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## From the Chair

I couldn't help but be struck by the introductory remarks of our guest speaker at our March meeting. Stephanie Austin noted that in Ashburton near where her novels are set, the u3a has recently had to fold as there were insufficient people prepared to step forward to serve on the committee. As I am sure you know, this is a continuing theme of mine. Members cannot escape the reality that Dawlish & District u3a could easily share the same fate unless we have more people prepared to contribute to the running of the organisation.

I am sorry I return to this theme so often. The AGM in September may seem a long way off as we have barely begun to enjoy the spring, but it will soon be upon us. By then it is essential that we have a clear sight of who would like to join the committee to take on roles not only for the year ahead, but beyond that as well.

Please don't allow us to drift into the same state that Ashburton has reached. Do make contact with me or any other committee member to discuss what is involved and how you might be able to contribute.

## Policy Reviews

At the last meeting, the committee reviewed a number of policies, and these appear on our website. They are all closely related to the model policies created by the national u3a organisation who provide valuable guidance on all sorts of matters.

- Health and Safety
- Privacy
- Safeguarding

Please find some time to look at these as they can affect all of us, sometimes unexpectedly.

John Vick

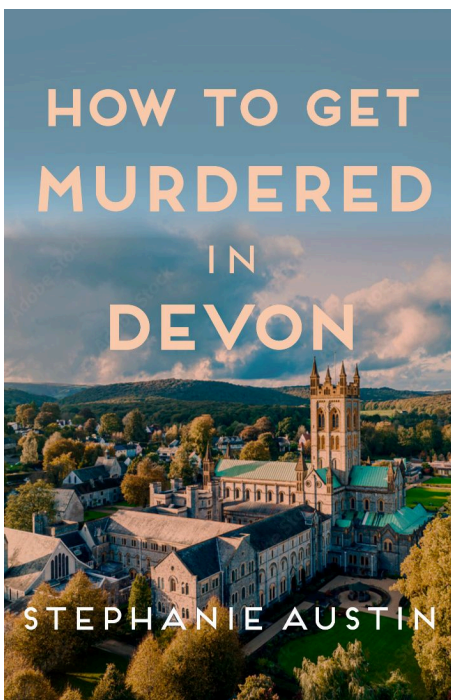
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## Monthly meeting report

### Turning to Crime in Retirement

Our guest speaker in March was Stephanie Austin who gave us a revealing insight into how to turn to crime in retirement. A tantalising prospect! It was reassuring to know that this was purely in a world of fiction.

After a career in education and working in libraries, Stephanie wanted to have a go at writing her own novel. She has always been a 'scribbler' and had a draft novel in her drawer which she had written about 30 years earlier. She dusted it off and wondered whether it might be publishable. She found an agent, the essential element in getting published, who gave her valuable advice to make it a viable commercial project. Essential, in her view, was to place the novel in a real, named location in Devon rather than a fictional community somewhere in the area. This enables readers to relate to the locations and other details, and can picture the action clearly in their minds. In this case, the setting was Ashburton, a town which was described by the 18<sup>th</sup> century Methodist preacher John Wesley, as 'the most sinful town in England'. A promising setting for crime! Even today, there is plenty going on there, and it is a town and area with a fascinating and often sensational history to draw on in her fiction.



Her novels have as a central character Juno Browne, an amateur sleuth with a knack for finding dead bodies. Her first story focused on the antiques trade which Stephanie was able to learn about through her friends. It is a trade full of shady characters! She likes to write about features of everyday life which people can understand, such as fly tipping or theft of farm machinery and other other features of rural crime. These can be a way into writing about more dramatic crimes including, of course, murder. This has proved to be a successful recipe for Stephanie as she has now had nine novels published, with one more to hit the bookshops soon, while she is also in the middle of writing her eleventh!

Stephanie gave us an insight into the realities of her new career. A writer needs to understand that a publisher will be in charge of matters such as the title and the design of the cover: they know their business and this needs to be respected. The publisher will demand a synopsis of the novel long before it is completed as the publicity and sales team need this to promote it. There will be pressure to complete the novel on time, and issues such as writer's block are real.



Wishing all of our members a very happy Easter.

