
From the Chair

Annual General Meeting

That so many members came to our AGM in September is a very good indicator of the health and wellbeing of the organisation. In truth, these are rarely the most exciting of events, but they are important in ensuring that members are well-informed about what is happening, and ensuring that their views are understood by the committee.

For the year ahead, members approved some changes on the committee with a pleasing influx of new members while thanking others for their years of service. Kate McCarthy has left the committee and stepped down from her role as Membership Secretary, but I am pleased she will continue to act as Beacon Administrator. Michael Heyden has been an immensely valuable servant of our u3a, as Treasurer for some years and more recently as Secretary. I will miss both of them for their hard work, excellent advice and good company. The good news is that they will both remain very active in many interest groups.

Succeeding Michael as Secretary is Bob Clark. As yet, we have yet to fill the post of Membership Secretary, but I expect that to be resolved before long. New committee member Kerry Good is immediately getting involved as our new Vice Chair. Also joining the committee are Deborah Wallis and Tom Reeves, while Charlotte May's valuable role as editor of our Facebook page is going to be enhanced by wider responsibility in leading our wider publicity efforts. All the other members of the committee are continuing, and the other roles remain as before.

I would also like to thank all members of the committee, and the membership as a whole for their support for me as Chair as I embark on my final year in the role. It is made so much easier when I have such a good team which ensures that we run our affairs well in the year ahead.

Living



Laughing



Learning

Monthly meeting report

Monthly Meeting, 20th October

As the AGM was the main item on our agenda for the September monthly meeting, there was no visiting speaker. I am pleased to say that on 20th October we will return to business as usual. We will welcome John Yeo who will be talking about 'Growing For Gold'. John is a fully qualified Horticulturist. He worked for Torbay Parks department for 35 years and retired early at 50 when they closed the Nurseries down. Since then, he has had the opportunity to work for the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) as their Floral Marquees Manager for four years, looking after all the exhibitors at all of the top shows.

John is a judge at the 'Gardeners World Show' at Birmingham's NEC and also a judge for 'South West in Bloom' but his ultimate aim is to become an RHS judge at their top shows such as Chelsea: "that for me would be the icing on the cake after exhibiting there and working there so a judge there would be the ultimate pinnacle of my horticultural life".

The many enthusiastic gardeners among our members will no doubt be very keen to hear what he has to say, but his talk will be of considerable interest to a wider audience as events such as the Chelsea Show are such high profile and loved events in our annual national calendar.

John Vick

2025 Dawlish & District u3a Christmas lunch 12.30 pm on Monday 15th December, Langstone Cliff Hotel



Khim Sim's message to all members who wish to go to the Christmas Lunch is that it is time to get pre orders sent to her as soon as possible. Please make sure that you state clearly what dietary requirements or restrictions you may have on your pre order list.

She says she has received a request for a non-dairy alternative dessert and is waiting for the chef to get back to her. If she does not get information about allergies and related matters, she will assume that you do not have dairy (milk) intolerance, egg intolerance, nut allergy, garlic or onion allergy, and that you do not require vegan, gluten free or vegetarian options.

All lunch pre-orders will be sent to the Langstone Cliff by 11th October. It will be difficult for her to correct your order after that date, and certainly not on 15th December.

Khim Sim advises that she may be slow at replying as she is in Singapore caring for her mother, so she asks members to please be patient. However, she is in good contact with the Langstone Cliff staff and with all members by email, so all should work well.

The Treasurer is starting to take final payments of £21 per head. As it will take George time to process cash or cheques into the account so that he can settle the final bill by 11th October, please do not wait till 11th October to make your payment.

Please help make 2025 Dawlish u3a Christmas lunch to be successful and enjoyable for all.

There are 13 Mondays to go before Christmas lunch!

Interest Group news

Adventure Group

Our small group of eight members met at the entrance to the caves to start our tour at 2:30pm. Our Guide, Mike, gave us a brief overview of the history of the caves and what we were about to see. We were also given our hard hats to protect us from low ceilings!



At the beginning of our tour, we were given a short history of the life of the caves in a small museum near the entrance to the caves.

