



Welcome to our May newsletter.

Spring marks the transition from winter to summer bringing longer and warmer days. Nature awakens and the landscape transforms.

Spring is a season of change and a chance to look forward to enjoying our town once more, after all the upheaval.

Dawlish has been looking lovely with the roadside daffodils and the trees in blossom. The black swans have been producing their young and the sea wall has been renewed and we are once more able to walk the sea wall path from Dawlish Warren to Dawlish. Lots of positives to enjoy in our town.

*"Spring is far more than just a changing of seasons; it's a rebirth of the spirit."*

Toni Sorenson

*"With the coming of Spring, I am calm again."*

Gustav Mahler

## **From the Chair**

### **Speakers Secretary**

As members know very well, it is important that we have new people volunteering to step forward to serve on the committee, as conveners for groups, or in other ways. I am pleased that there has been some movement on that front, although there are still some issues to clarify.

One late change is that there will be a vacancy in September for Speakers Secretary. Khim Sim has been extremely energetic and diligent in putting together a varied and interesting programme of speakers for our monthly meetings. She has done this despite having to spend long periods of time in London or in Singapore dealing with important family matters. I am extremely grateful to her for all she has done for several years in this role. She has now come to the decision that for personal reasons she must step down from this role, and from the committee as she will be moving away from Dawlish. I am sure we all wish her well as she makes plans for the future. She has made a real difference to our organisation, not just as Speakers Secretary but also as the founder and convener of the Luncheon Club.

Speaking from my own experience of having done it in the past, the role of Speakers Secretary is an interesting and creative one. It gives the opportunity to put together a programme of speakers from all sorts of backgrounds who will entertain and inform members. Khim Sim has brought us speakers from local charities, people with interesting pastimes and occupations, writers, local historians, advocates for important local campaigns, environmentalists, police and cyber security and many others. There are very few limits to what might be included in the programme. You can look on our website to see the sort of speakers we have had for the past few years. [Speakers at our monthly meetings - Dawlish & District U3A](#)

The main requirements are decent email skills, a degree of curiosity to seek potential speakers, a bit of detective work to find good people in the local area, and imagination about what might interest members.

If anyone is interested in learning more about the role, Khim Sim would be pleased to speak to you, or alternatively, you can contact me or any other committee member. One reassuring thing to know is that Khim Sim has booked a programme well into next year already, so her successor need not feel pressurised into finding speakers for the immediate future.

John Vick

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## **Monthly meeting report**

### **Dartmoor Search and Rescue**

As our previously booked speaker was not able to come for personal reasons, we are grateful to Alan Pewsey, a volunteer for Dartmoor Search and Rescue, for agreeing to speak to members at very short notice.

Before listening to Alan talk about their work, I assumed that DS&R would mainly focus on walkers and others who get into difficulties when enjoying the Dartmoor National Park. That is rather wide of the mark and they have a much broader remit.

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He began by telling us that 5210 'missing persons' were recorded by the police in Devon last year, and that did not include Plymouth. Over 700 were classified as high risk. At any one time, the police are likely to be focussing their attention on about 15 of these high risk cases.

The police undertake an assessment to try to understand where the person might have gone and why they have gone missing. They may then refer the case to one of several organisations whose expertise may help. In

addition to DS&R they might also call on HM Coastguards, caving organisations and mountain rescue groups across the region.

These cases may not be confined to the immediate area of the national park. While much of their work is in the immediate area, they are also likely to be involved in searches across the region, as far east as Lyme Regis and Wales. In 2015, they were called to York to assist those affected by severe flooding.

The majority of the people they are searching for are classified as 'vulnerable' – with mental health issues or at risk of suicide. These cases increase in the winter months. Children are a large group and they also search for horse riders, cyclists, kayakers and others who have come into difficulties while enjoying the outdoors.

