

Newsletter

From the Chair

Wishing all our members a very happy Christmas.

Do join us on -

Thursday 4th December for Tea and Chat, 2pm at The Riverside.

As this is the last one before Christmas we will be starting off the Festive Season with Mulled Wine and Mince Pies. Festive jumpers and hats optional but strongly encouraged.



Monthly meeting report

From Flower to Jar

Our guest speakers in November were Clare and Martin, bee keepers at Buckfast Abbey who gave a fascinating and very entertaining talk about how honey is made. They stressed from the outset that it is not the bee keepers but the bees who do all the work - and they do it for themselves not for us. The honey is to feed themselves, and they will produce as much as they need to get through the winter.

After long careers as bee keepers, Clare's and Martin's knowledge is impressive but they managed to share just a little of it with us without overwhelming us. However, what they did demonstrate conclusively is how remarkable bees are, and how extraordinary is their life within the hive.

Bees don't hibernate but the population of a hive does diminish from about 70,000 in the



summer to about 17,000 bees in the winter in a typical hive. Their sole purpose is to maintain the gueen at the heart of the community, so that she can lay eggs for the coming season. They organise themselves with a cluster of younger bees around the gueen, whose task is to ensure her well-being by activities such cleaning to prevent disease. Outside this layer, are 'middle aged' bees who engage in what was described as 'heavy duty shivering' to maintain the temperature of the hive at a very precise level of 35 degrees. achieved using extraordinary skill, with

bees able to increase their metabolism to increase the temperature by as much as 25% if required. Outside these bees is a further layer of older bees (in their Third Age, perhaps?) whose role is to hold the heat inside the cluster. In a mild winter, some bees might emerge for a while to forage but on the whole, they remain inside the hive.

During the winter, the hive will consume about 35 pounds of honey. Bee keepers encourage the hive to produce more honey than this for human consumption. However, at Buckfast, they make sure that they do not take more honey than this and will not take artificial steps to increase production.

Bees are, of course, vegetarians. They collect pollen from flowers as their source of protein, and nectar for carbohydrates. We were shown illustrations to understand how the 'design' of bees enables them to collect the pollen and nectar, and how different flowers present different challenges for varieties of bees. Life and work is highly specialised within the hive, and not for nothing are bees often described as



'busy'. A bee may need to visit up to 150 flowers to fill its crop with nectar. Bees have remarkable methods of communication. 'Scout bees' have the task of venturing out to find out where the best flowers are located. They show 'forager bees' where to go by performing complex 'waggle' dances which give directions and distance. They are the only creatures other than humans to use symbolic language.

When a bee returns to the hive, it regurgitates nectar to 'unloading' bees who take it inside the hive where large numbers are dedicated to fanning the nectar to adjust water levels to the required level of 18%, and create the right microclimate. The bees make wax cells where the honey is stored, after being sealed and with an added enzyme from their saliva which turns to hydrogen peroxide, the substance which is so effective in healing wounds.

Bee keepers take the honey in either the spring or summer. Not surprisingly, the bees resist so there are various techniques to do this successfully and without harming the bees. Once it is collected, there are different ways of preparing the honey for consumption. Clare and Martin's absolute favourite is to eat it from the wax cells.

We got important advice on what to buy. We need to be on the alert for products which are labelled as a 'blend of EU or non-EU'. Despite what it may say on the label, Clare and Martin say this will not be pure honey, and will contain a large proportion of sugar syrup. Almost all supermarket honey, including 'prestige' brands, have failed tests to demonstrate which is pure honey. If we are cooking with it then that is not a problem but if we want pure honey on our bread, then we should ensure that we read the label to see where it is produced. A good guide is to buy locally produced honey from a named producer. In good Dawlish fashion, Gaye's Creamery honey is highly recommended! Honey is a luxury product, and entails a great deal of work (from bees and humans) to produce, so it is unrealistic to expect it to be anything other than expensive.

Manuka honey from New Zealand has a high reputation for its therapeutic qualities. This is certainly justified when it comes to being applied as a dressing for wounds, and there is strong evidence that it is very effective in aiding healing. However, Clare and Martin argued that all locally produced honey will be beneficial (as well as enjoyable) and there is no reason to believe that Manuka honey is any more beneficial as part of our diet.

