Dawlish & District u3a

March 2026

Newsletter

From the Chair

Every year, I ask members to consider how they might contribute to the running of their u3a. We should all be very grateful to all the conveners and members of the committee who do so much throughout the year to ensure that our programme of activities runs smoothly, and also to those who help at meetings in vital matters such as organising refreshments. Many of these members have been fulfilling their roles for quite some time, and may feel entitled to step aside and allow others to take over.

Although the AGM is not until September, we need to have some idea about who will be in post in the year ahead in plenty of time so we do not find ourselves with a last minute problem. Most members of the committee and conveners will be happy to continue but there will inevitably be some 'churn'. It is always good to have new people getting involved, bringing new ideas and experiences to the role. If you are interested in knowing more about what might be involved, do ask any member of the committee, and certainly feel able to get in touch with me about this.

Although I do not feel that we need to face this situation in the immediate future, we must all face the reality that unless sufficient members do respond, the future of our u3a is at risk and we may have to contemplate winding the organisation up. This is not something I wish to contemplate but it will all depend on the response from members. For most members, the u3a in Dawlish makes a huge difference to their lives, and I very much hope it will continue to do so for years to come.

I will resist including the famous First World War recruiting poster pointing at you but I think you get the message!

National u3a Survey

All Chairs have been asked to send this message from the Trust to all u3a members across the country.

The Trust has asked Council Representatives to send this out to all u3a's in our regions.

We would like to invite members to take part in a national u3a survey that explores what u3a means to them and how being part of u3a has impacted their lives.

Learning • Laughing • Living

*This survey is open to **all members** so please take a moment to fill it out yourselves as well. It is a great opportunity for members to share their experiences and support their u3a to thrive into the future. The feedback will be used to grow membership, demonstrate the impact of u3a and raise our profile.*

Please share the survey with your members and encourage as many people as possible to take part:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/u3a-me

*To thank members for their time, they will be entered in a John Lewis £100 prize draw. The survey closes on the **31st March.***

Thank you for your support.

Marian Luck

Council Rep for the SW

u3a Festival 26

You might be interested in this announcement from the national u3a office.

u3a Festival 26 brings the movement together for fun, learning and new connections. Join us on Wednesday 1 July - Friday 3 July at The *University of York* for a celebration of everything that makes u3a so special.

There's a huge variety of activities on offer - here's a taster of what you can look forward to:

- Sparking new ideas at talks on a wide range of subjects.
- Getting moving at a fitness workshop or in a sports tournament.
- Exploring your creativity with hands-on craft workshops.
- Enjoying live performances by talented u3a musical groups - or have a go at making music yourself.

Places are limited - book your tickets and accommodation now to avoid missing out. Please note that tickets and accommodation are booked via separate links, which you'll find below.

Buy tickets – u3a Festival 26 – University of York

Welcome - u3a Festival 26

John Vick

Monthly meeting report

Ice Ages and Climate Change

Our guest speaker in February was Peter Lewis. He has spent his career in many different sectors of education, including in the army and the prison service. Throughout, he has maintained his interest in earth sciences such as geology and geography. His chosen topic was an enormous and challenging one, and most members of the audience had to work hard

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to keep up with the complex issues he explained. It would be an impossible undertaking to summarise all that he had to say here!

While most of us are aware that the earth has experienced widely contrasting climatic conditions throughout its history, I suspect that few of us have a grasp of why these changes occur. Peter focussed on six primary factors in this – the role of the sun, the earth's place in the solar system, the land, the oceans, the atmosphere and the impact of mankind.



Glacier d'Arolla - Francois Diday

Peter outlined how it was as recently as the 19th century that scientists came to realise that the earth had experienced ice ages. Furthermore, systematic keeping of meteorological and climate data, knowledge about the jet stream and other phenomena are quite recent developments. They have enabled scientists to understand what has happened in the past and what may happen in the future.

We now know that rather than 'the ice age', the earth has experienced a considerable number of ice ages, and in fact it might be argued that these are nearer the norm for our planet than periods of warmth. Many of these earlier ice ages lasted for many millions of years. More recently, in the past 2-3000 years, there has been a cycle of ice ages alternating with periods of considerable warmth. We know, for instance, that the Romans were able to grow grapes and other 'Mediterranean' crops in this country, and the same was true in the Middle Ages, but in between there were periods when agriculture was very challenging because it was so cold. There was certainly a significant 'mini ice age' in the 16th and 17th centuries recorded by diarists and artists who depicted the Thames frozen over, and hard winters were the norm.