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## Interest Group news

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### Adventure Group

Lazer Tag was this month's activity for the Adventure Group. We were told that we would use lightweight, safe infra-red laser 'guns' to fire harmless beams at our opponents, scoring points by hitting electronic sensors and we would be doing it inside a genuine decommissioned Cold War Nuclear Bunker!

So we assembled at a huge forbidding looking concrete structure with very thick walls. Inside was a long corridor with a network of numerous rooms leading off it and including two staircases leading to an upper gallery. It was very dusty and dingy

and half dark. We had a very brief safety talk – no running or climbing – and then were given our weapons. We each had a headband with a sensor front and back at which our opponents would aim. The gun would speak to us and tell us if we had wounded or killed our opponent and would let us know if we were shooting at someone who was already dead. It would stop shooting once we were killed. We needed to divide into two teams and we opted to play boys against girls. Each team had a base within the bunker. If we were killed we could return to that base and press a red button and we would be alive again.



Each game lasted for fifteen minutes. In the first it was a straightforward race to make the most kills. It was very exciting dodging round doorways and firing at our opponents. Fortunately the guns would not let you kill your own team mates. Fifteen minutes passed by in a flash and soon we were led back to the main building to get our breath back and hear the results. To our delight we found that the girls had won by twenty three kills to nineteen. We were also able to check our personal statistics on our guns and see how many times we had killed or been killed.

In the next game the supervisor hid a black box. If we shot at it then it would show our team's colour. We could then defend it until the other team were able to turn it their colour. First we had to find the black box and I certainly felt at a disadvantage here as in the first game I had not ventured very far from our team's base so had little idea of the layout. Our team quickly made a plan of who would go where and agreed on a code so that we could tell each other if we found the box without the other team realising. That proved to be a waste of time as we later discovered that the boys had located the box and defended it for over seven minutes while we were still looking for it! By the end of the fifteen minutes the boys had held it for well over twelve minutes and we for less than two. We had to admit that they had won that one.

So it was all to play for in the third game when there was a box to find and defend and we were also competing for the number of kills. We all got very carried away with shooting each other which was definitely great fun, but we kept forgetting about looking for the box and it was only found about a minute from the end (well done Miggie!). So the overall result came down to the number of kills. It was very close at twenty two to twenty but the girls were the winners!

I think we all enjoyed this afternoon of playing. It is amazing how quickly a group of respectable senior adults can get into the mindset of a shoot to kill battle!

Many thanks are due to Phil as this was the first adventure he had arranged for us. We are sorry you weren't able to join us on the day but you certainly organised a good one!

Deborah Wallis

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## **Art Appreciation**

### **Two Living British Artists**

It was quite fitting that we had a record attendance of 17 for our March meeting to hear David Gearing give his final presentation to the group. Over the past decade, David has given at least ten presentations to the group. His contribution has been outstanding and he will be greatly missed as he has now moved to Exeter.

Most of his previous presentations have been on 'great masters' but on this occasion David decided to focus on two living British artists, Kurt Jackson and Helen Tabor. Although she is regarded very much as a Scottish artist Helen Tabor was born in England. On her website she says her work explores colour, movement and atmosphere across landscapes, still life and figurative subjects. She works primarily in oil on

canvas or board. Beginning with a textured collage base, she builds her paintings through bold brushwork that is gradually refined, allowing the layers beneath to influence the final image. She is inspired by the landscapes of southern Scotland, music, family life, and artists such as William McTaggart, Joan Eardley and Picasso.

Kurt Jackson is based in the South West of England and much of his work is focused on Cornwall although he does work in other parts of the UK as well as abroad. His Kurt Jackson Foundation gallery is in St Just. He is committed to a wide range of environmental causes, and he donates a large proportion of his income from the sales of his art to organisations such as Greenpeace, Surfers Against Sewage, Friends of the Earth, Wateraid, Oxfam and the Cornwall Wildlife Trust. He has been artist in residence at Glastonbury as well as on the Greenpeace ship Esperanza. Much of his work reflects his environmental concerns and causes.

His landscapes often include a written commentary on the scene and what he is experiencing in the places he is painting. While many of the locations are very beautiful, he is also interested in what might be regarded as everyday, unremarkable scenes. He studied zoology at Oxford but spent much of his time at the Ruskin School of Art. His knowledge of the natural world is a strong feature of his work which has been described by some critics as 'transporting' and 'uplifting'.