Honey comes in a wide consistencies. Some to come from bees trees are likely to be deep in the earth. to become crystalline make these runny, you gently in warm water, Overheating will harm therapeutic qualities.



variety of colours and are very dark and are likely harvesting tree nectar as the bringing up minerals from Some are much more likely than others. If you wish to should put the jar to warm no more than 60 degrees. the product and its

It is no surprise that

fascination to mankind for millennia. In their talk, we were only scratching the surface, but
Clare and Martin gave us a glimpse into this extraordinary subject which may tempt us to find
out more – as well as to eat the best we can afford!



I am not sure whether there will be any honey on the menu, but please remember that our next 'meeting' is our **Christmas Lunch on Monday 15th December at the Langstone Cliff Hotel**. Khim Sim has been keeping all those who are planning to attend very well informed of the arrangements – including the parking arrangements for those going by car. **Don't forget to register your car at reception if you don't want to incur a parking fine!**

See you there, with or without a Christmas jumper!

John Vick

Convenorship.

Firstly, on behalf of myself, and no doubt all our u3a branch members, I would like to thank all present conveners for the work they do to keep so many interesting and varied groups running.

Convening a group in itself can be an interesting and rewarding undertaking. What is required depends on the group's activities, sometimes it's quite involved, and sometimes very straightforward, but in every case it accentuates the group's existence.

At present, we have 23 groups running that cover a wide range of interests, and there is always room for more. If you have an interest that isn't on offer at the moment, you could start your own group to bring it to life.

Some groups have closed, often due to reduced interest in the subject, but on occasion due to the absence of a replacement convener. If you are in an active group where the convener is stepping down why not pick up the baton and keep it going?

Our u3a is run by its members, for its members, and everyone is encouraged to work together to make it as enjoyable as possible for everyone. If you don't feel that you could run a group perhaps assisting as a second or assistant convener would work in some groups.

Any questions regarding any of our existing or possibly new groups please contact me by email; enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info

Barry Baker Groups coordinator.

Interest Group news

Adventure Group

Adventure group members are looking forward to December's visit to an escape room in Exeter. We had a go at a virtual escape room just after lockdown but this will be our first real life one. Blackbeard's treasure, here we come!

This will bring us to the end of the year and our list of outstanding adventures, so next up is our annual meeting to choose some more. The meeting has been arranged for **Tuesday January 6th at 10am** in the Manor House. All members are welcome.

Further details, including how how to register your interest in attending, can be found on the website here:

https://u3a.dawlish.info/adventure-group-meeting-tuesday-6th-january-2026

Miggie Pickton, co-convenor

Art Appreciation

Fourteen people attended the November Art Appreciation meeting, probably a record, so it is most encouraging to have such an active and lively group.

The topic this time was 'Other Cultures' or 'Cultural Encounters', and predictably there was a wide and often surprising range of works of art to learn about.

We started with the extraordinary Giant Reclining Buddha in Wat Tho, Bangkok. This sculpture, covered in gold leaf, is so large it is almost impossible to capture in a single photograph.

As expected, there were several works of art either from Japan, or inspired by Japanese art. Hokusai is probably best known for 'The Wave' which is reproduced in posters, tee shirts and other media. Less known is his 1814 work, 'The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife', an example of erotic art which is part of a major tradition in Japanese art. We learned not only about this disturbing and fascinating image but about the folk tale which inspired it.

Many 19th century European artists were inspired by the Japanese, including Van Gogh. We saw his interpretation of the Japanese paintings, 'The Plum Garden' and of a courtesan, side by side with the originals.

One of the group of artists known as 'The Glasgow Boys' was Edward Hornel (1864-1930). Born in Australia of Scottish



moved to Scotland and became interested in Japanese prints. Unusually, he travelled and explored extensively in Japan, experiencing more of

parents,

he

everyday life than most visitors. Hornel was unfamiliar to most of the group but members greatly enjoyed the vibrant colours and images of geishas, tea houses and social life in his works.

We moved to China and had a rapid overview of many centuries of art where to the 'inexpert' eye, it is hard to detect significant changes in style or subject matter. The settings were stylised, and the figures portrayed were largely members of social elite groups. We then moved to the middle of the 20th century, a period of civil war, social dislocation and destruction and saw paintings which had very different subject matter. Influenced by trends in western art, the subjects were ordinary people, clearly refugees and homeless, not the scholars and privileged people who dominate earlier work. There were striking similarities to the Chinese tradition though, notably that they were placed against a background which was essentially blank.