These variations occur naturally, and are the product of the frequency of sun spots, the changing tilt of the earth in its orbit around the sun, changes in the proportion of land and sea on the earth's surface, variations in the salinity of the oceans and other factors. These have profound effects on the currents in our oceans, air temperatures, and which plants and animals can thrive.

Of course, in recent centuries, the activities of mankind are making a significant impact as well, and this continues to be a major issue for us all in our own lifetimes. Peter's view is that while we need to take action at present to anticipate major changes in our environment, our way of life and for life on earth, it is also the case that there will be another ice age in about one or two millennia, such is the power of the forces which are beyond mankind's control. Time will tell.

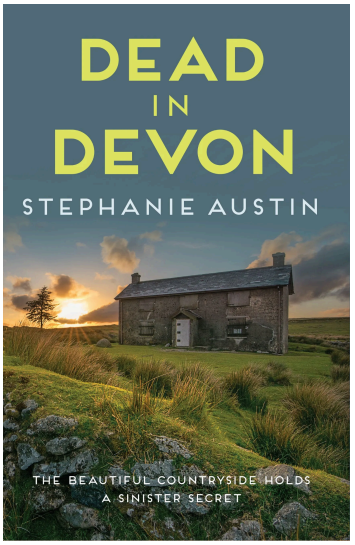


The guest speaker at our next meeting on **Monday 16th March** at **3.45** is local writer Stephanie Austin.

She will be speaking to us about **'Turning to Crime in Retirement'.**

I hope you will all come ready to take notes!

John Vick



Interest Group news

Adventure Group



This month eleven members of the adventure group discovered the world of

West African drumming. We spent a fun afternoon learning to play the Djembe.

James Carr led the session, teaching us djembe patterns and techniques which culminated in a final piece that included singing and sounded quite professional!

We all came away smiling and would thoroughly recommend the experience to all, whether a beginner or experienced.

If you like the idea of this, James is running a workshop at Teignmouth Pavilions on April 18th.

Art Appreciation

There was no meeting in February but we are looking forward to meeting again on **Tuesday 10th March** when David will be giving a presentation on 'Two Living British Artists'.

Lynne Vick, Convener

Beer and Skittles

We are still looking for a convenor for this group. If there is someone who would like to know more please contact a member of the committee.

It would be such a shame to lose this group.



Boules

The Boules Group have been pursuing Dawlish Rules Indoor Boules, a game of our own invention, throughout the winter months.

We meet twice a month in the cafe of the Methodist church, for refreshments before playing in the hall.

More refreshments are generally required afterwards, none of us are getting any younger, and the cake is excellent.



In April, provided it has stopped raining by then and if South West Water have left an area for us to play on, we'll change to our summer program of playing three times a month, once indoors, once on the Lawn and on the third occasion traveling to Exminster to use the boules terrain there. I have approached the Town Council with a view to a boules terrain being incorporated in the Lawn refurbishment program when SWW have finished their work, but I haven't had a reply yet.

We are always happy to welcome new members, no experience or equipment needed.

Michael Heyden, Convenor

French Conversation

We had a full house at our first session in February.

We read and talked about an article on procrastination. Interestingly, not everyone puts things off "until another day."

One person liked to get things done but most of us are inclined to wait and sometimes make excuses as to why we've not done what we intended .



At the second session which I had to miss, I thank June for her précis, we discussed 'L'interdiction des réseaux sociaux pour les mineurs, une '*dérive législative*' ou un pas dans la bonne direction?'

(**Banning social media for minors, a '*legislative slip-up*' or a step in the right direction?)**.

We read and discussed this article from a French source.

The lengthy and interesting article stated that - from Twitter - **TechRadar** - Members of Parliament have just voted 116 to 23 in favour of banning social media for minors, a decision hailed as a 'major step forward' in protecting children and teenagers online.

The group had plenty to say and generally agreed - weighing up the pros and cons - with the decision of the vote, but also understood one member's feeling that banning social media for minors deprives many children of the availability when they are using it for the right reasons; the responsibility should come down to the parents of minors by teaching their children how to use it sensibly.