Members very much enjoyed being introduced to these artists and will certainly be looking out for their work in future. A trip to St Just may well be on the list of places to visit on future trips to Cornwall. Because both artists are practising today, there are obvious restrictions on showing examples for this newsletter which is viewed online. However, members may like to visit these websites to see some of their work. [Helen Tabor Paintings](#) and [The Official](#)

[Website of British Contemporary Artist Kurt Jackson](#). I think you will be interested to see their work and to learn more about them.

Quite rightly, as David finished his presentation, there was a spontaneous round of applause to recognise all that he has done for this group, and for the Dawlish & District u3a.

Lynne Vick, Convener

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## Beer and Skittles

An elite group of skittlers met at the Brunswick Arms for a fun filled but maybe not skilled evening.



We went from strikes to letting the ball go backwards (that might have been me).

Our first game was somewhat uneven with the A team achieving a score of 162 and the B team 135. After a change of teams we were much more even.

We did wonder whether we should introduce new rules giving ten points to anyone skilled enough to miss all the skittles with all three balls.

Our next Skittles evening at the Brunswick Arms will be on **Thursday 16th April**.

Do come along and join us for a friendly and fun evening. £5 per person.

We have a new convenor from this month, thank you Richard for putting yourself forward.

Roz Summerton

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## **Dog Walking**

In March we had our first midweek break.

Four of us stayed at the Fox and Hounds Country Hotel, an exceptional dog friendly hotel where we were made to feel most welcome. The hotel sits in its own grounds which dogs are free to explore.



A couple of minutes' drive and we were spoiled for choice with stunning walks owned and managed by the Forestry Commission. The Hotel was originally built as a Fishing Lodge and sits on the River Taw.

We can't wait to plan our next break.

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## **French Conversation**

We had a free ranging session at our first meeting in March as we all had plenty to

say! Topics ranged from gardens, broken limbs to the conflict in the Middle East.

We discussed an article on tourism at our second meeting. This was entitled - "Comment les destinations touristiques peuvent-elles survivre aux touristes?"

This highlighted the positive and negative sides of tourism. On the one hand, tourism contributes to the local economy with full hotels, restaurants and busy shops with full employment. On the other hand, there is a loss of local, affordable housing as Airbnbs, hotels, etc take over the housing as well as raising prices and the crowds can damage the environment, the authenticity, etc. Noise levels, pollution and more increases. How do we find a balance?

Many places have taken steps to manage the negative impact, e.g. access to certain areas is restricted in Japan, extra taxes have been charged in some areas and other restrictions have been imposed.

There have been demonstrations in Tenerife, Barcelona and Venice who complain they are overrun with tourists. They feel that their country has been changed by the advent of mass tourism.

We have similar problems here in the UK where several places have second home owners and where Airbnbs flourish. Cornwall, in particular, has this problem. Think of St. Ives for example.

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## **Gardens and Gateaux**

Our Gardens and Gateaux group is the third largest in our branch with 45 members and counting.

We visit all types of gardens, from those in stately homes to small private residences holding open days.

(I would happily visit a window box if they have Tea & Cake).

In March, we had our first get together of the year in the Methodist Church on Brunswick Place. We have started to plan several future visits, and will continue these meetings over the summer on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 11am.

Group members are encouraged to plan future outings as Trip organisers, so if you think you would like to choose somewhere to visit this summer, 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.

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](mailto:barrybaker1@live.co.uk)

To receive updates on planned trips (with no obligation to attend any) just contact me and become a member.

Barry Baker - Group Coordinator.

Ps. Our next important project is to determine the difference between Cake & Gateaux.

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## Literature

**Still Alice** tells the story of Alice Howland, a distinguished professor of psychology at Harvard who, at the peak of her career is diagnosed with early onset dementia at the age of fifty.

She had tried to put odd lapses down to perimenopause, stress or tiredness but the signs became unmistakable.

Her husband John, also a Harvard professor in the field of cancer research struggles to come to terms with an illness with no hope of treatment or cure.