In the museum was a large limestone window which had been carved at the quarry in 1492 and taken to St Andrews church in Colyton. The window was removed by the Victorians in 1900 when they renovated the

church. It was knocked out and left in the churchyard. It was found in 1984 and brought back to Beer Caves for restoration.

Mike went into the history of the caves which is a 2,000-year-old man-made limestone underground complex located about a mile west of the Village of Beer, and the main source in England for Beer Stone. This was in the period of the Romans up to the Victorian era.

Our Guide, Mike, was very knowledgeable and brought to life the experiences of what it was like to work underground with very little fresh air and light.

Quarry men worked long hours by candlelight with hand tools such as picks and saws. The quarrymen were also often supported by child labour.

Skilled stonemasons would then work on the stone in the quarries because it became harder to carve when exposed to the air. The stone blocks would then be lifted by hand-operated cranes and loaded onto horse-drawn wagons and taken to barges which would sail from Beer Beach.

The stone can be seen in many Cathedrals, especially Exeter, including Winchester and St Paul's Cathedrals, Westminster Abbey and the Tower of London.

After the Reformation, one of the uses of the quarries was as a place of refuge and of worship for Catholics facing persecution. In the 19th century, the quarries were also used

to store smuggled contraband and WW1 ammunition.

Beer Quarry Caves can now be hired out for music festivals and wedding and vow renewals.

Unfortunately we were too early to see the bats which have a home near where we exited!

Carolyn Hartley

Art Appreciation

There was no meeting in September as a number of members were unable to attend. Business will resume as usual when John will give a presentation on the 20th century sculptor and engraver Eric Gill whose life and work has caused considerable controversy in recent years. We will meet at 2pm on Tuesday 14th October in the Mayor's Parlour of the Manor House.

Lynne Vick, Convener

Boules



The boules group took advantage of a gap in the showers to play on the Lawn in September.



Discussion Group

The Discussion Group met on 17th September to explore an unusual topic, "Beauty". We argued whether beauty was conceptualised before the Romantic age and on whether our understanding of it was largely shaped by 19th century ideas.

Monuments created before that time were created for the glory of gods or to enhance status, whether they were designed on an exalted or a human scale.

We asked ourselves if other species perceived beauty in nature and agreed that humans were the ones who tried to impose shapes on the environment, probably because our brains are wired to codify and recognise predetermined proportions and outlines, such as the shape of a human baby's head, or patterns like the Fibonacci sequence and the golden rectangle, which govern natural arrangement.

We also touched on the perception of music and considered associations of sound and light which make some people see notes as colours or translate audio sequences into graphic images.

We also talked about fashion and how it reflects a more transient idea of beauty,

making our standards change at first with every generation and later with every season, yet fundamentally transitions from one accepted shape or combination to another. We did not have time to go into details regarding the visual arts or beauty in humans...

Our next meeting is scheduled for **October 22nd** and will be devoted to Free Speech.

As some of our members had to leave the group, we would welcome new people who like to chat about different topics.

Dana Dima, convener



Another had been to Longleat Safari Park, which was a great experience.

French Conversation

At our first meeting this month we listened to and translated a song.

A song to cheer up one of our group.

It's sung by Maurice Chevalier and called "Ma Pomme" which means "Yours Truly"

The song is about his happy life going to his bars and how laid back he is.

Quite a cheery song!

We spoke a little about our summer activities. One of the group went to the King William Dock development in Plymouth which has restaurants, shops, etc and saw the film "The Thursday Murder Club" which she found very entertaining.

And there was the Dawlish garden show where one of the group won a couple of prizes.

A few stayed home and had visitors taking them to local places of interest such as Shaldon zoo.

In Our Own Write

There were four of us meeting to present our version of "Should she (or he) go" and it was gratifying that Margaret, our newest member, hadn't been scared off by meeting us last month.

With the level of bloodthirsty writing displayed by certain members you really don't know what goes on in the minds of us innocent looking grey haired old ladies! It is certainly a shame that one of our members is too modest to enter a short story competition as her tale of a young lady in all likelihood about to meet a grisly death at the hands of a supposed benefactor was riveting.