Bridie

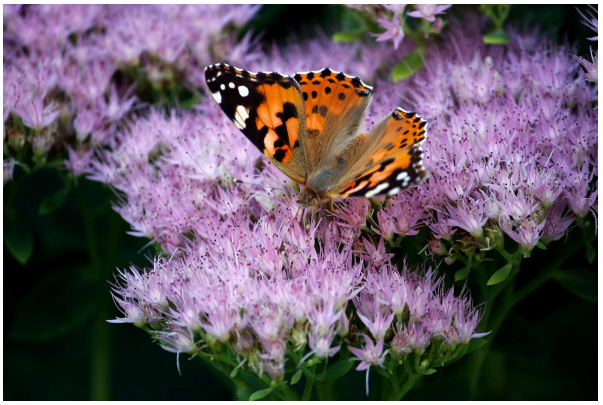
Gardens and Gateaux

Rumour has it that summer is not too far away. In anticipation of this, our Gardens and Gateaux group will hold its first meeting of the year, on **Tuesday 10th March at 11am in the Methodist Church Brunswick Place.**

This is for group members to meet up and plan future outings. If you think you would like to join us in the coming year, just come along and join in, you and your ideas will be welcome.

Tea, Coffee and Cake is available at £1.00 a cup or slice.

Our first trip of the year is already booked; a guided tour of Forde Abbey on **17th of April**, and at the time of printing, a couple of places are still vacant.



If you want more information on this group, see our website or email me via the info link.

I can also be contacted directly, via barrybaker1@live.co.uk

Come on sunshine.

In Our Own Write

We had the choice of two topics of The Accident, or The Proposal for our latest writing project. You may be disappointed to hear that apparently we do not all spend our waking hours planning gruesome endings for the heroes of our stories and our thoughts can occasionally turn to romance.

This is not to say that all of our stories were particularly jolly as can be seen by these summaries.

1. A mother grieving for her young daughter who had died of leukaemia could not bear to part with a silk mermaid outfit that had been

made for her child. Unfortunately her husband accidentally donated it to a charity shop and it was sold before they could reclaim it.When she eventually tracked it down she decided on meeting Precious the budding ballet dancer who was now wearing it that it was a far better idea for the dress to bring joy to the living.

2. This was a reflection on the different types of accidents that can occur and the sometimes life-altering consequences of a seemingly simple whiplash injury.

3. A young farmer's son had to run the gauntlet every time he crossed the farmyard to get into his home due to a rooster who loved to peck at his heels. His father's answer was to set up a running track in one of their fields so that he could try and outrun Charlie the rooster.He was devastated a couple of years later when Charlie lost an argument with a milk lorry. Some years later as an Olympic gold medal sprinter he put down his success to a very pesky bird.

4. It was hankies at the ready for a very evocative poem about a beloved pet escaping from their home and into the path of a car and the emptiness of the house following the accident.

A second poem dealt with a man trying to decide whether to propose.

5. Finally we had an accidental proposal when a man who had prevaricated about proposing to his girlfriend lost her when she got fed up of waiting and moved abroad.

Some years later she returned and neither had married. They arranged to meet up and following an accident when she knocked him off his bike and into the village pond he proposed and she accepted.

I won't be at the next two meetings as we are off to Sweden to make lots of snowmen with our grandchildren and then off down the Nile for our Golden Wedding trip. Hopefully one of the other group members will co- ordinate and submit a report.

Travina White

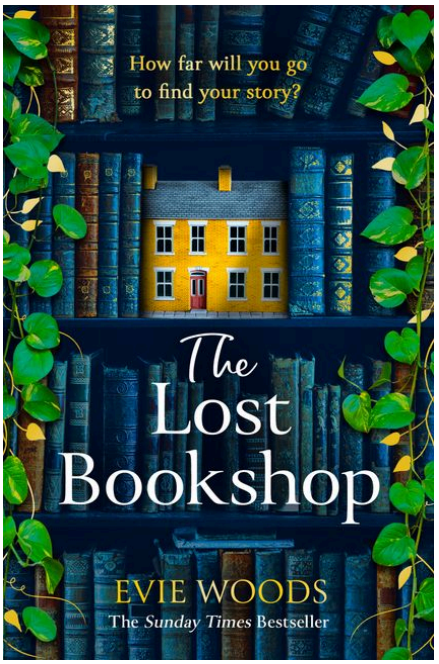
Literature

The Lost Bookshop by Evie Woods

This novel follows two timelines: present day and the 1920s, centering around a delightful sounding Dublin

bookshop that also sells toys, objets d'art, and curios. It appears to certain people and vanishes again.

