
From the Chair

Committee News

I am pleased that at our recent Committee meeting, Roz Summerton was co opted as a member of the Committee. Roz has been editing this newsletter for several months, and has agreed that it seems sensible to be directly involved in what is going on across the u3a. I am grateful to her for all she is doing for members.

Financial matters

As we are all aware, the cost of almost everything has been rising significantly in the past two years, and this has included hire charges for the Manor House. We have maintained our subscription of £15 pa ever since we were formed ten years ago, and also the charge of £1 to attend our monthly meetings. The Committee has decided that we should keep our annual subscription at the same level but that with effect from April, we will increase the monthly charge to £1.50. I am sure members will understand why that is necessary.

It is also worth noting that our membership continues to rise to record levels. Kate McCarthy, our membership secretary, reports that we now have 186 members which continues our steady growth over the past two years.

Time of Monthly Meetings

For some time, there has been discussion about the best time for our meetings. Especially in the winter months, some members have been concerned about being out and about on dark evenings and in poor weather. We have previously not had much room for manoeuvre as the Council Chamber has been booked by another group earlier in the afternoon. However, it appears that the situation has changed, and we are now able to meet from 2.30pm. We propose to change to this earlier

time for a period of time to see whether this suits more people. However, it must be noted that attendance in recent months, including during the winter, has been at record levels! (You may like to note that this change will mean the Committee meets at the less convenient time of 12.45 to accommodate this!)

Monthly Meeting, 2.45pm on Monday 15th April – Zak Showell, Shaldon Wildlife Trust

We will welcome Zak Showell who will be talking to us about the work of Shaldon Zoo which is more correctly termed the Shaldon Wildlife Trust. We are very fortunate to have a zoo nearby, and he will be talking about the wide range of activities the trust undertakes. I hope there will be another bumper attendance.

Please note that doors will be open from 2.30pm with the meeting due to start at the new time of 2.45pm.

Important Notice ***

Membership Renewals due by 1st April.

Many thanks to the majority of you who have renewed your membership. If you are still waiting for your membership card, please bear with me as I email these out individually. At the moment we do not ask to see your card but it is a form of acknowledging you have renewed.

For those of you who have yet to renew, please look on our website (how to join) for information about renewing. It is particularly important that those who are Gift Aiders confirm each year that they are still a Gift Aider. Not sure what this means? Contact enquiries for an explanation. If you joined after January 2024 you do not need to renew your membership until April 2025.

Monthly meeting report

Medical Detection Dogs



There was a lot of activity before the March monthly meeting began as there was a search for extra chairs. Clearly, my email advertising our guest speaker which included a photo of a very endearing dog, was the secret to attracting a large audience! Whether that was the reason or not, we had what was comfortably a record attendance of well over 60 members to hear Peter Isaacson share with us the extraordinary story of Medical Detection Dogs.

Peter told us how this remarkable organisation came into being in the early 2000s. It is a complex tale involving observation of animal behaviour, rigorous scientific research,

and some good fortune in the form of a very large legacy to fund its work! The organisation has now developed an important role within our national health provision.

It is now understood that dogs have very large numbers of receptors in their noses. These enable them to identify volatile organic compounds which reveal a number of health conditions in humans. A human has 5 million sense receptors whereas a dog has 250-300 million. Training enables dogs to help humans in two main areas:

1. They can sniff samples of sweat or urine in controlled conditions in a laboratory.
2. Assistance dogs living with people with a known condition can warn them of oncoming episodes.

We saw film of dogs sniffing samples and identifying those which had tell tale indicators of conditions including prostate and breast cancer. There is currently no reliable test for Parkinson's Disease, but it is clear that trained dogs are able to identify the condition up to 20 years before the symptoms are apparent. Dogs are also able to identify Covid-19 earlier and more reliably than the tests we currently use. Research is underway in a number of other diseases such as malaria and some bacterial infections. The success rate is very high, and in many cases much higher than other more 'orthodox' tests.

prevent harm. Dogs are used in care homes, especially to identify those with a urinary tract infection. We heard moving testimony from a number of people with severe, debilitating conditions such as Postural tachycardia syndrome (PoTS). The constant assistance of their trained dog enables these people to live active and fulfilling lives which previously was not possible.

