

**Welcome to our June newsletter**



June marks the start of summer in the Northern Hemisphere (winter in the Southern) and is named after the Roman goddess Juno, protector of marriage and childbirth. It features the longest daylight hours of the year during the summer solstice, features three birthstones (pearl, alexandrite, moonstone), and is a popular month for weddings. The birthday flowers for June are roses and the honeysuckle. Both stand for everything that is associated with affection, love, desire, and generosity.



Some notable figures born in June include Che Guevara, Anne Frank, Jean-Paul Sartre, [George H.W. Bush](#), George Orwell, and Marilyn Monroe.

Learning • Laughing • Living

*"In early June the world of leaf and blade and flowers explodes, and every sunset is different." – John Steinbeck*

*"June is a love song written by nature." - Patience Strong*

*"What is one to say about June, the time of perfect young summer, the fulfillment of the promise of the earlier months, and with as yet no sign to remind one that its fresh young beauty will ever fade." - Gertrude Jekyll*

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## **From the Chair**

I was not able to be at the monthly meeting in May but I do hope to be at the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> June to hear our guest speaker Sally Robinson talk about the Royal Institute of the Deaf. Sally writes this about herself:

*I have been deaf all my life and worn hearing aids from the age of five years old.*

*I am a Mum to 3 children and a Grandma to 5 girls.*

*I worked as a Maths teacher then an Advisory teacher for children and young people who are deaf for 40 years before retiring two years ago.*

*My sister and I were full-time carers to our Mum in our teenage years as she had MS.*

*I have volunteered for various charities for most of my working life, including with: [DELTA](#) – summer school for families with young children who are deaf; [NDCS](#) – giving talks to families of Deaf children on weekends away; [DBUK](#) – Mentoring young Deaf Blind people, giving them skills to look for work and building up their confidence; [RNID](#) – talks and hearing aid checks.*

*When I am not volunteering I am meeting up with friends and family and my younger granddaughters keep me busy!*

I hope you will be able to come to the meeting which, as usual, will begin at 3.45pm in the Council Chamber of the Manor House.

### **You might be interested in this...**

Recently I have discovered a very interesting series of radio programmes/podcasts which cover all sorts of subjects which are regular topics of conversation in our society, including u3a members. These programmes feature Evan Davis, perhaps best known by many for presenting Dragons Den and Radio 4 news programmes, and Sarah Montagu, also a Radio 4 current affairs journalist. In a very relaxed way, they explore some big themes in our national life today, and try to shine some light on matters which often perplex us. And the good news is that they only last about ten minutes but leave you better informed and with much to think about.

Recent programmes which particularly resonated with me were about 'The Economics of Happiness' and 'Gen Z vs Late Boomers: Which generation is better off?' Most of us will have an

opinion about these, and they do affect us all and our families. There is certainly a lot of concern and discussion on how life is difficult for the current generation of young people leaving education and entering employment and, they hope, independent living. They face many challenges in contrast, it is often suggested, to 'our generation' (the Third Age?) who have benefited from all manner of advantages. The discussion explores these issues from many angles.

[The World at One Highlights - Gen Z vs Late Boomers: Which generation is better off? - BBC Sounds](#)

The other programme which particularly interested me explored, from an economist's perspective, what makes for personal happiness as well as for a happy society.

[The World at One Highlights - What are the economics of happiness? - BBC Sounds](#)

It is clearly a complicated matter, but one of the main conclusions – based on academic research – is that major contributions to personal happiness include financial security (rather than extreme wealth) but also generosity and volunteering. This could lead me in a roundabout way to one of my major themes in seeking members who are willing to volunteer to help with running our u3a!

Nuff said.

John Vick

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## Monthly meeting report

If you go down to the woods today you are likely to encounter more of a surprise than a Teddy Bears picnic according to this month's guest speaker, Alex Bowler.

Following his first encounter with a Big Cat at Christmas time in the Brendon Hills, near Dunster village, when following a rendition of Merry Christmas, he and some friends



happened to glance behind, only to see a large Black Panther stalking them, terrified they ran away into the woods.