The number of people who get into difficulties in remote areas is increasing, possibly due to the use of social media. 'Influencers' and others post photos of beautiful scenes, encouraging others to see for themselves but neglecting to include advice about suitable footwear and clothing, checking on the weather and other essential safety advice.

Technology plays a growing part in locating people. A considerable amount of data is used to assess the likely locations and behaviour of the different categories of missing people. For those who are lost or injured on moorland, mobile phones, satellite technology and other navigation aids are vital. We learned a great deal about new methods to seek help in emergencies in remote areas – including some valuable cautionary advice on 'What Three Words'.

The current organisation was founded in 1968, building on the work of earlier volunteers. It has evolved over the decades, and now there are four separate teams within DS&R. All members are volunteers, as are those who work in dozens of similar groups across the country. All of the 2800 men and 700 women are deployed in the same way regardless of age or sex. Typically, they will devote about five hours per week to this work, although frequently it is more. They come from all walks of life and occupations, and rely heavily on the goodwill and flexibility of employers to release them when an emergency demands.

Dogs are also a vital part of the team. It takes up to three years to train a dog to detect a person in remote countryside, using their highly developed sense of smell, but once trained they can do the work of about 20 humans on foot.

Needless to say, it is an expensive operation to run, requiring a great deal of specialist equipment, fuel for vehicles and a large training programme. The UK budget is approximately £2.5m pa, and 92% of that comes from donations. Just 8% comes from government funding, so the need to raise funds is paramount. There were information leaflets available for those who wished to learn more, and how to donate money to assist in this vital work.

## 18<sup>th</sup> May – Big Cats of Devon

Next month's speaker is Alex Bowler who will be talking about the 'Big Cats of Devon'. He is a big cat investigator, who lives in South Devon. His unusual and interesting 'hobby' began as a result of being stalked by a black leopard on Croydon Hill near Dunster in Somerset on Christmas Eve 1985. Since then, Alex has seen pumas and black leopards in Somerset and Devon a number of times and has photographed, recorded and filmed them. He has also studied their field signs, such as scats, scrapes, footprints and claw marks on trees.



John Vick

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## Interest Group news

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### Adventure Group

The adventure group has already had a busy year, with line dancing, African drumming, laser tag and metal detecting under our belts. Coming up, we have an opportunity to learn how to navigate with



map and compass on Dartmoor; the chance to go rowing together in a bell boat or dragon boat at Exeter Quay; and our biennial trip to the Manor Resort at Okehampton.

All our adventures are open to all Dawlish & District u3a members and are advertised in Adventure Group news on the website (<https://u3a.dawlish.info/tag/adventure>).

If you'd like to be included on our circulation list so you get notified as soon as a new adventure is advertised, then contact the convenors via [adventure@u3a.dawlish.info](mailto:adventure@u3a.dawlish.info) and we will add you to the group. Don't worry, you are not expected to join in with everything, just pick the adventures that

interest you and enjoy doing fun activities with other u3a members.

Miggie Pickton, Co-convenor

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### Art Appreciation

For their April meeting, members were invited to select a work of art on the theme of 'Old Age'. We started with a famous image by the American artist Grant Wood. 'American Gothic' (1930) depicts a couple of farmers, both grim faced with the husband holding a pitch fork, and standing in front of their wooden house. It seems to typify the stoic endurance of a generation of farmers who suffered great privation during the depression.

The rather lugubrious theme was continued by a self-portrait by El Greco painted in the 1590s. Although he was only in his 50s at the time, this reminded us that the definition of 'old age' has probably changed significantly over time.

Gustave Courbet's 'Old Man with a Glass of Wine' (1860) was a 'realist' painting which aimed to depict everyday life without compromise. The ravaged features of this old man were graphically portrayed. The glass of wine in his hand was probably not his only drink that day!

The Dutch artist Pieter Claesz reminded us about the reality of death with his 'Still life with a skull and writing quill' (1628). The genre of 'memento mori' paintings was popular in that period, full of symbols showing how ultimately insignificant are the things which preoccupy us in life.

