

Newsletter

From the Chair

I hope members will forgive me for returning to one of my themes in last month's newsletter!

I wrote about the need for some volunteers to help in the running of our u3a. As the AGM approaches in September, every year, the Chair asks for members to join the committee and to take on roles, including becoming a convener, to help run our organisation.

As you will be aware, we are very fortunate that in the past couple of years we have had some excellent new members joining the committee who are really making a difference.

However, as is inevitable in any voluntary group, some very valuable committee members have indicated that they wish to step down in September, and so this leaves the pressing challenge of finding replacements.

I continue to be optimistic about the future of our u3a, but we must also be realistic. Unless some volunteers step forward, we are approaching a position where the future of Dawlish & District u3a will be at risk. We must all understand that if we want our u3a to flourish, we cannot ask the same people to take the strain, year after year.

So, I ask all of you to consider how you can help to run our affairs. While there is 'work' to be done, it really is not too arduous if the roles are shared around properly and we all support each other.

If you would like to know how you can get more involved, please speak to any member of the committee, or contact me directly via

enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info.

Living



Laughing



Learning

Facebook



It is good to know that our new Dawlish & District u3a Facebook page is attracting a lot of visits. Charlotte May is doing a great job with this, and her work is appreciated.

So too are the contributions from members and convenors who are sending material to include. Photos are particularly welcome from convenors as these are what really attract attention. Interesting locations are particularly eye-catching and Charlotte would be happy to receive these photos from convenors of groups.

Monthly meeting report

An Audience with the Lady Katherine

At our July meeting, members were privileged to be granted an audience with Lady Katherine. She made her impressive entrance in the attire befitting a lady with connections to some of the most distinguished families of Devon and the English court. Lady Katherine introduced herself to us, speaking in the elegant language of 16th century England.

She then adopted her alter ego, Rosemary Griggs, a one-time civil servant who is now immersed in her two major interests, history and dress making. These interests had always been part of her life but once she became a volunteer at the Devon National Trust property, Castle Compton, she was able to take these on to a completely different level.

Supported by the National Trust she began to research the lives of Devon women in the 16th century, and to talk to visitors and to take on their personas by making and wearing their clothing. Her initial focus was on the life of Lady Katherine Champernowne who was, quite remarkably, the mother of Sir Humphrey Gilbert from her first marriage and Sir Walter Raleigh by her second marriage. To say that she was at the centre of Devon's maritime history would be an understatement but as is so often the case with women of this and many other eras, little is known of her life. Rosemary Griggs is putting this to rights and giving us an insight into just how significant Katherine was and how her life deserves to be properly known and understood.

Most of Rosemary's talk focused on the design and making of the clothes worn by women at that time. She described the making of the garments as more akin to engineering than dress making. While some original items of clothing have survived, other evidence comes from less obvious sources such as wills and inventories. The fact that so much is included in wills indicates just how valuable these clothes were and important to their wearers. Rosemary explained that these fabrics were often very expensive, as were the dyes which were used. Clothing was not just a matter of fashion and personal preference: what people wore was

severely constrained by 'sumptuary laws' which dictated what different types of people could – and could not – wear. These were often intended to protect specific trades, such as the

Devon woollen cloth industry. The laws were also intended to control society. Certain fabrics and dyes could only be worn by those in specific classes of society: they determined status. If we see people wearing black in a portrait, we should understand that black dyes were extremely expensive and to wear them was a sign of high status. There were significant punishments for those who broke these laws.



The design of Lady Katherine's dress was explored in detail. We learned about the 'busk', the origins of the design and term 'bodice', the 'farthingale' and even the 'bum roll'. For those who want to learn more about these (and the writer of this article is ill-qualified to attempt to cover this ground!), Rosemary Griggs' own website has links to videos where she shows how she makes these clothes and how they are designed. <https://rosemarygriggs.co.uk/>

Rosemary's research has led to the publication of a number of novels, including *A Woman of Noble Wit* about Katherine, and other notable Devon women in *The Dartington Bride* and *Dartington Hall*. They are all securely based on the historical evidence and Rosemary's impressive archival research. There are more to come!

John Vick

A Day at the Races - update

I am looking forward to my Day at the Races on 9th September, and I know some other Dawlish members will also be travelling to Newton Abbot to try their luck at beating the bookies.