We next looked at beautiful artefacts from the ancient Minoan civilisation of Crete. There are many legends recorded in Greek literature relating to the island, notably concerning King Minos and the Minotaur. Much of the art work relates to bulls but there are also many examples of decorative jewellery and religious objects.

We moved on to the west coast of Canada to see 'The Raven and the First Men', a contemporary work which was made by sculptor Bill Reid in partnership with Haida artists. This tells the story about how man was created. A raven opens up a clam shell from which the first men emerged.

A cultural encounter of a very different sort was portrayed in 'Tipu's Tiger', made in Mysore in the late 18th century, a time of warfare in India between Tipu Sultan and the armies of the East India Company.



This automaton shows a tiger mauling a European soldier. It has moving parts and offers sound effects of screams and roars. It is one of the most popular works of art currently on display in the V&A.

Throughout the 19th century, Europeans' fascination with 'the orient' and the Muslim world, produced a great deal of art. Not all of it was based on real knowledge and understanding of the society, but Pilgrims going to Mecca by the French artist Léon Auguste Adolphe Belly (1827–1877) was based on his own observation in the region.

Killerton's current exhibition of costumes from the 1920s includes many items inspired by ancient Egypt. The 'Art Deco' movement between the wars used many Egyptian motifs in architecture and design, relishing in the opulence revealed by the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb and other archaeological discoveries of the 1920s.

Our final dip into another culture was the Iberian culture of pre-Roman Spain and Portugal. The news has recently included coverage of the theft of works of art from the Louvre, but this is nothing new. We learned about the theft a century ago of Iberian sculptures from the Louvre which clearly inspired some of Picasso's art, and it is quite possible that Picasso himself was involved – but the matter was never resolved!

Our next meeting will be on **Tuesday 9**th **December** when members are invited to select a work of 'Extravagant Architecture' to talk about for a few minutes.

Lynne Vick, Convener

Badminton

As the nights have drawn in, would you like a little indoor exercise? As with all u3a



activities, the emphasis is on enjoyment and having fun, but this is also an opportunity to either learn a new skill, or

improve an existing one. The badminton group has a core of about 8 players, but we are always looking for more members, regardless of skill. The more experienced players are on hand to offer friendly advice.

We play on a Tuesday afternoon, 4.30pm to 5.30pm, at Dawlish Leisure Centre, Sandy Lane. The first session is free, but after that it currently costs £4 a session.

Bob Clark - Convenor

Beer and Skittles

We had our last game of the year on Thursday 20th. Attendance was low on a wet cold night, but the company and beer was as good as ever.

The group will be taking a break in December so that The Brunswick can concentrate on providing us all with Christmas dinners.

Anyone interested in joining us next year can do so by just coming along to the first meeting at

The Brunswick 7pm on Monday



15th of January. (Pop the date in your new diary)

Everyone is welcome and you don't need to be skilled at skittles, as a quick look at our score board will testify.

Wishing you all a merry Christmas.

Barry

Boules

The Boules Group have given up playing outside until next spring.

New indoor boules equipment has been bought. Everyone is welcome, do get in touch if you'd like to join in.

Michael Heyden, Convenor

French Conversation

Five people attended the first meeting of the month. We read and translated an article which posed the question "Can money truly make you happier?"

We were invited to imagine that; having been content with enough money for our basic needs and not wasting time and effort to strive to earn more, we suddenly discover that we have won a vast sum on the lottery. Would that improve our lives?

Apparently, economic research shows that beyond a certain threshold, more wealth does not improve our feeling of well-being. Psychologists say that the relationship between money and happiness is dependent on our attitude to money. More materialistic values correspond with a decline in our satisfaction with life, our mood and our mental health.

Another survey revealed that 52% of French participants thought that money brought happiness, rising to 66% in the 20 – 30 years age bracket.

The general opinion of the group was in consensus with this. All of us had been stretched financially in the past and had been taught to be sensible with money. Some had been brought up in large families with little money for necessities, let alone treats. However, they felt they had been happy, and learned that family, friends and an appreciation of simple pleasures were more important than lots of money.