Throughout his life, Rembrandt produced a great many self-portraits and these show his progress from a young man full of promise, becoming a successful artist and prosperous family man, through to a troubled and sad figure preoccupied by bereavement and financial woes in his declining years.



Vincent Van Gogh's 'Sorrowing Old Man' (1890) was another sobering image focusing on the physical and emotional decline of old age. Likewise, Gustav Klimt's 'The Three Ages of Woman' (1905) presents an uncompromising portrayal of childhood, motherhood and the physical decline of old age. It is far removed from the glamorous images which are so characteristic of much of Klimt's work.

After so much gloom, it was a relief to find some more positive images of what old age can offer. Honoré-Victorin Daumier produced a number of pictures on a theme of older men enjoying some leisure time and a common interest in 'The Print Collectors' (1860-64). Gaetano Bellei (1857-1922) produced many images celebrating the relationships which grandmothers had with their younger family members, and the fun to be had with old friends, enjoying the time old age offers for recreation.



Gaetano Bellei original

'Grandmother and granddaughter', 'A Good Brew' and other of his paintings are warm and engaging.

A very different take on old age was Cranach's intriguing 'The Fountain of Youth' from 1546. It shows old women being taken to a large pool with a fountain. As they experience the waters and move from one side to the other, they regain their youth and beauty, and emerge transformed and able to enjoy dancing, feasting and all the good things of youth. It seems that old men did not need this fountain of youth, but were rejuvenated by the company of younger women!

We ended with a selection of the nation's favourite images of old age produced by Beryl Cook. Old men and women playing tennis, dancing on a cruise ship, or having tea in the garden – naked! – these came as a considerable relief after the largely negative images of physical and emotional decline which characterised so many of the other choices. Beryl Cook and Gaetano

Bellei's work reminds us of the positive side of living in our Third Age.

At our next meeting on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May, Molly will give a presentation on Anatomy in art.

Lynne Vick, Convener

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### **Beer and Skittles**

Our next skittles evening is **Thursday 21st May, 19.00 to 21.00 hrs.**

No experience needed. Do join us for a fun evening.

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### **Boules**

The Boules Group have come out of their winter hibernation and chanced their arm on the Lawn, before retreating after an hour for much needed coffee.



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### **Creative Writing**

Our chosen title this month was 'The Lonely...' We knew this would generate different approaches and that was indeed the case.

We had a lovely story about a lonely teddy hoping to find a new home. When the owner of the shop locked up at night the teddies came to life and were able to talk to each other. After throwing himself from the shelf into a little girl's arms, the lonely teddy secured himself a forever happy home.

Another writer approached the subject in a more serious manner looking at the sad experience of loneliness in the community.

Our next writer set her story in past times with a father being pressed by an older man to gain his young daughter's hand in marriage. A marriage that would surely be a lonely one for the poor girl.

Our story of the month had to be the one written about a woman who was in a coma following an accident in which she had fallen from a balcony. When she finally regained consciousness it turned out that she remembered her husband pushing her off.

The final story focused on the life of a former artist, now living with dementia in a Care Home. Sadly she couldn't remember her own son, but drawing his portrait brought her skills back and some degree of comfort. So definitely a range of approaches!

The highlight of the meeting was the presentation of a bouquet to Ruth, celebrating her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and still writing brilliantly.

Our next topic for the 11th of May will be 'Who would have guessed?'

It should be fun.

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## Gardens and Gateaux

Our Gardens and Gateaux group took its first trip of the season to Ford Abbey on 17<sup>th</sup> April.



It was a definite success with the weather being kind to us; the only way to get wet was to stand too close to the 160ft. high fountain.

We had a lovely guided tour of the house with additional access to some

private areas. It is always lovely to see the great workmanship that has gone onto these types of buildings.



Refreshments and a stroll around the beautiful gardens rounded off the trip. (Didn't quite manage the full 30 acres.)