I have spoken to Dee McVey from Okehampton who has organised this special entry price of £10 for u3a members, and she says there has been a lot of



interest from all over the SW region. There is no limit on places, but you need to buy your tickets by 25th August. Details are in last month's newsletter.

BBQ at Coombe Gardens - 3rd September

Dee McVey is clearly a busy and enterprising person and is doing great work in encouraging u3a members across the region to get together to have fun. The BBQ I wrote about last month for 13th August has been oversubscribed already, so she has organised another one on 3rd September at Coombe Gardens.

This lost garden, by a beautiful Dartmoor stream, was overgrown and neglected. Since 2016 its mature magnolias, camellias, azaleas and other trees have been rescued. Paths and ponds have been cleared, archaeology preserved, borders created, bridges and terraces repaired and over 15,000 bulbs planted. The meadows contain wild daffodils and bluebells,

The price is only £15 per person to include the following:

A tour of the Gardens for those who would like to arrive by 12.30pm



BBQ from 2pm with smoked brisket, pork spare ribs, burgers, chicken legs, sausages and vegetables...plus Michael's homemade cider.

Tea or coffee and cake.

If you would like to attend, please email Dee on chair@okehampton-u3a.org.uk or phone her on 01837 658590. The maximum number of places is 40 and the last I heard, 11 had already gone!

John Vick

NB

Christmas Lunch 15th December at the Langstone Cliff Hotel - £31 per person

Deposits to be paid by **August 5th**.

Details can be found on the website.

<https://u3a.dawlish.info/lunch-club-christmas-lunch-2025>

Interest Group news

Adventure Group

In July several members took part in an interesting tour of the roof void and both the North and South towers of Exeter Cathedral.



The views from there were wonderful with Exeter laid out before us.

The 150 steps or so to climb up were steep, narrow and very uneven but safely navigated by all.

We were given a fascinating insight of not only the history of the building but also the difficulties of combining new technology, fire regulations and old buildings.

An excellent and very informative visit which everyone enjoyed.

Art Appreciation

For the July meeting, Lynne gave a presentation on the Austrian artist, Friedensreich Hundertwasser.

Lynne said she had first seen and enjoyed work by Hundertwasser when she was in Vienna on an art tour as a student. Her interest was rekindled while on holiday in New Zealand earlier this year, when she visited Whangārei where there is an arts centre designed by Hundertwasser and dedicated to his art.

Hundertwasser had a fascinating life. Born in Austria in 1928 to a Jewish mother, his early years were overshadowed by Nazi policies of persecution.

After the war, he pursued his talent as an artist but largely without formal study at art school. His interest in the early 20th century artist Egon Schiele is apparent in his work in the 1940s but he soon found his own style which is characterised by vivid use of colour (especially greens), and his interest in nature and buildings. He often worked in some unconventional materials, such as using wrapping paper and found materials as backgrounds.

Initially this was due to lack of money, but later it was his preference. His paintings frequently include spirals, and references to architectural features such as windows which

were often represented as a shape which might easily be mistaken for a hot water bottle!

Lynne said she would not try to offer interpretations of the pictures she showed; she would just ask everyone to make a personal response to what they saw. Hundertwasser did offer some explanations for his work, but he was of the opinion that the artist's intentions were of secondary importance to the response of the viewer.

She personally enjoyed his use of vibrant colour, of sinuous lines, recurring themes, frequently displaying a zest for life and nature.

In the early 1950s, he entered the field of architecture and also worked in applied art, creating flags, stamps, coins, and posters. He travelled widely, often sailing in his boat Regentag. His travels and work took him to Japan, New Zealand, many parts of Europe, the USA and elsewhere.



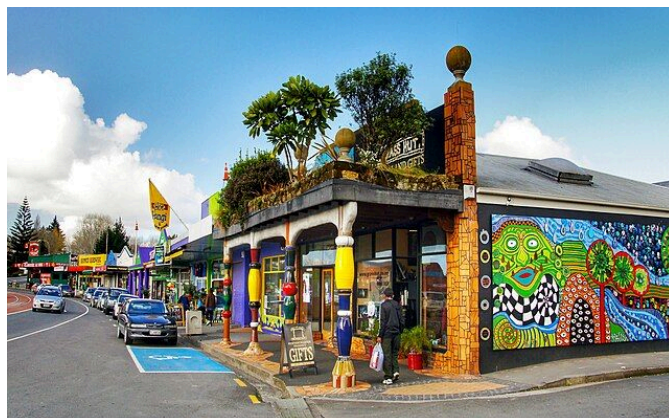
Much of his work focused on his mission to improve the built environment in which people live. He strongly disliked the 'modernist' style of architecture which was

much in vogue in the post war world. Instead, he wanted people to build their own homes, or to decorate and adapt their homes inside and out.