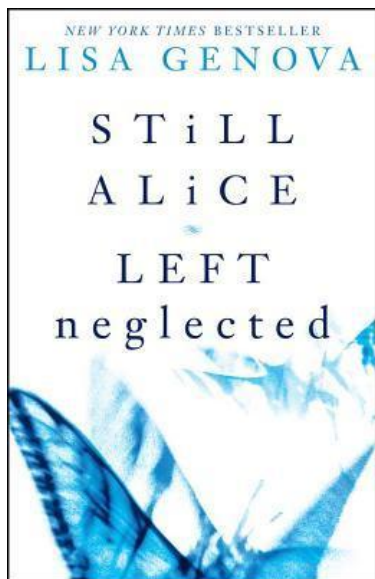
The novel is told from the viewpoint of Alice, although it is not a first person narrative, and the reader joins her as she experiences the unwelcome milestones of dementia sufferers. She gets lost in her own neighborhood, she fails to recognise someone moments after they have been introduced, she greets one of her daughters as a stranger. There are the indignities of not being able to care for herself and being referred to in the third person which is also bewildering.

This was relatable for some of our group who have witnessed it with their own family members.

The form of dementia she has is passed on genetically and they have to inform their three adult children, one of whom is undergoing I.V.F, so that they can be screened.

Alice has to resign from Harvard and her career has been an integral part of her. She says that she misses herself and wonders too about the other important part of her life, her husband and children. Where, she

asks herself, does love reside? In the head or in the heart?



There are some touchingly positive moments, when she makes a moving speech about dementia to an audience and she starts a support group with fellow early onset dementia patients. Alice has a wish to be able to realise that she

has become a grandmother and still recognise her daughter and this is achieved.

Alice masses sleeping pills and has a plan to commit suicide when her condition becomes worse but she leaves it too late and is too confused to go through with it.

There are some moments of humour, she laughs when she mistakes her pants for her bra, but there are terrifying experiences too. A gaping hole appears in front of the door, trapping her, which is actually just a mat.

This book concerns a caring family in crisis and the decisions and sacrifices that have to be made, particularly for John's career.

At the end of the novel Alice is still able to feel and appreciate love.

Lisa Genova is a neuroscientist and this is a well-researched and well-written book that is compassionate in its depiction of a dreadful illness.

We gave this excellent debut novel 5/5.

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## Lunch Club

The March u3a luncheon club was held at the Cockhaven Arms and was hosted by Kate McCarthy.

It was an affordable, enjoyable lunch in good company.

The next lunch on **April 24th** will be at the Powderham Bistro for twelve members. It will be hosted by Kate during my absence.

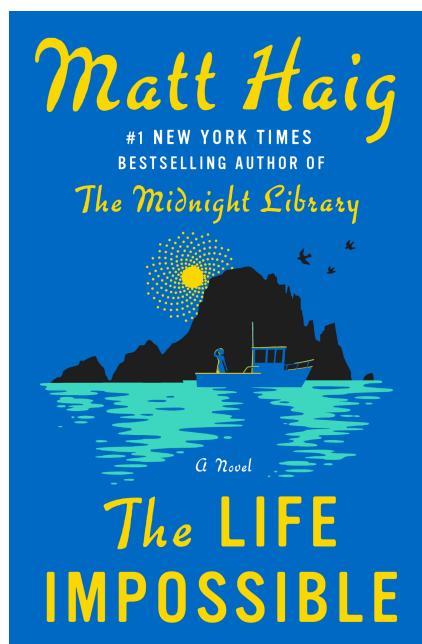
Please pay a deposit, look at the menu and send to me your lunch choices before **April 15th**.

Khim Sim Tan - Convenor

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## Page Turners

In March the Page Turners read 'The Life Impossible' by Matt Haig. This English author has written both fiction and non-fiction for children and adults. This novel was published in 2024.



The book centres on 72 year old Grace who lives alone after the deaths of her husband and only son. Out of the blue she hears that she has inherited a house in Ibiza from a long lost friend and she sets off to

explore her inheritance. As Grace gets to know the island and meets people who knew her friend, the book changes. Having begun as a relatable story of an elderly woman coming to terms with the changes in her life and making a fresh start, the book turns into a story of fantasy, where magic and supernatural powers are used to support the local environment.

One of us very much enjoyed the whole book but most were not so keen on the fantasy section and would have preferred to see Grace embrace her new life and help to resolve the problems of the island in a more realistic way. However, an enjoyable writing style and some interesting characters meant that most were happy to finish the book and therefore we had plenty to talk about. What would we have done in Grace's shoes? How would we have coped with the powers she acquired? Who would we cast in the film of the book? What is the point of a chapter with only three words? We also talked at some length about fantasy literature in general and considered why it has become so popular. As always it was an enjoyable afternoon.