Nonetheless, having a financial cushion in the bank for emergencies and unexpected expenses is bound to result in less anxiety. Some were a little sad that their parents had been so careful with their finances that they had perhaps sacrificed some chances to enjoy life – a mistake they were determined not to replicate!

In support of the findings quoted in the article, we considered all the celebrities we know of, who one imagines had all the good things money could buy, but even so were unhappy enough to end their own lives.

We also concluded that good health is more important for happiness than wealth. We did wonder though, how we would feel if we lost everything after being in a position of relative comfort!

The second one where we welcomed a new member, Pat, was about how we deal with and experience fear.

We read about how fear isn't just about the huge challenges but about daily things like attending a professional meeting, a hospital appointment, etc.

There's an infinite list.

We have to learn to manage it and face it . Some suggestions were to speak to a wise friend and find out what they would do if they had a similar experience, to pinpoint exactly what our feelings are and deal with them. Easier said than done!

There are things that weren't mentioned like calming yourself with deep breathing and relaxation techniques.

We had a range of responses from the group with typical fears of dentists mentioned, along with fear of injections, giving birth, dogs, cats, tunnels and falling.



One person expressed the view that the article we were reading which talked about fear of e.g. bungee jumping was directed to younger people and that, as we get older, we have faced and dealt with many fears and are probably now too cautious to attempt anything dangerous. Another said her fears and anxieties seem to have increased and that you worry more as you get older!

Great Lives

For our meeting in November, I chose to introduce the Group to Thomas Telford (b.9 Aug 1757-d.2 Sept 1834).

The son of a shepherd, born in Eskdale Dumfriesshire Scotland, this self-taught engineer began his career at 14 as an apprentice stonemason but soon progressed under the patronage of Sir William Pulteney to become the Surveyor of Public Works for Shropshire in 1787.

From then on, his meteoric rise as a civil engineer led him to design and build over 1,000 bridges, many of which remain in use today, at least 920 miles of road in Scotland alone, churches and canals.



Dunkeld Bridge

His engineering masterpieces include the Chirk and Pontecyslite aqueducts and the Menai and Conwy bridges.

He never married and only purchased his only permanent home some 12 years before his death. He became the first President of the newly formed Institute of Civil Engineers and made provision in his will for it to achieve a permanent home. He was buried in Westminster Cathedral. Years before he became a distinguished engineer he had become a noted and published poet.

George Mansfield

In Our Own Write

We had a full house for our latest topic of "
It all started when..". Unsurprisingly we had
a wide range of interpretations.

- 1. A couple took a last minute getaway as the husband had seen a postcard in the newsagent's window advertising a country cottage for rent for a good price. Having driven through wintry weather to get there to their horror they found a dilapidated building with broken windows. To try and get warm they lit a fire using a newspaper whose headlines screamed "Search for missing couple". The firelighters that were already in the fire were in fact sedatives and a short time later the door opened and the owner of the property walked up to the pair with a machete in his hand. (Such a talented writer and she had us all on the edge of our seats).
- 2. Next was a historical story where a wealthy business man was blackmailed into agreeing to his teenage daughter becoming betrothed to a much older man.
- 3. An old man lived alone at the edge of a village and reflecting on his life and his mortality as many of his old friends and his wife had died. He felt that age had made him invisible to others and he rarely saw his children. Whilst walking in the woods near to his home he stumbled upon a dog abandoned and tied to a tree. Although initially he was going to take it to a dog shelter he changed his mind and acquired a new companion.
- 4. In this story it all started when Harry went out for a bike ride and was badly injured by a car in a hit and run. Luckily a witness had given him life saving first aid and called 999. After weeks in a coma he came round and began the long slow

journey of recovery with his wife at his side. They realised that life is precious and you should appreciate the beauty of simply being alive and being able to see your family.

5. This time we had a true story when in her younger days Margaret launched herself out of an airplane to do a parachute jump.Not content with that she was even brave enough to repeat it at a later date although on this occasion the landing did not go entirely to plan

6. The final one was a fairy tale about looking for a missing young princess.(Just getting in practice for my three grandchildren coming over from Sweden for Christmas!)