He liked to include plants and trees in the structure of his buildings, bringing the natural world into everyone's lives. Amongst his projects are 'redesigns' of stark steel, glass and concrete buildings to make them colourful and joyful parts of the townscape which are enjoyable to live and work in.

One of the most famous buildings on the tourist route in New Zealand is a public lavatory!

Hundtwasser toilets.



He was an outspoken activist on environmental issues, designing posters for campaigns to save the whales, address the problem of acid rain, and conservation of water to name but a few.

Composting toilets, water purification by plants, green roofs and electricity generated by solar panels and water power were features of his own house in New Zealand.

After his death in 2000, he was buried in accordance with his wishes which he had expressed in his painting of 1953 "The Garden of the Happy Dead."

It was to be interred without a coffin and with a tree planted over him, so that he would give back to nature some of what he had taken during his life

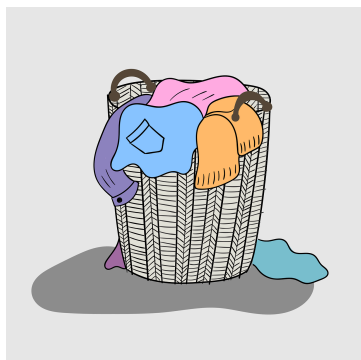
French Conversation

We met twice this month. Our first topic was Which household chore do you most dislike? I don't think any of us care much for cleaning, etc.

For one person, it depends on their mood and energy level. They might suddenly clean something without having planned it..

All of a sudden something will get done!

We all dislike cleaning the oven and the fridge as well as defrosting the freezer and don't like stripping the beds and remaking them. Yet we like a clean house!



And sometimes it's nice hanging out the washing in the sunshine though nowadays many people just use the tumble dryer.

Diane used to run a chamber d'hôte in France and that required a lot of bed changing and cooking!

And some of us like gardening .

June then told us about her special birthday party which was in London and organised by her son. It was a wonderful party with surprise family guests who'd travelled to see her.

Five of us met for the second meeting of the month.

We read a French news article about a trend this year for marking the July 14th

celebrations with drone light displays rather than traditional fireworks.

This is due to concerns about the risk of fire, and also the emissions of gases and particles from fireworks which contribute to climate change and are damaging to health. Whilst they lack the excitement of the bangs and booms of fireworks, drone displays can be equally spectacular and have the potential for more varied and creative visual motifs.

The disadvantage, however, is the cost. A drone display costs on average 100,000 euros compared to 3000 to 30,000 euros for a traditional fireworks display. Our group favoured the idea of drones, feeling that in time the cost would probably come down as drone manufacture becomes cheaper, and as more people acquire the skills to create displays so that there is more competition in the market.

Nonetheless, there was concern that such huge sums of money were being spent for amusement when so many people are living in poverty. Are we being kill-joys?!



The article also evoked memories of our childhood Bonfire Night celebrations, usually in the back garden, and we discussed how these customs have changed over the years in favour of safer, organised public displays.

On a different subject, one member shared her impressions of Lanzarote, having

returned from a short holiday there. This prompted a discussion about the difficulties of surviving and cultivating the land in such an arid climate.

Bridie and team

In Our Own Write

This month's topic of discussion was "The Red Shoes".

There were only three participants and one story was about a prostitute whose red shoes reminded her of her childhood and hoped to lead a better life; another discussed the film The Red Shoes and the final one how jealousy between two sisters resulted in a sad outcome.

Our next meeting is on the **11th August** and the topic will be "Lost and Found".

Travina White

Literature

The Siege by Ben Macintyre

This is an in-depth, extensively researched account of the six day siege at the Iranian embassy in 1980. It is a non-fiction work which outlines the historical background of troubles in the Middle East between minority Arabs and the Iranian rulers and the conflict between Iran and Iraq.