Despite not being fans of the fantasy genre, we were still glad to have read this book and will happily commend it to you so do get in touch if you would like to swap our page turner for one of your own.

Deborah - Convenor

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## Quiz Group

We soldiered on for the first quiz despite having only two teams on line.

We tackled questions on City nicknames, Old occupations, Hitchcock, General Knowledge, Who's missing and It's spooky.

For the first time ever two rounds tied for top spot and two for the booby prize. I wonder what your best round would have been.

Here is an overview of the quiz subjects..

'The city of gold' most commonly refers to which African country?

What does a Peruker make?

Alfred Hitchcock was described in many newspapers as the master of what?

What is the most spoken language in the world?

The pop group Cream included Eric Clapton, Ginger Baker and who?

What play by Arthur Miller tells the story of the Salem witch trials?

We then had a three week break to refresh the brain cells and met again on Monday 23rd. The subjects this time were Spring, Masks, Doubles, Musical days, General Knowledge and British F1 Champions.

The best scoring round was Doubles but the quizzers found it hard to amass points when it came to Spring and Musical days.

We had a formula one guru in our midst who obtained full marks in the British Formula 1 Champions round.

So have a go at answering the six questions...

How many petals does a snow drop have?

Which actor starred in the 1994 film 'The mask?'

In which sport might you see a Double Axel?

In 1966 Matt Monroe sang about whose child?

Which country has a patron saint for nuclear weapons?

Which British racing driver won the Formula 1 championship in 2009?

Our April quizzes are diarised to take place on **Easter Monday 6th and Monday the 20th.**

Graham Carey

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### Scrabble

At our March meeting we had six eager contenders to do battle.

On random selection I found myself playing with two of our resident experts and feared myself as the usual makeweight.

Our first game produced this board.



The word quays on a triple letter earned a very handsome,

commanding lead which I managed only

temporarily to peg back by challenging the word Farty, not allowed. However by changing the word slightly on his next turn he managed to run out the winner with an outstanding 317 points.

In our second game, just the right combination of letters managed to keep me in the competition until close to the end and I finished in second place.

Our next meeting will take place on **Monday 27th April**

George Mansfield

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### Strollers Social Walking Group

Only four of us went on our March Dawlish U3A Strollers walk although we had apologies from six other regular walkers.

Alas the weather became extremely wet and windy. After walking down Eastcliff we walked along the seafront as far as the pier then took shelter from the heavy rain and strong winds. We then cut through town earlier than planned to see the local Community Groups exhibition at TAAG before our refreshment break in a nearby Teignmouth cafe.

Our next Dawlish U3A Strollers walk is on **Thursday April 9<sup>th</sup>** - meet up at the bus shelter opposite the Minidab on the Dawlish Teignmouth Rd at 1.30pm.

The walk has been chosen by one of our walkers and will take us along hilly lanes and pathways via Holcombe to Dawlish

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### Tea and Chat

**Thursday 2nd April** at the Riverside Centre, 2-4pm.

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## Other news:

### Dawlish Diary

Something from Dawlish Bowling Club

#### Free taster sessions!

Would you like to 'have a go' at bowls? Have you ever stopped and watched the players on the green and thought you'd like to try it?

Bowls is a gentle sport which helps to keep people fit and flexible, whilst being a very social sport, both on and off the green.

Dawlish Bowling Club is holding two open days;

#### **Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 April, from 11:00 – 15:00.**

We have a range of bowls for people to try as bowls come in different weights and sizes. The only thing we ask is that you wear flat soled shoes, like trainers.

We will also be holding some free taster sessions every Wednesday from 22 April to 27 May, 12:45 – 14:30; and Saturdays 2nd, 16th and 23 May 14:00 – 16:00.

Just one more great thing to do in our wonderful town.

Maybe see you there.

Barry

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## 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](mailto:newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info).

**Webmasters:** Please contact Dave and Miggie Pickton via [webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info)

Want to know more about Dawlish & District u3a? Check out our website: [u3a.dawlish.info](http://u3a.dawlish.info).