Dogs come from a variety of sources, and the charity uses a wide range of breeds – but they must have long noses. They come mainly from breeders, donations or as rescue dogs. The training takes up to two years and costs £29,000 each. Once their useful life comes to an end, they are never sent to kennels but are always either kept by the person they have been assisted or rehomed.

Needless to say, all this remarkable work needs to be funded. They get no government funding so rely on donations. In any calculation of costs and benefitIn the case of assistance dogs, trained dogs live with people with some known medical conditions. They are able to alert the person to the imminent onset of an episode (such as an allergic reaction) so they can take immediate steps to s, it should be recognised that the work these dogs do saves the NHS and the nation as a whole, considerable sums of money, for example in costs for the call out of ambulances, medical attention in hospital, time missed from work, payment of benefits and in many other ways.

The CEO, Dr Claire Guest, was awarded OBE for her work in establishing the charity, and the Queen Consort is their patron, and takes an active role in their work. Anyone who wishes to support can find out how to contribute by visiting the website [Welcome to Medical Detection Dogs - Medical Detection Dogs](#)

Making the most of your u3a.

Your Dawlish and District branch is growing steadily, with a wide range of group activities on offer. Being a member is all about taking part and enjoying what's on offer, but it can be even more than that, there are always opportunities to start something new, where you could meet other members with the same interests as yourself.

Sometimes new groups don't get off the ground, like last year's attempt to start a Singing Group.

Sometimes new groups are an instant success, like the Dog-Walking Group.

Other groups can be put on hold when new conveners can't be found, like our Natural History Group.

A new convener coming forward can restore and revitalize such groups, making our branch even more diverse and interesting. A great example of this is when Khim-Sim restarted the Lunch Group late last year, resulting not only in a well-attended group, but also in what was hopefully our first of many Branch Christmas Dinners.

Our Discussion Group has also recently restarted thanks to Dana taking on its convenorship. We have had several proposals for new groups, and there are still some old groups that no longer run. You can see some of these on our web site under Growing Our Interest Groups.

If you would like to get involved in organising anything, old or new, please contact me via; enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info

Barry
Groups Coordinator.

Interest Group news

Adventure Group

After the success of our last Adventure Group trip to the Manor House hotel near Okehampton, a number of group members were keen to go again. Together with some new adventurers, we numbered 15 in all.

Some stayed for two nights, others for three nights; all of us made the most of our time there, launching ourselves with great enthusiasm into the huge variety of crafts and sports on offer.



Between us we managed all of these in the three days that most of us were there:

Determined to beat our previous total of 33 activities, I am pleased to report that this time between us we managed 45! Given that there were a number of new classes on offer, everybody had the chance to do things they hadn't done before - just what we like in the Adventure group!



1. The Great Manor House throwdown
2. Hand built pottery
3. Lino printing
4. Botanical resin
5. Embroidery/applique
6. Quilling
7. Mosaics
8. Silk painting
9. Silver clay
10. Enamelling
11. Decoupage and 3D art
12. Macrame - Scandinavian gonk
13. Resin art (three different classes)
14. Resin dip (two different classes)
15. Candle making
16. Glass fusion
17. Glass slumping
18. Glass engraving/painting and upcycling
19. Pyrography
20. Bind your own leather journal
21. Woodwork with scroll saws
22. House plaques
23. Needle felting
24. Badminton
25. Table tennis
26. Table bowls
27. Ice curling
28. Archery
29. Air pistols
30. Air rifles
31. Pilates
32. Hula hooping
33. Clubbercise
34. Hydro spa
35. Skittles
36. Dartmoor guided walk
37. Climbing wall
38. Board games
39. Quizzing
40. Ten pin bowling
41. Swimming
42. Sauna
43. Steam room

- 44. Gym
- 45. Spa treatments (aromatherapy and massage)



I think we annihilated our previous record but beating this year's total when we go again is going to be a bit of a challenge!