Six heavily armed gunmen burst into the embassy taking twenty-six men and women hostage. They demand that ninety-one Arab political prisoners be released from a notorious jail, flown to London and from there to another unnamed destination within

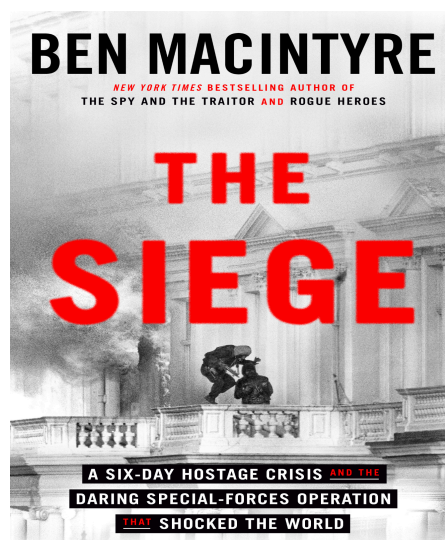
twenty-four hours. They also state the cause they represent.

The British Government is neither willing nor able to comply with this but they do not, as requested, relay the contents of the letter. This results in a lack of understanding by the press and the British public regarding the grievances of the hostage takers and adds to the escalation of tensions.

The gunmen, never referred to as terrorists, have been cynically manipulated by the organisers of this action in order to wreak havoc for their own political agenda. They must have been completely indifferent to the

inevitable bloodshed and loss of life that ends any hostage taking situation.

From here on, the book is like reading a



page-turning thriller but there is more to it than a gung-ho tale of derring-do.

Ben Macintyre is very adept at bringing the individual characters to life and we particularly admired the way he can encapsulate a person in a few short words. We got to know all the people involved, to understand them and, particularly in the case of those held hostage, to care about what happens to them.

The trauma and stresses of being held captive at gunpoint are not downplayed and

some of them never fully recovered from their ordeal.

In spite of this, great courage and resourcefulness is shown, for example, a policeman manages to hide his handgun under his coat and a journalist keeps a written account.

Meanwhile, the police and army are gathering outside and a negotiator is trying to reason with the gunmen whilst listening devices are being drilled through the walls.

Communications break down and the waiting SAS storm the building live on television, interrupting the snooker but not Coronation Street. It was watched by almost everyone except the government ministers at the Cobra meeting who didn't have the set switched on.

The occasional dry humour in the book was most welcome and it was suggested that more would have been appreciated.

The SAS had ordered plasticuffs, presumably cable ties, and received, incongruously, a box of plastic cups.

The book includes photographs which helped to put a human face on the people we read about and they entrusted Ben Macintyre with their stories, exposing themselves at their most vulnerable and terrified as well as at their bravest.

The siege ended with five of the six gunmen shot, one hostage shot dead by the gunmen and two injured in the crossfire.

The book is well-written and gripping, but also insightful and compassionate.

We were left wondering if things could have been resolved without loss of life, though it also could have been worse.

This was a bit of a departure from our usual reading for some of us but well worth it and most of the group gave it 4/5.

Lunch Club

We were unfortunate not to get to Forest Fungi for our July lunch due to road closures for the Dawlish Grand Prix bike event.

Two members to Forest Fungi on 29th July 2025.

The food was delicious with a wide selection of breakfast dishes on the menu. The gourmet mushrooms were an interesting mixture of the mushrooms that forest fungi grow and sell.



There is a tour available for those interested in seeing how the mushrooms are cultivated.

The cafe inside is spotlessly clean, spacious and airy with large house plants and a view at one end. There is sufficient room for a wheelchair into the cafe. You can also view some of the mushrooms being grown there through a window. The service was

welcoming and the food arrived promptly. It was delicious and well presented.

Seats are also available outside. They are currently cooking barbequed food on certain evenings. You can find this information and menus on their website.

July 29th 2025 two members went to River Exe cafe.

It is an unusual setup with everything organised with military precision. We had to be at Exmouth Quay by 12 o'clock or we would forfeit our lunch. Two water taxis then transported the diners out to the pontoon with the restaurant which sits a stone's throw off Starcross pier (which is a bit frustrating). We were held in the boats for 5-10 minutes until the restaurant was ready for us.

After that it was pure joy. The service was excellent and the food cooked to a very high standard. It specialises in fish dishes, although not exclusively, and we can thoroughly recommend cod loin.

All too soon we were told that our water taxis had arrived with a fresh consignment of diners and we needed to leave. We were lucky with the warm sunny weather but what a fantastic setting.

