions of Heath Robinson whose cartoons have been widely enjoyed for many years. His name has earned a place in our language in the term 'a Heath Robinson contraption'. VE Day was marked by Giles and Zec in very different ways and evoked early childhood reminiscences by some members.

We were reminded that there is now a resurgence of interest in graphic novels. For those who have not delved into this genre, we were strongly recommended to read Posy Simmonds' books, which she has adapted from classic novels. These include Tamara Drew (*Far from the Madding Crowd*) Gemma Bovary (*Madame Bovary*) and Cassandra Darke (*A Christmas Carol*).

Some of the most memorable figures in our culture are from cartoons. Giles created a whole family of favourite and (to some of us) very recognisable people who entertained millions of people every week in the pages of the *Daily Express*. *The Beano* also has a host of individuals who have been

part of our lives, notably Dennis the Menace. We were shown a contrast between the British version of Dennis and the American incarnation who has a very different persona and, to me at least, a hairstyle with a disturbing resemblance to Donald Trump's!

Martin Rowson's cartoons in *the Guardian* have a very different purpose. While making us laugh or more often wince, they make powerful and incisive comments on politicians, homing in on the reality of our world, forcing us to stop and think. We ended with political and social comment of a different sort in the form of the Christmas front covers of *Private Eye* from recent years which really capture the mood of the times.

It's a shame we cannot publish more of our choices as they are protected by copyright, so go online to enjoy them.

Lynne Vick, Convener

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## Beer and Skittles



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## Boules

The Boules Group has continued meeting indoors in the Strand Hall twice a month in December, and in January we shall gather on Friday 12th and Wednesday 24th at 10.30 in

the morning. Everyone is very welcome, no experience or equipment needed.

Michael Heyden, Convenor

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## French Conversation

The group met just once this month on December 7th with a good turnout.

June had printed out the words of 2 Christmas carols and we sang along to -

Il est né le divin enfant and Minuit Chrétien

We then each gave our thoughts on the topic which was,

"How do you make yourselves feel better when you are sad?"

There were a variety of responses, listening to music, walking, listening to the waves, making a cake (and eating it!), solving a puzzle, talking to someone, trying not to dwell on sad things.

One person said that there's a difference between being depressed and being sad and that's it's good and healthy to be sad and to allow that feeling and to cry if it helps.

We moved on to talking about sad films and then Christmas films of which there are plenty.

June gave us a crossword to keep us occupied!

Next meeting possibly January 4th. Venue and topic to be decided.

Bridie



## Literature

Treachery by SJ Parris

Treachery is set in 1585. Drake's fleet is about to embark from Plymouth on a, hopefully, decisive expedition against King Philip of Spain when a murder is committed on the flagship and staged to look like suicide. The ship is securely guarded as Philip has put a bounty of 20,000 ducats on Drake's head, £4,000,000 in today's money, so the perpetrator has to have been a member of the crew, either for their own reasons or because they are in the pay of an enemy of Robert Dunne, the victim.

Fear and superstition spreads through the fleet and the mission is in jeopardy, so Drake asks Giordano Bruno and his friend Sir Philip Sidney to help solve the mystery.

Robert Dunne was an inveterate gambler, heavily in debt, but as he would have earned a share of the proceeds of plundering the Spanish ships, his creditors had nothing to gain from killing him before the voyage.

Likewise, his widow stands to lose everything if it is decided that he has committed suicide as that was a criminal offence and all their money and property therefore forfeit. In these times a wife's money belongs to her husband and she has watched him squander her inheritance. Whilst she may have wanted him dead, why make it look like suicide?

There are many strands to this novel and she paints a fascinating picture of life in Elizabethan Plymouth, full of details about clothes, food, buildings, the contrast between the lives of rich and poor and the squalor and filth all around.

We liked the character of Bruno, a scholarly outsider ahead of his time in terms of his scientific knowledge, with a dry wit and a clear eye.

Some of us found that the novel was a bit long, tending to drag a little, but others disagreed, enjoying all the descriptions and the exciting twists and turns.

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After we discussed the book we had a festive glass of wine and shared some poetry. One of the group kindly wrote us a poem:

Another Christmas

Another Christmas!

Another Year!

They pass so quickly now.

I don't know how.

Where did it go?

What did I do?

Cook, Shop, Clean and Wash

Nothing to show at the end.

Turn around and it all needs doing again.

Thank goodness for Books

to entertain and expand our minds

Also like-minded friends

to share our pleasures

and favourite books.

Real treasures!

So, friends, books

and conversations

go on forever!

So don't think of giving up reading.

Never Never Never!