Since then Alex has dedicated himself to searching for, and finding significant evidence of Big Cats such as Puma's, Lynx, Black Leopards and Wildcats all living wild and free in many areas of dense woodland. His evidence includes footprints, faeces (scat), tree scratchings and images from remote motion cameras.

These animals are possibly descendants of Roman imports, supplemented by numerous releases brought about by the implementation of the 1976 Wild Animals Act, which significantly enforced the rules for registering and keeping of such animals.



Alex believes that these wild beasts survive happily on a plentiful diet of wild deer, sheep, wood pigeon and pheasant. He noted that landowners are reluctant to publicly acknowledge many of these findings to prevent creating undue panic and drawing attention to the areas where sightings have been made.

We were reassured that, apart from one recorded incident when human remains were discovered in a tree, there have been no harmful encounters with these wild beasts, as they stay away from human encounters.

Alex collects and collates testimony from people who have experienced any such encounters with Big Cats and several members recounted incidents during the Q & A

session following the talk.

Finally Alex invited anybody to share their own personal experiences with him at: [www.mybigcatsightings.co.uk](http://www.mybigcatsightings.co.uk)

George Mansfield

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## Interest Group news

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### Art Appreciation

Our May meeting had to be cancelled because of power problems at the Manor House, but the good news is that the talk scheduled for last month will now go ahead on **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June** at the normal time of 2pm.

Molly will give a presentation on the topic of 'Art and Anatomy'. She thought it would be a good idea to advise members that her talk will include some images which are somewhat gory and, as the BBC would say, some people may find them upsetting.

Sadly, she can't refer members to a helpline, but hopes this will not deter people from coming!

Lynne Vick, Convener

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### Beer and Skittles

Next beer and skittles is **Thursday 18th June** at the Brunswick Arms, 19.00 - 21.00hrs.

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### Boules

The Boules group met on the hottest day of the year so far. The new boules court in Exminster was not yet ready, and so we used the Lawn instead and decided that with careful selection of where we played we would get some shade for most of the time.

We played one game, and then sought refreshment in the cool of the Methodist church cafe. New members are always welcome, no experience or equipment needed. Or talent either, otherwise they wouldn't let me play.

Michael Heyden, convenor.

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## French Conversation

We had two meetings in May.

Our first chosen subject was "The first record you bought or were given and the first film you saw"

Well, this was certainly a trip down memory lane!

We all remembered Max Bygraves, Lonnie Donegal, the Chipmunks, Frankie Avalon and more and the words to many songs.

Who remembers "We're All Going on a Summer Holiday", "The Ugly Ducking" and "My Old Man's A Dustman"?

There were plenty more to recall.

As to films, many of us remembered the ABC Minors or whatever Saturday morning's film show we went to.

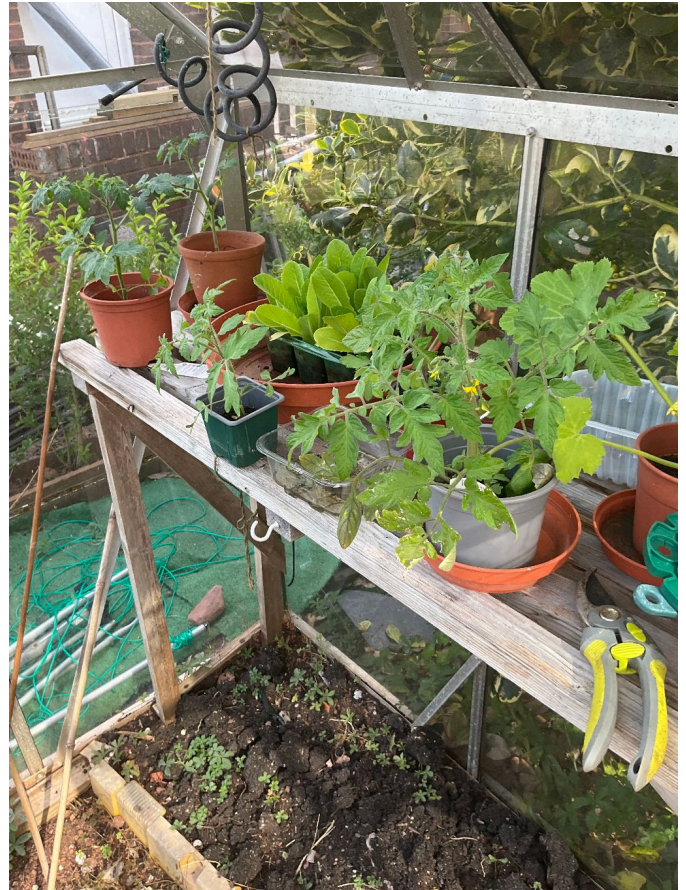
Who remembers Flash Gordon?