August 1st 2025 Forest Fungi (Full)
August 29th 2025 Tradewinds (2 seats left)
November 2025 TBA

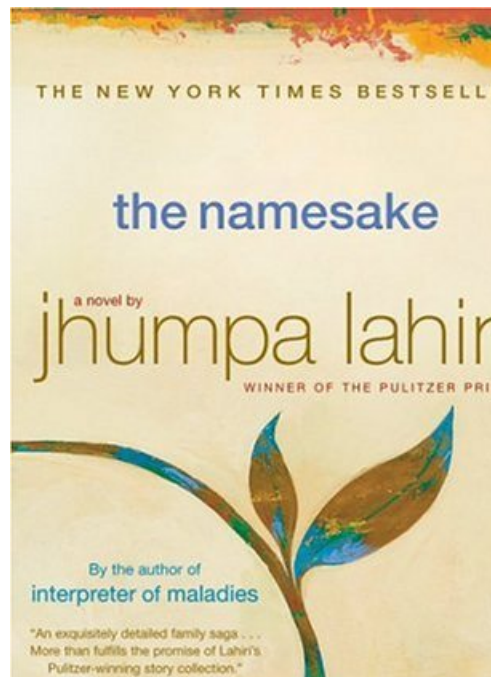
December 15th 2025 Christmas lunch
Monday Langstone Cliff Hotel

Just to say I have to return to Singapore to look after my elderly mum so no lunches for September and October 2025.

Khim Sim Tam

Page Turners

In June the Page Turners read 'The Namesake' by Jhumpa Lahiri.



This debut novel was published in 2003. In the book a Bengali couple settled in America in 1968, shortly after their arranged marriage. The main

protagonist of the book is their son Gogol and we follow the story of his education, early relationships and eventual marriage. Throughout the book we explore the differences between the Bengali and American cultures and learn about how the different family members respond to these differences.

We admired the mother who left behind her family to follow a husband she barely knew and made a successful life in a new country, while always remaining committed to the traditions and values of her childhood.

Gogol demonstrates an increasing desire to distance himself from his parents' lifestyle and to embrace the American way of life. He is also challenged by his name which derives not from the Bengali culture, but from his father's favourite Russian author. He resents the strangeness of his name and changes it

legally long before he comes to understand the significance of it.

We were all captivated by this book. We enjoyed the beautifully descriptive writing which gave the story a wonderful sense of place. We were very interested in how the family retained their Bengali identity while also being part of the community in which they lived and worked but we recognised that this was a story of a well-educated and fairly well-to-do family and may not necessarily reflect the experience of many immigrant families.

We particularly enjoyed discussing whether the book would make a good film - and then discovered that it had already been done! We also discussed how our name might affect our sense of self and some of us gave reasons why we had chosen to be called by something other than our given name.

Finally, we wondered what would happen to Gogol next - by the end of the book this confused young man was gaining an understanding of his heritage and we hoped this would lead to him coming to terms with who he was and finding happiness.

We recommend this book to you. Some of us have copies to share so do get in touch if you would like to swap our page turner for one of your own.

Deborah

Quiz Group

Our two quizzes in July covered the following subject matters....

General Knowledge x 2, Collectors, Religious celebrations, Turkeys, Computing, Carols, Summer, Bushes, Elephants, Arthurs and General History.

Plenty to choose the joker round but unfortunately not many played it in the right round. Never mind, a lot of info was tabled such as..

Aurora, Chandler, Legacy and Reka are all varieties of blueberries

A vexillologist collects flags

The festival of colours, love and Spring known as Holi is a Hindu celebration



John Lennon wrote the song 'Cold Turkey' in 1969

The acronym JPG stands for Joint Photographic Group

Carol Thatcher, the daughter of Margaret is 71

Aestas was the Roman goddess of Summer

Aspirin was originally derived from the bark of the Willow tree

Melanie (Mel) Bush is a fictional character from the Dr Who TV series

The beer brand CHANG is also the Thai word for Elephant

Paul 'Bonehead' Arthurs was a founding member of the rock band Oasis

Anne of Cleves had the shortest reign of Henry 8th's wives

I wonder how many you knew?

In the first quiz, Carols came out on top whereas the Collectors round was bottom of the pile.

As for the second quiz, the best result, due to the joker played, was Summertime and struggling to get points was the General Knowledge subject.