Next meeting will be on the **8th December** with the seasonal topic of "The Christmas Tree"

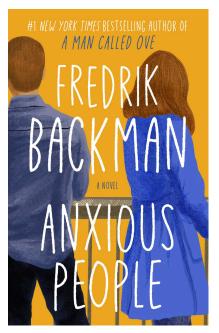
Travina White - convenor

Literature

Anxious People by Fredrik Backman

Anxious People is set in a small town in present day Sweden where six prospective buyers viewing an apartment and the estate agent were held hostage by an escaping armed bank robber. They have been safely released and are now being interviewed by two rather inept policemen, a father and son, to establish details about the event and the whereabouts of the bank robber who is missing. We were puzzled at the start of the novel by the odd responses of the victims to police questioning as they all seem incapable of giving a straight answer but their stories unfold and all becomes clear.

Whilst they were kept captive they got to know each other and we learned about their lives. People are, as is so often the case, not as they at first seem.



Estelle, aged eighty-seven, says her husband is trying to find a parking space.

Two women recently married are expecting a baby but one of them is insisting on viewing one apartment after another to avoid facing her fears

about her ability to be a good parent.

The other couple, now retired, are also engaged in a displacement activity, "flipping" apartments because the husband knows that he will never have a grandchild.

Saddest of all is Zara who appears to be the most unsympathetic character. A brittle, impeccably dressed successful woman who runs a bank is, however, burdened by a dreadful guilty secret and is badly in need of friendship but cannot allow herself to get close to anyone. We see chinks in her armour as the story progresses.

A bridge visible from the balcony is an important part of the story and is a metaphor for connections and the hostages become close to one another, opening up, revealing themselves and, oddly, under the circumstances, having some fun. Finding some hidden wine in the apartment and sending out for pizza helps to break the ice.

Although this novel has a farcical, quirky quality and is frequently zany and absurd, it is also warm and sympathetic and the challenges faced by the characters are relatable and all too real. The humour is dark but never cruel and we found ourselves laughing out loud and several of us admitted to crying as well.

We very much enjoyed the satisfyingly clever twists and revelations.

Anxious People looks at relationships, long and new marriages, grief, loss, estrangements and, above all, it is a book about love in all its forms.

We would happily read more of Fredrik Backman's work and award this one 5/5.

Lunch Club

Kim Sim Tan will be away for a few months in Singapore to take care of her elderly mum. Members can still meet for lunch if someone would like to host it while she is away.

Just send her a message at luncheonclub@u3a.dawlish.info

January 23rd 2026

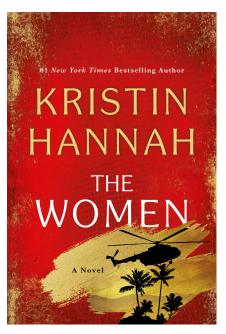
Ten Tors Inn 12.30 pm

Please pay a deposit to secure booking.

Kay Owen will host the lunch.

Page Turners

In November the Page Turners read 'The Women'. This book is by American author Kristin Hannah and was published in 2024.



The main character of book the is Frankie McGrath, who was from fairly wealthy background and, like the central characters in last month's book, was brought up in the expectation

that she would marry and spend her life raising a family and supporting her husband. Frankie's brother was serving in Vietnam and, in a misguided attempt to gain her father's approval and a place on his 'heroes' wall' of photographs, she signed up to serve in the United States Army Nurse Corps. The first third of the book tells of Frankie's experiences during two years of duty in Vietnam and the remainder is about her life when she returned home to a country where the tide of public opinion has turned against the war, there is little support for veterans and the future that was previously mapped out for a well brought up young woman no longer seems attainable.

The book is an emotional read as we hear of Frankie's many traumatic experiences. It is also an uplifting tale of female friendships as we find that the bonds that Frankie formed in Vietnam sustain her through the difficult times. Her colleagues were perhaps from less sheltered backgrounds and were able to

cope in a different way with all that they witnessed and were a real source of support throughout.

Whilst parts of the book were a harrowing read, we all found it to be a page turner. Many of us felt we had not been fully aware of the story of the war at the time and this well researched book gave us some insight into events in Vietnam and America.

We enjoyed the writing and felt that the descriptions gave us a good sense of place, of the horrors of the war and of events in America, however some of us struggled with the fact that the many horrific events that the author had researched were all attached to one character, meaning that she suffered a relentless roller-coaster of emotions. We felt that in truth every woman who served would have suffered some of these traumas but not all. However, we accepted this was necessary to make a novel.