There was also "The Lady and the Tramp", "Pinocchio " and all those cowboy films?

Annie spoke of a film that moved her deeply. A French film about a laundry girl who restarts her life but things are too difficult.

At our next meeting we read and discussed an article about gardening and how it might alleviate anxiety.

The article spoke about the stress in our lives and the state of the world today about which we can do nothing. It talked about the satisfaction of watching something grow and develop and quoted research showing the benefits on mental health, not to mention the effect on physical health and mobility.



We have some keen gardeners and some who hate it!

Some of us derive great satisfaction from growing vegetables.

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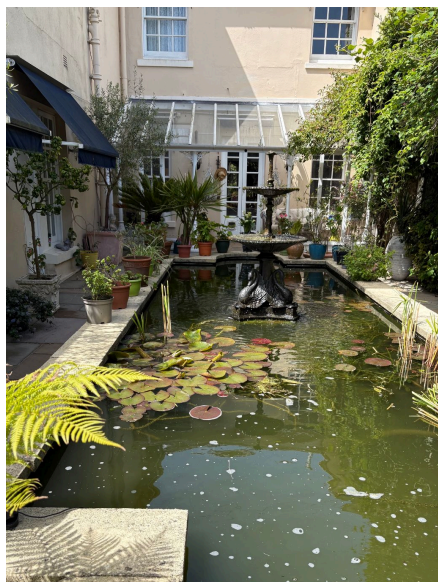
## Gardens and Gateaux

Wylam House was built c 1863 in the Italianate style, which allowed the wealthy to re-create the feel of Italy in Torquay



because the Napoleonic war had precluded travel by the affluent to the Mediterranean.

Originally named Malpas Lodge, the current name came about when in 1917 it was purchased by Sir James Knott who was an MP for Sunderland and was living in Wylam, Northumberland at the time.



The Italianate themed gardens have retained their formal layout with balustrading framing the front of the house and several ponds and fountains still

remain.

The rose garden appears to have been a later addition to the original design and is being revitalised with a selection of David Austin roses, whilst the crazy paving will undergo renovation work to render it safe as it was roped off because of the uneven condition.

We were blessed with a beautiful day and the event had a feel of a garden party especially with The Orangery being available to sit in to enjoy refreshments and the sea view.

Torquay Garden Club provided an excellent display of plants and vegetables for sale at the entrance.

Agatha Christie would visit Wylam house when she was young. If you missed the

chance to visit during the NGS open gardens in May it looks like you may be able to see it again with the international Agatha Christie festival being hosted there on 14 September this year.

It is well worth visiting this excellent example of its period.

Jenny Lancaster

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## Great Lives

### Robert Blake

*a neglected West Country hero*

Born in Bridgwater in 1599, Robert was the eldest son of Humphrey Blake who owned a shipping business in the town which was then a busy port.

On his father's death in 1625 he abandoned a scholarly career to take on responsibility for the family.

His life took another turn in 1642 at the outbreak of the English Civil War. Taking Parliament's side against King Charles 1st, Blake distinguished himself at the sieges of Bristol, Lyme and Taunton.



In 1649 Parliament passed an act to create the new office of "General at Sea", and Blake was one of three Colonels appointed to the rank.

Despite no previous seafaring experience, Blake soon showed himself worthy of the trust placed in him. His determination and bravery inspired his crews, and won the respect of his seniors in the Council of State.

After pursuing and destroying most of the royalist fleet, Blake was able to land forces at night to seize Jersey and Guernsey from royal control.

At the outbreak of the first Dutch War in 1652, he was involved in a number of sea battles, though the English received a setback at Dungeness as the Dutch admiral Maarten Tromp was able to shepherd a Dutch merchant fleet to safety.