Next month's adventure will be Footgolf. Deborah is currently establishing interest in this and fixing a date so do contact her via adventure@u3a.dawlish.info if you'd like to join us.

Miggie Pickton

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. 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.

Kate McCarthy & Kim Walker

Beer and Skittles

After the appalling weather kept the numbers of players down in February, we turned up with a vengeance in March, and some had lost none of their skill. Mary Mansfield, with the highest score in a round of the evening of 18, and possibly the highest in the history of Beer and Skittles, astonished us all.

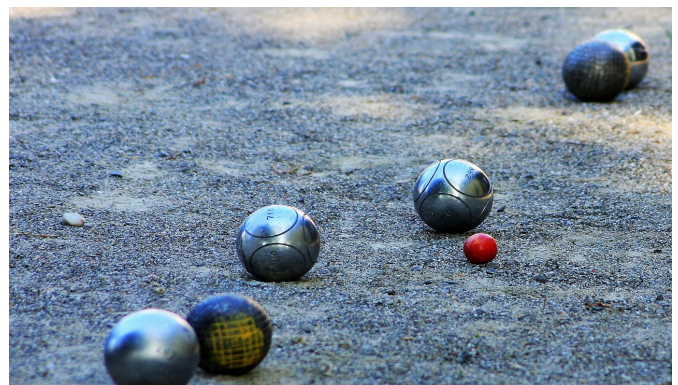
We play at the British Legion on the third Thursday of the month at 7 p m, £1.50 each, and everyone is most welcome.

Boules

The Boules Group, which plays in the Strand Hall only throughout the winter months, just to keep our eye in, are now changing their dates and venues starting in April.

We shall continue to meet in the Stand Hall once a month on the first Wednesday, starting with 3rd April.

Then we shall meet on the Lawn by the bandstand on the second Friday of each month beginning with 12th April, and then on the fourth Wednesday, 24th April we shall travel to Exminster where the Deepway Lane playing fields have a purpose made boules terrain.



All dates have a 10.30 start, and we have always managed car shares to travel to Exminster, although you can get there by bus as well.

Everyone is welcome, no equipment or experience is required, there is normally a small charge for playing indoors in the Strand Centre only. Do come and join us.

Michael Heyden - Convenor

Discussion Group

Our Discussion Group met on the 14th March to discuss aspects of the environment, focusing on local issues.

With 2 apologies, we started with a powerful statement, that in the last 50 years 70% of the monitored species were destroyed. We mentioned the need, but also the resistance to rewilding and environment restoration schemes and some reasons behind it.

The main conclusion was that support for such schemes would involve a change of lifestyle, such as reducing food consumption, especially of meat and dairy, stopping overproduction which ultimately causes waste. This is driven by greed and the fact that we still base our economies on growth, including of the world population.

There are many organisations, including in Devon, volunteering to preserve biodiversity, rewilding, and getting involved in planning permission approval. Anyone can join and contribute expertise, and there will be more ways to inform the public about them, as a grant application has recently been approved and leaflets will be produced.

Profit and monetary incentives for stakeholders often encourage development

in unsuitable areas. Infrastructure development is not always a requirement imposed on the developers, we end up with augmented environmental concerns, especially in regard to water and drainage.

This last mention prompted the choice for our next topic, which will be the environmental footprint of the built environment. The meeting is going to be held on Wednesday, April 17th, at the convener's home.

Dana Dima, Convener

Dog Walking

We have been meeting for a year now and have grown from strength to strength!!

We continue to meet on Tuesdays at 10.30 as a Group, but there are other times in the week when one or two of us meet up.

We are planning a day out to Rame Head Peninsula travelling by train and bus which will be a new experience for some of our dogs. We are looking in June but have not decided on a date yet.