Still lots more to come this year so, if you want more information on this group, see our website or email me via the info link.

Barry Baker

Group Coordinator.

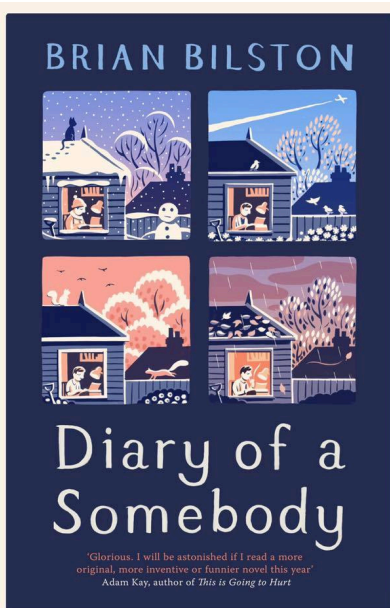
You can also contact me directly, via [barrybaker1@live.co.uk](mailto:barrybaker1@live.co.uk)

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## Literature

### The Diary of a Somebody by Brian Bilston

Brian Bilston (not his real name) is a poet who found fame on social media, "The Poet Laureate of Twitter", and this, his first novel, is a comedy with poetry. The premise is that Brian, a forty-five year old divorced father of teenage Dylan and cat owner makes a New Year's Resolution to write a poem a day. The reader follows a year in his life and becomes acquainted with his friends, neighbours and family.



Brian is a misfit, though he does have a job at first, and, like Pooter in *The Diary of a Nobody*, his life is a series of scrapes. Some of us have known self-destructable people like this and found him to be believable.

He procrastinates, gets into debt by squandering money and can't seem to help letting down his friends, including his potential new girlfriend, Liz.

There are memorable characters in the book: his wildly eccentric occult following neighbour, the small group of fellow poets who meet in the pub and Tomas, the philosopher-janitor who has an apposite quote from Wittgenstein to offer Brian comfort and support for every difficulty.

Brian's ex-wife has a new partner, a seemingly perfect, financially well-off motivational speaker who tirelessly raises money for various charities.

This is bad enough but his real nemesis is Toby Salt, one of the poetry group. He writes in a pretentious and inaccessible style, rejoicing in his, to his mind, superiority to the others and is scathing about their work.

When he is published and achieves critical acclaim he becomes even more insufferable.

Toby disappears and Brian is the chief suspect in, possibly, his murder. The police officers conducting the investigation remove Brian's journal which contains hate-filled verse about Toby and torn out pages that Brian cannot explain.

The policemen make a great comic double-act with one of them offering critiques of Brian's work and asking, in all seriousness, why, if Brian calls himself a poet, he hasn't written any limericks.

It falls upon Brian to investigate to prove his innocence.

He bonds with Dylan during a wet week on holiday in a Welsh cottage and their

relationship was one of the highlights of the story.

Most of us liked his poems very much, appreciating the eclectic mix of styles with pastiches of well-known much-loved work combined with songs given new words and we especially enjoyed the horoscope haikus.

Some of us thought that the plot was a bit thin but there was, after all, a missing, presumed dead, poet, a dreadful betrayal of friends that required redemption, a very satisfying comeuppance and a happy resolution to a relationship that seemed to be doomed.

There was satire and word-play, laugh out loud moments and one particularly poignant poem that we thought was the author's own and not another affectionate parody.

It was good to have a comic novel for a change and we were split down the middle with half giving it 4/5 but it was awarded 3/5 with some of the group saying that they would like to read more of Brian Bilston's poetry.