There are three main protagonists: Opaline, born in 1900, who escapes from her controlling mother and older brother who are intent on marrying her off against her will, Martha in present day Ireland who has fled her dangerously violent husband and Henry, a scholar with an alcoholic father, who is searching for Opaline's story, the rumoured missing manuscript of Emily Bronte's second novel, and the lost bookshop.



Opaline sells some rare books to fund her getaway which starts her career as an antiquarian book dealer. She obtains work at Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company shop in Paris. The shop and person both existed in real life and she also comes into contact with famous writers. (One of our group felt that there was a bit too much name-dropping)

She is relentlessly pursued by her brother and goes to work at the titular bookshop. Unfortunately, he catches up with her with dreadful consequences for Opaline and her unborn daughter.

Martha takes a live-in job as housekeeper where the lost bookshop is located, or not as the case might be. She is employed by Madame Bowden, a retired actress, eccentric, opinionated, and very much her own woman who becomes an invaluable and supportive ally of Martha.

There are hints in the story that she is not a flesh and blood person but part of the spirit of this benign shop.

Given the serious issues raised in the story, domestic violence, incarceration of innocent women, abusive families and alcoholism, it could seem an odd juxtaposition with the fairy-tale qualities of the bookshop, a manuscript manifesting itself to Martha, a tree growing in her basement room and acting as a guide.

There was a suggestion that we consider these other-worldly aspects as symbolic. A bookshop, especially one that sells other unusual artifacts could be a metaphor for people realising what life has to offer and both women survive their ordeals to thrive and find fulfilment.

Martha discovers a love of reading and goes on to study literature. Opaline escapes back to the bookshop and finds love. The lost Emily Bronte manuscript is found and hidden safely away and Martha and Henry, after a tentative start, have a long happy marriage.

The storyline converges and the links between past and present are discovered.

Half of us liked The Lost Bookshop very much whilst others found flaws and inconsistencies in the story. Some said that it was a good read and it doesn't matter as reading can just be for enjoyment.

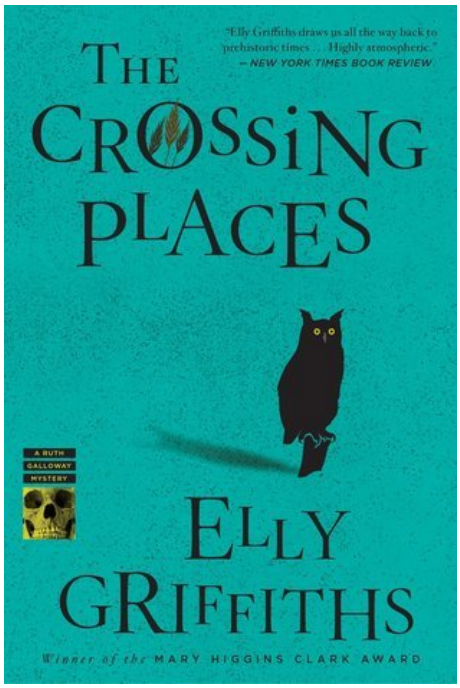
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Page Turners

'The Crossing Places' by Elly Griffiths was Page Turner's book for January. This was published in 2009 and was the first of a series of fifteen books in which Dr Ruth Galloway, an archaeologist, works with the police.

The book is set on the north Norfolk salt marshes, a mysterious place where the earth meets the sea, and it draws on the mythology of the Iron Age people who once roamed the area. Dr Galloway is called in when a set of bones are found on the marshes. Soon she is drawn into the investigation of two missing girls and is studying a set of anonymous letters with biblical, literary and archaeological references. As well as covering the investigation, the book gives us a story of Ruth's personal life and the backstory which we will presumably need to know if we are to follow her through further books. Whilst the book does stand alone and the majority of the loose ends are tied up, it leaves us

with one plot twist to take us into the next book.