We also had a young man who reluctantly went to Hollywood just as the Wall Street Crash happened and all work prospects dried up apart from the offer to assassinate an obnoxious individual. With the help of an out of work actress acting as a decoy he carried out the deed but was never caught.

Another was about a married woman fed up with her husband constantly traipsing mud

through the kitchen spontaneously taking an old flame up on the offer of meeting for lunch. She quickly realised that lunch was an ordeal never to be repeated and the solution to the problem of mud on her white kitchen floor was to simply replace it with brown and grey Lino.

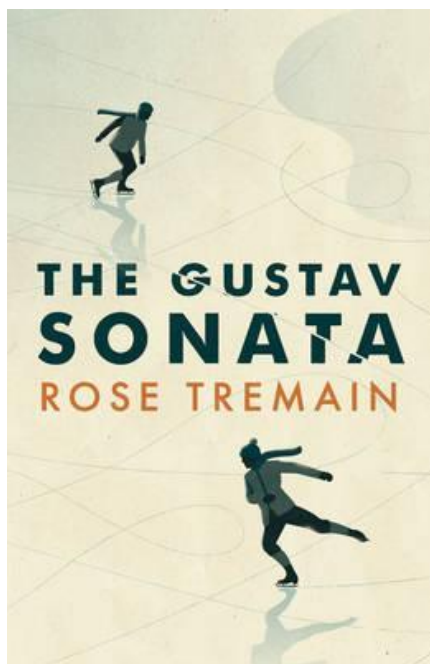
Lastly, an inheritance meant that after nine years of marriage and coercive behaviour a young woman finally had the courage and money to leave her husband and return to her native Canada.

Our next meeting is on the 13th October and the title is "Island".

Travina White

Literature

The Gustav Sonata by Rose Tremain



The book is set in a small Swiss town and is structured, like a sonata, in three parts covering the years between 1937 and 2002.

Gustav Perle, born in 1942, lives with his widowed

mother in poverty in a grim apartment. His mother, Emilie, is a depressed and embittered woman with a dislike and resentment of Jewish people which is linked to her husband's death in a way that is not yet made clear to the reader.

Gustav makes friends with a new boy at school. Anton Zwiebel, a Jewish boy, has escaped from Nazi Germany with his parents, Adriana and Armin, who has a well-paid job in a Swiss bank.

Gustav is invited to their home and included in treats and outings giving him pleasure that has been lacking in his life. They go skating on Sundays and it was distressing when this is stopped when Emilie organises extra tuition on that day and another boy takes his place.

Anton plays the piano well and his mother arranges for him to enter a competition in Berne, accompanied by Gustav. He is ill with stage fright at the prospect of playing in front of a large audience which is put down to nerves but it seems that Anton is not quite the prodigy that his mother thinks he is.

Gustav also goes on holiday with them to Davos and the boys play at nursing patients back to health at a derelict TB sanatorium. A kiss, disguised as a kiss of life, is shared. Davos often reappears in the book as a motif, symbolising healing through beauty, nature and fresh mountain air.

The second section of the novel takes the reader back to 1937 when Emilie met Erich, Assistant Police Chief, and their hasty marriage as a baby is expected.

Emilie is happy for the only time in her life with a handsome husband and a lovely apartment, but it doesn't last.

War is looming and Erich is overwhelmed at work with Jewish refugees trying to find safety as Switzerland closes its borders.

He takes out his frustration on Emilie, accusing her of having no interest in what is

happening and throws her across the kitchen. She loses the baby and, soon after, when Erich is discovered falsifying visas for Jewish refugees and sacked, also loses her home and their income.

She goes to stay with her mother in her wretched hovel for a while but their relationship is fraught so she returns, hoping to be able to forgive her husband.

Erich has begun a passionate affair with Lottie, his colleague's wife. She is warm, sensual and voluptuous, the opposite of his wife, but Emilie and Erich have Gustav only for Erich to die of a heart attack at Lottie's door.

Emilie blames Jewish people for all her ills including the stress that caused her husband's death.

The third part, somewhat startlingly we thought, skips to 1992.