We hope to continue meeting in August and the scheduled dates are **Mondays the 4th and 25th.**

Graham Carey

Scrabble

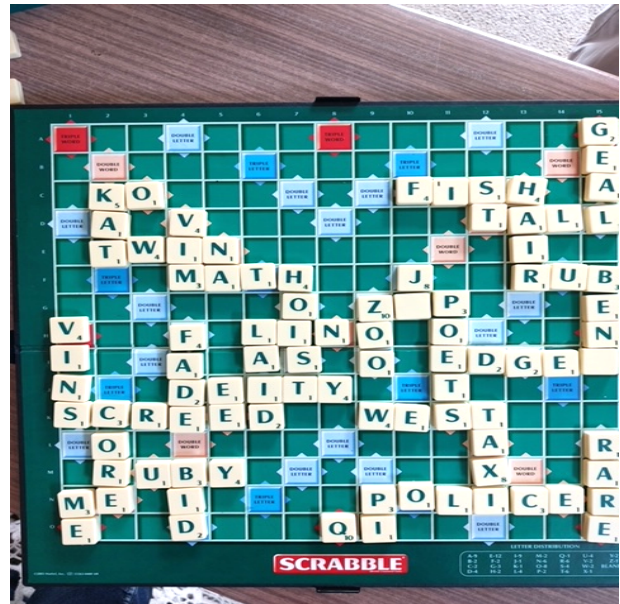
This month two new members joined our merry group, raising the total to seven participants and certainly enlivening the conversation as introductions were made. We split into four and three person games.

Having picked up the letter Z with my first letters I felt that the word Zoo would put me into an unassailable lead, only to be trumped by a first score of 34 and then it was just catching up. Towards the end of the game there was hesitancy about adding an R to make the word POLICER. I took a chance to be able to utilise the triple letter score and it went unchallenged (it is a legitimate word) and finished not so far behind in second place.

A tea break was taken and players switched games to bring the afternoon to a conclusion. I still haven't won a game yet, but I live in hope that one day the right combination of letters and opportunity will

come my way, and then everyone will know about it.

Our next meeting is on **Monday August 25th** (bank holiday), and should anybody find themselves at a loose end, please come and join us.



George Mansfield

Strollers Social Walking Group

There were just four walkers on our last Dawlish & District u3a Strollers walk in July (though we did receive a few apologies as usual).

The weather was hot and sunny so we did our best to mostly walk in the shade. We walked down Eastcliff via the community orchard, walled garden and the Dell where we stopped to chat with Jacqui B, one of the gardening volunteers.

Once on Teignmouth seafront, we decided the weather was too hot to venture further along the seafront and Back Beach area, so instead we enjoyed cool, restorative drinks at the Kings Arms pub in French Street.



Our next Dawlish & District u3a Strollers walk is on **Thursday August 14th**; a walk chosen by one of our regular Strollers.

We are catching the number 2 Exeter bus from Teignmouth at 1.09pm or Dawlish at 1.25pm.

We'll get off the bus at the far end of Starcross then walk along the coast road by the railway line to Powderham Church. From there we follow the footpath to our refreshment stop at the Turf Lock pub alongside the Exeter Canal.

Afterwards we'll be walking through the RSPB reserve to catch our bus home from the stop near the Swans Nest pub at Exminster.

NB new Dawlish & District u3a members are always welcome to join us on our monthly walks.

Jean Gitsham, convenor

Other news:

Dawlish and District U3A **Notice of Annual General Meeting, Monday 15th September 2025**

We are pleased to give advance notice that our Annual General Meeting this year will be held in the Council Chamber at the Manor House, Old Town Street, Dawlish EX7 9AP starting at 2.45 p m (entry from 2.30 p m). Please note the date in your diary and be aware of the venue.

The AGM will give a report from the Committee on the past year and a Treasurer's report and accounts for twelve months ending 31st March 2025; receive any resolutions proposed and carry out the election of Officers and Committee members.

Timetable

- Closing date for nominations for committee members and for any motions for consideration at the AGM – 21st August 2025.
- Formal notice of the AGM with agenda, details of voting arrangements, accounts for 2023/24 to be sent out by 25th August 2025

For more information and nomination forms follow the link below and scroll down to the reports.

<https://u3a.dawlish.info/newsletters-and-reports>

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.