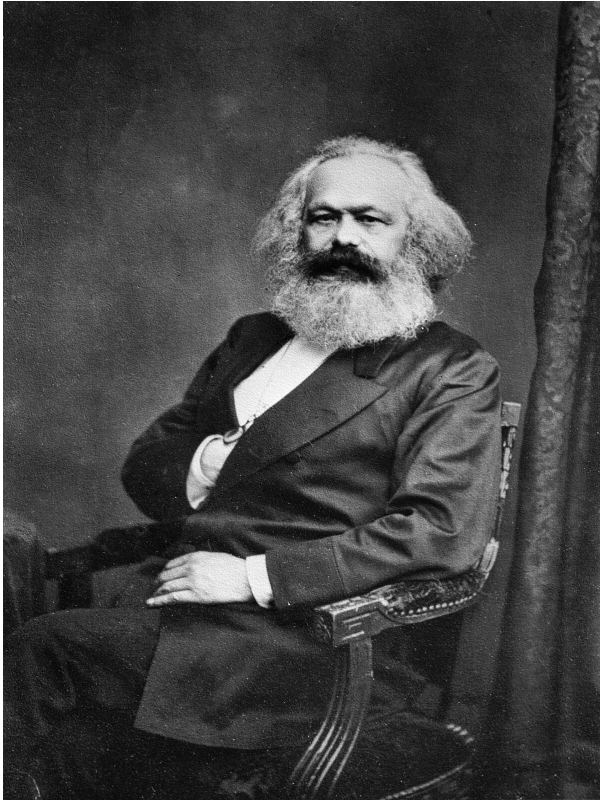
This month we met up with the newly formed Dog Walking Group from Teignmouth u3a. We have swapped contact details so that we sometimes share walks especially if numbers are low.

Dogs need to be walked whatever the weather and the walks can be as long or short to suit each dog and dog walker! Everyone is encouraged to suggest a walk. Contact enquiries if you wish to be added to the group.

Kate McCarthy

Great Lives

Karl Marx (1818-1883)



Eleven of us met on Friday March 22 when Chris gave a fascinating look at the life of Karl Marx. Marx was born in Trier in West Germany to a wealthy Jewish family who had converted to Catholicism before his birth.

Marx studied Law, to fulfil his father's wishes, and later received a doctorate in Philosophy. He was influenced by the philosopher Georg Hegel. After a short spell as the editor of a liberal newspaper in Cologne, Marx and his wife Jenny moved to Paris which was at the time a hotbed of radical thought. It was here he met Friedrich Engels. He then spent 2 years in Brussels where, with Engels, he wrote the pamphlet, "The Communist Manifesto", published in 1848. Having been expelled from the various countries where he was seen by the

authorities as an agitator and troublemaker, in 1849 the family moved to London where he spent the rest of his life. They lived in poverty but were supported by Engels who came from a wealthy background. There they formulated their most important work, "Das Kapital". After Karl Marx' death in 1883 Engels carried on his work.

Karl Marx analyzed the impact of the ruling class on the labourer and the uneven distribution of wealth and privilege in society. His mission was that the working class would question the injustices forced upon them through wages, lifestyle and oppression, rise up and ultimately achieve victory.

Although of course best known for his politics, Chris also gave us an insight into a romantic man who wrote poetry and was devoted to his wife and family. He had seven children but partly due to their poverty, only three daughters survived beyond childhood. Sadly one of the daughters died from cancer aged 39 and the other two committed suicide. Marx' wife Jenny died in 1881 and Karl Marx in 1883, having suffered poor health for some time. He was buried in Highgate Cemetery but there are memorials to him – sometimes with Friedrich Engels, in many cities around the world.

We next meet on Friday 26 April when George will tell us about Bertha Benz, Automotive Pioneer and wife and business partner of Karl Benz. We shall now be using a larger room in the Manor House and would welcome a few new members to our group.

In Our Own Write

There were four of us at last Monday's meeting and the topic we covered was Decisions.