The majority of us enjoyed this book and definitely regarded it as a page turner. However this was probably more for the descriptive writing and the characters than for the plot. We felt it gave a very good sense of the landscape. The main characters were interesting and relatable and some of us have already read more books in the series to learn how their story progresses. We were less convinced by various aspects of the story and felt that the way the various parts of the plot were tied up in the final chapters was less than satisfactory.

Some of us have copies of the book that we are willing to share so do get in touch if you would like to swap our page turner for one of your own.

On another note - we regularly get requests from people who would like to join our group but we really cannot let it get any bigger if we are all to have the opportunity to join in the discussion. We are also limited by the number of people that we can fit in our living rooms. However if there is anyone out there who would like to start up a further book group, we would definitely encourage you to do so and would be happy to talk you through how we operate.

Quiz Group

We were some members short for both quizzes but soldiered on regardless. Varying subjects drew out various answers; some spot on, others missing the mark. However, the group enjoyed the evenings and the quizmaster got away lightly with hardly any heckling from those on line.

So let's zoom in on the first quiz, with the subjects covering The Beatles, General Knowledge, Food science, Have a P, England in the Middle Ages and Marilyn Monroe.

I wonder what your joker round would have been; doubling up the points. For the quizzers, the most jokers were played in the Have a P round.. (No comment!!). So go on, have a shot at the following questions...

What name was given to the Beatles' iconic hairstyle which was copied around the world?

What would you do with a Spanish Empanada?



What is the name of the fifth basic taste, sometimes referred to as 'Savoury'?

In the Star Wars universe what name is given to a Jedi apprentice or youngling?

Which Archbishop was murdered during the reign of King Henry II?

Which two male actors appeared alongside Marilyn Monroe in ' Some like it hot'?

So a 6 out of 6 for you?

After our two week break we looked at the following themes...

Books, Air, land or sea, General Knowledge, Tops, Licences and permits, Myths and legends.

Three of the jokers were played in the Air, Sea or Land round. This said, I don't think the quizzers thought it would be questions on where you find specific creatures!

The best score was in that round but the quizzers failed to get many points when it came to the General Knowledge questions.

Would you have known that Atticus Finch was a character in the novel 'To kill the Mocking bird?Or how about these ....

A bongo would be found on the land in the African forest

Chris Lowe and Neil Tennant were the members of the Pet Shop Boys

A topspin is a shot often used in tennis

You have to have a licence to own a goat

Brutus of Troy was the legendary founder of London

So there you have it, another 120 questions bagged and now onto March. As there are five Mondays in **March** our quizzes are scheduled for the **2nd and the 23rd.**

Graham Carey

Scrabble

We had seven members reporting in for our monthly scrabble group meeting on Monday 23rd February. After a short discussion about how to split the group and who is sitting where (can be quite important when you know who you are playing with), we settled down to play in a three and four person group.

This was the result of the four person group who raced through their game. You may notice a few significant errors, which went unchallenged as people were intent on completing their own turn. In our group I actually won! A lucky collection of letters.

Our next meeting will take place on **Monday 23rd March.**

George Mansfield - Convenor



Strollers Social Walking Group

Our Feb 12th U3A Strollers walk was enjoyable however there were only 2 of us - however 7 of our regular walkers sent their apologies.

We walked from Marine Stores down the lane to Dawlish Warren and on to our refreshment stop at the Anchor Inn Cockwood. Down the lane which takes you below the Langstone Cliff hotel, just before you reach Dawlish Warren at this time of year there are masses of beautiful snowdrops growing on a steep bank behind a mesh fence.

Due to recent continual wet weather it really is quite a problem finding a local walk which isn't water logged.

On **Thursday March 12th** our Dawlish U3A Strollers walk will be a local walk starting 1.30pm from the bus stop opposite the Minidab on the Dawlish to Teignmouth Road.

We'll walk down Love Lane then downhill via Eastcliff/Mules Park footpaths to Teignmouth seafront.

After a walk along the seafront and the back beach area we'll pop into TAAG in Northumberland Place to view the Charities and Local Groups Exhibition. Followed by a refreshment stop before heading back home

Hopefully we'll also be able to plan our next few monthly walks on March 12th.

Tea and Chat

Come and meet other members of Dawlish u3a on the third Monday of every month.

March 16th, 2pm at the Riverside Centre in the grounds of the Manor 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

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