We enjoyed discussing the various characters and how their upbringing affected the choices they made. Our conversation ranged from the horrors of war to memories of holidays in Vietnam.

We commend this book to you. Do get in touch if you would like to read it and you can swap our page turner for one of your own.

Deborah Wallis - convenor

Quiz Group

The quizzers grappled with the usual 6 themes each time and another mixed bag they were.

In the first group meeting we unpacked the subjects of Johns, Games, General

Knowledge, It's colourful, Elvis and Mountains.

There were some good scores and the gold medal went to the Elvis round. In fact one of the group is a real Elvis fan as she gained maximum points and hopes to visit Graceland one day. Bottom of the score board was Games.

So ...

Who killed John Lennon?

What is the nickname for the ball on a roulette table?

Which four English counties have a land border with Wales?

What colour jersey is given to the best young rider in the Tour de France race?

In what 1964 film did Elvis play the role of 'Lucky Jackson'?

What is the tallest mountain in Africa?



Two weeks rest and we were back zooming, ready to answer questions on Your five a day, Letters and numbers, Give me an H, General Knowledge, Bodies of water and Siblings.

What would have been your chosen round to play your joker in?

The quizzers obviously knew their onions as the 'five a day' galloped into the number one spot. This was helped along by a 10/10 score. The weakest link was General Knowledge.

Will you get five out of five correct answers? Let's see..

What is the world's most popular vegetable?

Which two books of Stephen King have titles beginning with the letter M?

Who is the girlfriend of the joker in Batman?

What does the RR in JRR Tolkien's name stand for?

Which Scottish inland lock is the longest?

Name the three Gabor sisters?

We will be able to hold two quizzes in December; on **Mondays the 1st and 15th.**

Graham Carey

Scrabble

Another bumper group meeting!

Seven of our group met on Monday 24th November for our monthly gathering. The numbers attending dictated that we split into one group of three and two groups of two.

I played in one of the two member groups and we had a leisurely single game whilst the other groups enjoyed two.

The second of which pitted our two resident word-smiths against each other to produce this final board. The friendly rivalry arose over the word Zoot, which is allowed, but not in its plural form Zoots and subsequently went unchallenged.



The afternoon ended with a straw poll with regards to our next meeting due on 22nd

December. Ultimately it was decided that enough people could attend to make it viable.

George Mansfield

Strollers Social Walking Group

Seven Dawlish and District Strollers enjoyed a new walk in November. We caught the train to Exmouth then walked back along the Exe Trail to Lympstone - next time we do this walk we'll do it the other way around then we can do an M&S food shop at the store by Exmouth station at the end of our walk.

Our next walk is on **Thurs Dec 11th** - we're walking over to Shaldon from Teignmouth - the plan is we walk on the off road path to Shaldon Bridge ,on through Shaldon and up to the Ness Tunnel - tide should be ok for those wanting to explore Ness Beach. After refreshments at the London Inn we'll either catch the number 11 bus or the ferry back over to Teignmouth.

Meet up at 1.30pm for the start of the walk by the Seaview Diner bus stop in Teignmouth - I'll wait until both the number 2 & 11 buses have arrived from Dawlish.

A suggested walk from one of our Strollers for January is to walk along the seawall from Dawlish to Dawlish Warren ..

Jean Gitsham - convenor

Wine Appreciation Group (WAG)

The WAG meets monthly, with the host choosing the wines to be tasted. This month there was one white, two rosé and two red wines. The host also provides appropriate nibbles to complement the wines. The cost of the wine and nibbles is covered by those attending.

On the evening the host provides details of each wine, and we taste and talk about each one.

The Vinho Verde was very well liked this month. As you might guess, it's a sociable _____ evening.



The size of the WAG is limited by the capacity of the hosts to accommodate the members. However, there is nothing to stop a second WAG being formed, all it needs is someone to organise it.

Just contact the Groups Coordinator at enquiries@u3a.dawlish.info

And finally - Christmas Crackers - ho ho ho.

Why don't you ever see Father Christmas in hospital? Because he has private elf care!

Which famous playwright was terrified of Christmas? Noël Coward!

How much did Santa pay for his sleigh? Nothing, it was on the house!



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.