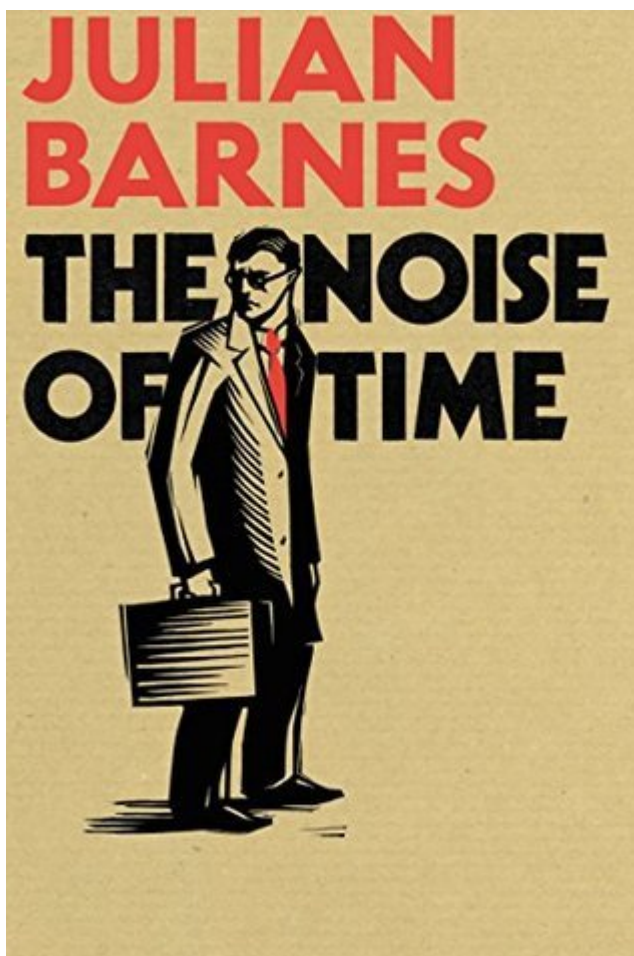
Again the stories were varied with a man deciding to rescue an animal caught in a gin trap and one about an old man who was placed in a nursing home following his wife's death and he struggled to make simple decisions as she had always made them for him. Next was the woman trying to reach an important decision who kept being interrupted and then the last piece was about how from cradle to grave our lives are constantly about making decisions.

Our next meeting will be on the 8th April and the topic will be "The bucket list"

Travina White

Literature

The Noise of Time by Julian Barnes



This is a fictionalised biography of Dmitry Shostakovich and his struggle to continue to compose under Stalin's totalitarian regime. The book is divided into three particularly significant times in his life beginning in 1938.

Shostakovich's opera, "Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District" has been derided by Stalin and condemned in the state run newspapers as "A Muddle instead of Music" and 'fidgety and neurotic'. Stalin's control extends to all the arts and music has to be jingoistic and bombastic, appealing to the masses. No work that might be considered elite or avant-garde is permissible.

Shostakovich expects to be, as many others before him, arrested, interrogated, tortured and sent to a gulag to die. Rather than being dragged out of bed, possibly with his wife and child, he waits night after night, small suitcase packed, by the lift door outside his apartment.

Oppression, Shostakovich does manage to privately compose his late string quartets.

The title "The Noise of Time" is taken from the works of poet and essayist Osip Mandelstam, an outspoken critic of Stalin who died in imprisonment after the Great Purge.

Some of our group were not very familiar with Shostakovich's music and this well researched book required some background reading. This was not a light, easy bedtime read but most of us found it a compelling study of art versus totalitarianism. He survives by toeing the party line, but attempts to introduce irony into his music for discerning listeners.

In the second part, Shostakovich is sent on a propaganda tour of the United States

where he is forced to denounce not only his own early work but also the music of Stravinsky, who he greatly admires. Although he presents his speech in a monotone hoping to indicate that he is not expressing his own opinions, he is publicly humiliated by Nicholas Nabokov. His supporters in the West cannot imagine the duress he is under to pander to his government or the danger to his family were he to defect.

Even after Stalin's death he is not free and is forced to become a Party Member and Chairman of the Russian Federation of Composers.

Although he is worn down by constant fear, how can someone create a masterpiece with a gun at their head?

We liked the structure of the book but would have appreciated more about Shostakovich's private life, his loves and his family.

This is a very quotable novel with interesting insights into the nature of heroism and, supposed, cowardice.

" Art no more belongs to the people and the party than it once belonged to the aristocracy and the patron"

The book was not to everyone's liking, but the majority of us gave it 4/5 and many thanks to our hosts for playing Shostakovich's music whilst we had our discussion.