Emilie is still alive but is soon to die.

Gustav now owns a hotel having had an unexpected inheritance from Emilie's mother. Where this money came from is not explained.

He enjoys running the hotel and providing a comfortable refuge for himself and his guests. He is particularly moved when a retired and recently widowed British colonel unburdens himself by telling Gustav that he is still haunted by being one of the first people to enter Belsen aged only nineteen.

He encourages Gustav to find out more about the father he never knew and, in doing so, meets Lottie and the two become friends until her death, even going to stay in Paris together.

Anton has found his vocation as an inspiring and much-loved music teacher but it is so instilled in him by his mother that he is an exceptionally talented musician that he allows himself to be taken by an impresario to produce records in Geneva.

They live together in a destructive relationship with Anton feeling enslaved and powerless. He has a breakdown and is admitted to a psychiatric hospital seemingly too unwell to be helped.

Gustav comes to his aid and Anton begs to be taken to Davos.

The hotel is sold and the two set up home in Davos, with Anton's mother.

He begins to recover and composes a sonata dedicated to Gustav.

Again, there were mixed reactions to the book. Those who read the book twice found that they appreciated it more on second reading.

Some of us were moved by the story but for others it was a bit flat, although they didn't mind the melancholy aspects of the book.

We discussed Swiss neutrality and thought that the characters mirrored the country's isolation, Emilie in particular showed the importance of connecting to others. Her life could have been so much better if she had not been so wrapped up in her own misery.

It was suggested that Gustav lacked love but he had a gift for making friends. Even his employees at the hotel were very fond of him.

Was the ending too happy and contrived or inevitable and welcome? The two seemed

distanced but kept in touch, though Anton could be thoughtless and selfish.

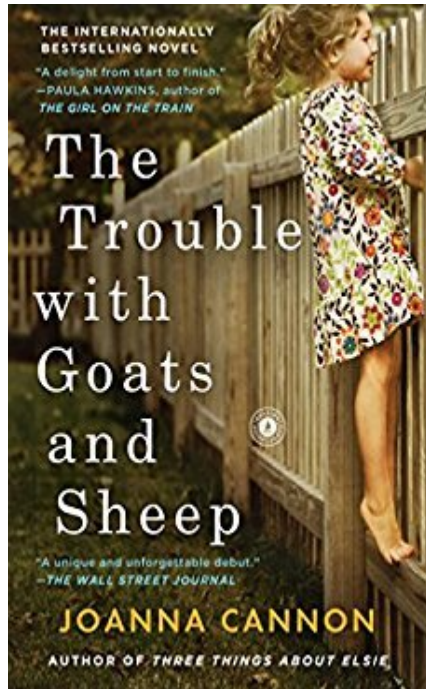
The war and the suffering of the Jews cast a shadow over the novel. Anton's parents carried great guilt about surviving the war in safety and comfort and the Swiss banks where his father worked were under investigation up until his death at the end of the book.

Erich was based on Paul Gruninger, a Swiss Police officer who was sacked, ostracised and died in poverty for helping around 3600 Jewish refugees by falsifying their documents.

3/5

Page Turners

In September the Page Turners read 'The Trouble with Goats and Sheep' by Joanna Cannon.



The book is set in the summer of 1976 when two young girls spend their summer holiday exploring the mysterious disappearance of one of their neighbours. They are inspired by a sermon they hear at church

where the Vicar explains the biblical distinction between 'goats' and 'sheep' and they believe that if they look for God, they

may find the truth about their neighbour. As the girls continue their enquiries, we learn that everyone in the cul-de-sac is harbouring long-held secrets and the trouble with goats and sheep is that you cannot always tell one from the other.

We enjoyed this book and particularly liked the way it evoked strong memories of the seventies. It is set in a community where everyone seemed to know each other's business and the children were safe to roam around the neighbour's homes. However we noted that in contrast to this apparent safety, things could be anything but safe for anyone that the residents turned against.

We thought the book was very well written. We enjoyed the humour and the beautiful imagery. We were less enthusiastic about the plot than the writing although some of us liked the way that things were not always fully revealed. The story was often told from the point of view of the children and the reader, with their adult knowledge and experience, was left to join the dots for themselves.