## Lunch Club

Our u3a Christmas lunch was held at Langstone Cliff Hotel with 55 attendees.

The hotel decorations around filled us with Christmas festivity and cheer.

Members came with adorable antlers headgear and jumpers.

We were entertained by a musician to set a Christmas mood. Some u3a members danced and had great fun.

I received a lovely flower basket from our chairman which was a surprise. Big big thanks. I felt so much joy and appreciation shown to me with flowers and cards by u3a members.

**Our January lunch is on Monday 22nd**  
Castle Inn, Holcombe.

Please send your order to me

[luncheonclub@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:luncheonclub@u3a.dawlish.info) by January 13th 2024.

Our February lunch will be on the 3rd Friday of the month as most of the restaurants shut on Tuesday.

**February 23rd at 12.30pm-2.30 pm.**

The Crab Shack, Teignmouth

Thank you to all of the u3a members who have supported the luncheon club since it started in September 2023.

Happy 2024. May it be filled with love, peace, happiness and prosperity.

Khim Sim Tan-Mephram Convenor

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## Page Turners

The Page Turners book for November was 'Rabbit Proof Fence' by Doris Pilkington. This is an Australian book published in 1996, which is an account of the experiences of an Indigenous Australian family.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century mixed-race children were forcibly removed from their families and taken for schooling to make them more like white people. The book tells of three young girls (one of whom is the author's mother) who escaped from the government settlement in 1931 and trekked over 1600 kilometres (990 miles) home by following the rabbit-proof fence, a massive pest-exclusion fence that crossed Western Australia from north to south. During their long journey they survived on everything from emus to feral cats, while narrowly avoiding the police, professional trackers and hostile white settlers.

This sounded like it would be an interesting and exciting story to read. However, although we all enjoyed learning about an episode in history that we were not aware of, the book itself was disappointing. The narrative is 'clunky' with none of the detail and description that would have helped draw us into the story and engage us with the characters. Although the book is quite short, the main characters are not introduced until about a quarter of the way through and their story is only briefly outlined. We can only assume that the author wanted to tell the story that her mother told her and was not interested in making up detail simply to create a good book.

The book was made into a film starring Kenneth Branagh which has been enjoyed by one member and we agreed that we would like to try to find a way to see this.

Although we definitely did not feel that this book qualified as a 'page turner', we would

be happy to share a copy if you would like to read it for yourself - just get in touch.

Deborah Wallis

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### Quiz Group

It was a joy to have a full house of teams for the Christmas edition of the quiz, which was held on the 18th December.

As it was a Christmas special, the chosen subjects were Christmas day, Christmas places, Christmas firsts, Christmas General Knowledge, Christmas cuisine and Christmas traditions.

We had 3 maximum scores; 1 in round 2 and 2 in round 3 and at the top of the Christmas tree were Christmas firsts whereas the Christmas traditions round, fell flat, all good fun and banter though.

Now, would you have filled your Christmas stocking with the right answers? Let's see....

In which part of the UK did Christmas day not become a holiday until 1958?

What was the fictional town created by Dr Seuss in his book, How the Grinch stole Christmas?

Which country first started the Christmas tree tradition?

Miss Fanny Bright is sung about in which festive song?

What is the most popular Christmas dessert in New Zealand?

Early versions of what tradition were started in Germany in 1903 by a publicist?

Our first quiz in 2024 will take place on

**Monday 15th January**, followed by the 29th and in February on the 12th and 26th.

Graham Carey

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### Strollers Social Walking Group

Our first D&D U3A Strollers walk will be on **Thursday Jan 11<sup>th</sup> 2024**, January weather can be unpredictable but hopefully we won't get too wet or muddy.

This walk will be around areas of Teignmouth starting from the bus shelter opposite the Minidab B&B, on Dawlish Rd.

From Dawlish catch the 12.30pm, number 2 Newton Abbot bus from the shelter by the railway line.

From Teignmouth catch the number 22 Dawlish Warren bus from shelter by WH Smith's

If weather conditions are ok, we'll walk down Love Lane to Cliff Rd or plan B up Dawlish Rd to New Rd. We'll then head onto the Highgrove Estate (no, not that one) to catch a glimpse of St Scholastica's Abbey

Next we'll cross over the Dawlish Rd and on to explore various pathways around Mules Park and Eastcliff. This leads us down via the railway bridge to Teignmouth seafront. From there we'll saunter along to The Point then along by the back beach, possibly call in to the TAAG Centre to view the publicity exhibition for local community groups, before heading to a cafe for our refreshments then our buses home.

Jean Gitsham

Wishing all u3a members a very happy, healthy and fun filled 2024



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

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

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