Lunch Club

Tradewinds restaurant serve Greek and British cuisine in Teignmouth. It is close to

the Teignmouth Rail Station. Thirty members came for lunch here.

For the main course, we indulged in an array of mouthwatering options from succulent chicken souvlaki, lamb kleftiko and tender vegetarian moussaka, pastitsio greek lasagne and beef moussaka to perfectly grilled fillet of sea bass with skewer of tiger prawns.



There were meze dishes like tender pork belly ribs, greek loukaniko (sausage), grilled halloumi and oregano, and a selection of homemade dips. These meze dishes were served in smaller portions.



The Service at Tradewinds Restaurant was impeccable with attentive staff who are passionate to share their love for Greek cuisine. Nick the manager socialised and if given a chance he would break out in a dance. Nick was friendly and jovial.

welcomed and well-cared-for throughout our visit.



Regular lunch members got to know new members who came for the first-time. Whether we are seasoned aficionados or a first-time explorer of Greek flavours, we felt

Thank you everyone for supporting Dawlish & District u3a luncheon club.

Future lunches:

April lunch - AWAY

June lunch - AWAY

May 22nd 2024 - Powderham Bistro, 12.30 pm

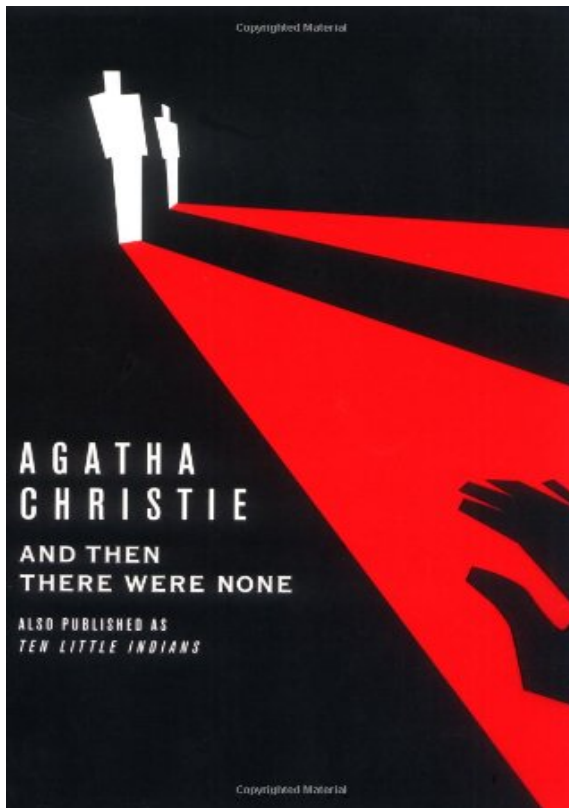
Most of you have received an email from Kate McCarthy.

I will see you all for lunch on July 26th 2024 at The Mix in Dawlish, 12.30 pm - 2.30 pm.

Khim Sim Tan-Mephram Convenor

Page Turners

In February the Page Turners read 'And Then There Were None' by Agatha Christie.



This was published in 1939 and tells the mysterious story of ten people marooned on an island off the Devon coast and gradually dying one by one in accordance with the fates described in the text of the nursery rhyme hanging on their bedroom walls. It is Christie's best-selling novel, with more than 100 million copies sold.

Although some of us were familiar with the book and had even seen the stage play (with the alternative ending that Christie developed for the stage in 1943), others had not read anything by this author before and thoroughly enjoyed this new venture - although one was disappointed after waiting in vain for Poirot to appear!

Some of us found the opening of the book to be difficult as so many characters were introduced and we struggled to remember

their names and back stories. However, others felt it was pacy and lucid and enjoyed the depictions of the people and location.

Christie said that she was pleased with the craftsmanship of the book which she felt to be clear, straightforward, baffling, and yet had a perfectly reasonable explanation.

Most of us enjoyed the epilogue which explained the story, with one even going back to re-read and search for clues in the light of that knowledge, but at least one would perhaps have preferred to be left wondering.