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### Lunch Club

A lovely meet up with the U3A lunch group at Powderham restaurant on a sunny Friday. We were made very welcome despite many customers being present. Some members enjoyed a glass of wine, others started with tea, coffee or water. Meals chosen varied from soup, ham egg and chips, fish and chips and the largest plate of various smoked fish with bread and salad. All looked delicious and all plates were emptied. A few hardy people had dessert or cake. And one person chose some cannoli to take home for a later dessert. It was a lovely spot with

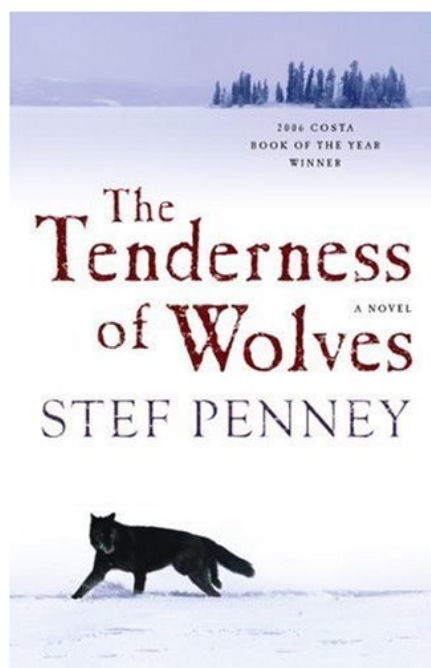
views of the castle and blossoming trees. A great catch up with friends. Many thanks Kate for hosting.

**May 21st 2026 Thursday, Thai Smile Cafe 12.30pm**

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### Page Turners

In April the Page Turners read 'The Tenderness of Wolves'. This debut novel by Scottish born Stef Penney was published in 2006 and won the Costa Prize for 'Book of the Year'. We were all unsure why the book had this title as there is very little written



about wolves.

The book is set in a remote area of Canada in the 1860s. It opens with the brutal murder of a trapper and follows the stories of those who are trying to discover what happened.

The majority of the story is

told in the first person by Mrs Ross, who is trying to locate her son who disappeared on the day of the murder. The murder is being investigated by men from the Hudson's Bay Trading Company and also by a former journalist and their sections are told in the third person. Much of the action concerns treks across the snowy wilderness tracking those who have gone before, or events in small remote communities.

Many of us liked the descriptive writing which gave a good sense of the north

Canadian desolate countryside in winter and the treks across it and we enjoyed the insight into how the Hudson's Bay company operated. However we all found the book to be overly long which can apparently be an issue for new novelists. Despite the length, not everything was clear at the end of the book and it was felt that some of the detailed sub stories could have been excluded in favour of rounding the ending more fully.

Overall, we were polarised in our view and enjoyment of the book. Half of us really enjoyed it and found it to be a page turner while the others were less enthusiastic with comments about getting confused by too many characters and side stories. I think all of us found the amount of trekking in cold inhospitable parts of Canada became a bit tedious at times.

Although the book is described as being a crime thriller we did not really think it fitted that genre. There was a crime, with a murder at the beginning, but most of the book is about searching and trekking and, in the case of Mrs Ross, perhaps finding oneself while enduring considerable hardship on an arduous journey.

If you are interested in reading this book for yourself and making your own mind up about whether it is a page turner or not, do get in touch and arrange to borrow a copy.

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## Quiz Group

Well another 120 questions have come and gone, adding to the vast knowledge of our quizzers.

The first evening saw us look at the themes of Easter, American presidents, Named after, European food and drink, Water, Water everywhere and General Knowledge.

Because of the jokers played, the Named after round narrowly came top. That said, taking off the joker points the European food and drink would have come in first. However, the Easter bunnies would have been hoping mad seeing how Easter came rock bottom.



*So which country does Easter Island belong to?*

*What is the middle name of Barack H Obama?*

*All the planets except for Earth are named after what?*

*Cheese fondue is a natural dish of which country?*

*What river in Vietnam is known as the 9 dragons and is the longest river in South East Asia?*

*Gustav Holst was of what nationality?*

General Knowledge was first up in the second quiz, followed by Politics, Film titles, Give me all three, Logos and Disney characters.

Would you have answered correctly that ..