If you would like the pleasure of reading this book for yourself, please get in touch and we can exchange our page turner for one of your own.

Deborah Wallis

Quiz Group

Tops, Bottoms, Record Labels, Feeling blue, General Knowledge and By the sea were the themes set for the first of our monthly quizzes.

Two jokers were played in the right round and because of those jokers 'Feeling blue' came top.

However the record label's theme was not Top of the Pops, despite me speaking about well known artists and groups.

Would you have been able to say that the Polydor label managed the Abba songs?

Talking about Top of the Pops, which group performed the first ever song on that programme?

When it came to bottoms, no one could answer one of my questions, which was 'What has a bottom at the top?' Can you?

Here's three more questions for you to think about:-

From which country does Blue Mountain coffee originate?

What does the V in DVD stand for?

Which pier is Britain's second largest?

Two weeks passed and the group members were once again zooming away; this time answering questions on Brains, Bottles, Nuts and Bolts, Stops and Starts, Honey and General Knowledge.

See how you would have fared...

Which creature has 5 pairs of eyes, 300 teeth and 32 brains?



How many standard bottles of champagne in a Salmanazar?

Who starred in the film 'The Nutty Professor'?

How many horses start the Grand National?

How many sides does each honeycomb cell have?

Which African country is bordered by only Cameroon and Gabon?

I wonder how many you got right.

If you like quizzes, then please feel free to join us. Our quizzes for **October** will be on the **13th and 27th**.

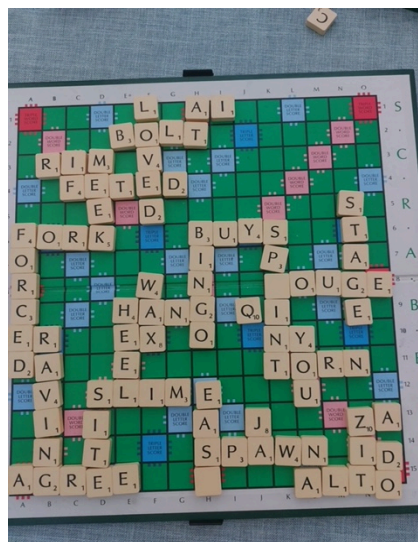
You will always be welcome.

Graham Carey

Scrabble

We had five members attending this month's meeting, including one new player.

We had a slightly delayed start, due to confusion over the changed venue for this month's meeting. This board was the result



of our first game and despite missing several turns at the beginning, our resident expert still managed a highly creditable second place out of five players.

For our second game we split into two groups and listening to comments from the second group, a highly competitive contest developed, with only a few points separating the players.

George Mansfield

Strollers Social Walking Group

Only four of us went on our September monthly Dawlish & District u3a Strollers walk. We managed to shelter from some light drizzle whilst exploring Walls Hill at Babbacombe. Luckily, we also managed to shelter at the cafe by the Cliff Railway later during a torrential downpour. From Walls Hill we enjoyed beautiful coastal views plus we saw lots of sloes on the blackthorn and some interesting blue flowers amongst the grass - possibly Devil's Bit Scabious?

Our next Strollers walk is on **Thursday October 9th**. We'll be catching the number 2 Newton Abbot bus from Dawlish at 12.46 pm or Teignmouth at 12.59pm.

From the bus station we'll head towards Asda, then take the off-road path to Bakers Park. After walking part of the perimeter

path in Bakers Park, we'll walk on through meadow paths to explore Bradley Manor Woods

The walk is partly alongside the river on mainly level pathways; it's not a circular walk so at the end of the wood we return the same way to Bakers Park .

The refreshment stop will be at either the cafe by the toilets in Bakers Park or if closed, at a cafe in Newton Abbot. Buses back home leave every 30 mins i.e. 15.45pm, 16.15pm or 16.45pm.

New u3a Strollers are always welcome to join us on our monthly walks.

Jean Gitsham, Convenor.

Contact us:

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

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Want to know more about Dawlish & District u3a? Check out our website: u3a.dawlish.info.