Our discussion was wide-ranging, encompassing subjects such as the way of life of these people at the time the book was set, the difference between murder and manslaughter, the nature of our judicial system and the concept of people sitting in judgment of each other. In addition, this book was originally published under a title including an offensive word and this led us to a discussion of this matter and in particular the recent re-classification of the film 'Mary Poppins' due to offensive language.

On the whole we were pleased to have read this book and recommend it to you if you are not already a fan of Agatha Christie. Some of us have bought a copy of the book so do get in touch if you would like to swap our page turner for one of your own.

Deborah Wallis - convenor

Quiz Group

It is interesting to analyse the scores of each quiz evening and to realise what the members have a bent for and also what they don't really follow. In March the strengths were shown as Stars and What's bigger. However the teams do not seem to be up to

speed as to where sports teams play or where airlines are based.

The first quiz was overall a high scoring one with just 3 points separating the top 3. The themes were Street Foods, Bens, Stars, Elements by symbol, General Knowledge and Where do they play.

Would you have known that...?

Chilli Crab originated in Singapore

The 1st Earl of Beaconsfield was better known as Benjamin Disraeli

Romeo and Juliet were star crossed lovers

HG is the symbol for Mercury

St Jude or St Rita is the patron saint of lost causes

The football team Feyenoord plays in Rotterdam

Our second quiz tackled the subjects of Where are they based?, Ireland, That's great, Where did it happen?, What's bigger? and the regular General Knowledge round. Here's a taster from each round and how many of the five do you know the answers to..?

Where is the airline TAP based?

What is the best selling Irish whiskey?

In which film does Dr Brown say 'Great Scott?'

Where in 1836 did the Battle of the Alamo take place?

What's the biggest... the heaviest human or the heaviest pumpkin ever?

What is the highest grade of Olive Oil?

The second quiz was a tight run race, with again only 3 points separating the top teams. There were also two maximum scores in one of the rounds.

April showers may be awaiting us but also the u3a zoom quizzes, on Mondays 15th and the 29th.

Graham Carey

Strollers Social Walking Group

Alas, the weather has been showery for our last two monthly Dawlish & District Strollers walks so we're very hopeful it'll be sunshine and blue skies for our next walk on Thursday April 11th.

We are planning a level walk from near B&Q at Newton Abbot to Locksbridge tearooms ...this route is part of the Templar Way ie Haytor on Dartmoor to Shaldon & Teignmouth

From Dawlish catch the number 2 Newton Abbot bus at 1 pm or the same bus from Teignmouth at 1.15pm ...buses back home from NA are twice hourly



Our leader Jean, opting only for light drizzle from time to time on this occasion (unlike the downpour last month, such poor planning) took us across the bridge to

Shaldon, and along the edge of the Teign estuary before walking up Ringmore Road to St Nicholas church. Most of us hadn't been here before, it's a lovely little church and we were lucky enough to find it open as well.

We then walked on up to the botanical gardens, not at their best at this time of year but always pleasant to walk through. Back down to the beach and we found to our astonishment that the ferry was not only running, but was apparently waiting for us on the beach. Refreshments in Teignmouth ended our afternoon's excursion.

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.



The Theatre Group now meets here too. 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.

We are going to see Hound of the Baskervilles Friday 29th March.



This performance is now fully booked.

Further ahead we have each purchased tickets to

see The Haunting at Pavilions on Saturday 6th April and Cider with Rosie at the Shaftesbury on Saturday 27th April.

Other news

u3a Online EventsI would like to draw your attention to an impressive programme of online events organised by u3a groups around the country but accessible to us all. If you follow this link [u3a - Online Learning Events](#) you will find information about events including using AI Chatbots, Anna Karenina, the hunt for the source of cholera in Victorian London, Mindfulness and Meditation, the Brain and Behaviour, Cryptic Crosswords, Milestones in Aviation, cookery demonstrations, Bollywood Laughter Yoga Dance, the Sonnets of Gerard Manley Hopkins and more. There is surely something for almost everyone in the month ahead, and there will be more to choose from in months to come.

These are surely well worth a try – and they are all FREE!

If there are any which members recommend, why not let me or the Editor know, and we can tell everyone about it so they can try for themselves.

John Vick

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.