*In Computing the S in HTTPS stands for SECURE*

*In 2024 Boris Johnson was turned away from his polling station because he forgot to bring his ID*

*The legal drama following a couple's divorce and its effect on their young son was KRAMER V KRAMER*

*The three highest points in the Peak District are Kinder Scout, Bleaklow Head and Higher Shelf Stones*

*The rabbit is linked to the Playboy magazine*

*Colonel Hathi was in the Jungle Book film*

As for the participants, they excelled when it came to answering the Logos round but their weakest link was the Disney characters.

We only have one quiz scheduled for May; **Monday the 18th.**

Graham Carey

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## Scrabble

Another competitive game with some interesting words and one that went unchallenged - wacked (whacked).



One interesting word, ironclad, which means something so secure it can't be changed.

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## Strollers Social Walking Group

Seven Dawlish & District u3a Strollers enjoyed a rather hilly walk in April. We met up at the bus stop opposite the Minidab B&B on Dawlish / Teignmouth Rd then walked via lovely country lanes down to and through Holcombe then on beyond to Dawlish (apart from two of us who left the group at the end of John Nash Drive).

Our next monthly Strollers walk is on **Thursday May 14th.** We'll be doing the Kingsteignton and Passage House circular walk, with a refreshments stop mid walk at the riverside Passage House.

From Dawlish please catch the number 2 Newton Abbot bus at 13.06 pm or the same bus from Teignmouth at 13.09pm.

New Strollers/u3a members are always welcome to come along on our walks which can vary from level terrain to more challenging hills.

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## Tea and Chat

Our next tea and chat is

**Thursday May 7th - 2pm**

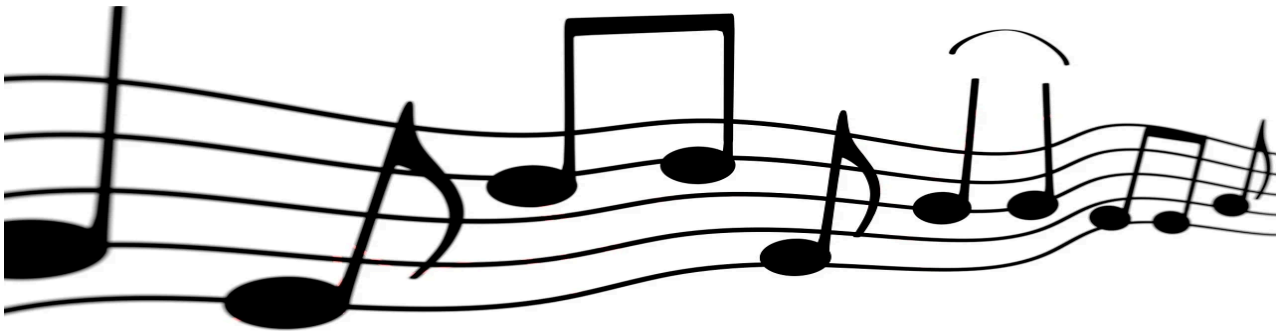
At the Riverside Centre at the Manor House.

Cost £1.50 to include tea, coffee and biscuits.

From 3pm to 4pm there is an opportunity to play board games.

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## Dawlish Diary:



**Dawlish Town Daytime Band** are on the lookout for some of our fantastic talent.

This from Sue Griffin, the Band Manager.

I am wondering if you have any musicians amongst your Dawlish u3a Groups who would like to come along and join us? We rehearse on a Monday afternoon 2.00p.m. - 4.00p.m. at The Hope Centre, Dawlish (behind Sainsburys). We are a lighthearted, friendly, adult daytime group, who play for fun, but hope to improve! We have a mix of wind and brass instruments, and are looking for enthusiastic players to increase our numbers. Returners/lapsed players, accomplished musicians, all will be very welcome.

Contact; [suegriffin149@hotmail.com](mailto:suegriffin149@hotmail.com)

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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).