Blake offered his resignation and requested an enquiry into the conduct of the English captains. The outcome was a number of measures including a new disciplinary code and powers of courts martial. Official Fighting Instructions were drawn up advocating line ahead battle formation. His resignation was refused, but at his request seamen's pay and prize money was increased.

In 1653 at the Battle of Portland Blake received a wound to the thigh which never properly healed, and he retired to Knoll to rest and convalesce.

At the outbreak of war with Spain, though not in good health, his services were again required and he achieved his most famous victory in 1657 when his fleet attacked and destroyed a Spanish fleet at anchor under the guns of Santa Cruz in Tenerife.

On his recall in June, before his ship reached Plymouth Sound, he died of disease and his wounds. He was honoured with a State Funeral and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

At the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 his body was exhumed and dumped in a common grave. Attempts were made to deliberately expunge the achievements of the Parliamentarians from historical records, which may account in part for the belated recognition Blake was accorded. In 1900 his statue was erected in Bridgwater and in 1945 a stone memorial was placed in Westminster Abbey in recognition of his role as a chief founder of England's naval supremacy.

Richard Farr

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### **In Our Own Write**

Having rather reluctantly returned from our very romantic Golden wedding trip down the Nile in a dahabiya it was back to reality and the wonderful imagination of my fellow writers. Our meeting was held on the 11 th May and the topic was "Who would have guessed".

Indeed, who would have guessed that our eldest and most revered participant would give us a tale of a leather clad biker taking his revenge on another biker for wronging his sister. There was a twist in the tale which to spare any blushes I will just say that it involved silk underwear.

After that the rest of our contributions seemed quite tame.

We had a bus company converting its fleet to electric vehicles which although worked fine in the summer literally ground to a halt in wet and cold winter weather.



A newly purchased teddy bear being accidentally left behind on a bus and then making a new friend of a smaller teddy in the Lost Property office. A happy ending for them when the first teddy's owner reclaimed both.

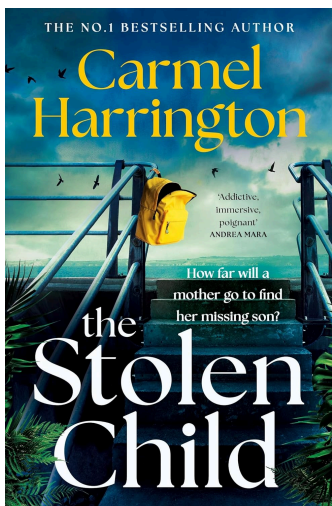
A voluntary visitor unexpectedly inherits a fortune following the death of the old lady that she had visited for several years.

Our next meeting will be on the **8th June** and the title is "They met on a Monday..."

Travina

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## Literature Book Group



The Stolen Child by Carmel Harrington

This is a mystery story related in three timelines from different points of view. At the centre is the presumed abduction of two year old Robert from a cabin whilst on a Mediterranean cruise

in 1983, with his stepfather and mother sound asleep. He had been drinking and she

had taken a sleeping pill following some earlier tensions between the couple. Their baby, Lily, was not harmed.

Forty years later, the stepfather, Jason, is still investigating Robert's disappearance and, during a television interview, produced a computerised age-processed image of how he probably looks aged forty-two.

Robert's mother, Kimberly, has immersed herself in her property business and Lily has always felt overshadowed and overlooked.

The marriage broke down soon after the incident.

An American called Zack contacts Lily convinced that he is Robert. There is a resemblance and he has memories of another mother. She is sceptical at first, Jason has been conned before, but the two form a bond, which we found touching, and they set out to discover the truth.

In the other thread of the story, beginning in 1963, friends Sally and Elsie are in a London orphanage and we follow them into young adulthood when they leave the care system with little support and struggle to get by.

They are resilient and determined but early childhood traumas have taken their toll.

The two storylines converge and, after surprising twists, the mystery is resolved. There were suggestions in our group of some implausibilities and odd coincidences but strange things do occur in real life. People in desperate situations can behave rashly and become trapped.

The author writes in a deceptively simple style but she tackles deep and distressing subjects of neglect, guilty buried secrets, the pain of not knowing what has become of a

missing child, the repercussions of living a lie, post natal depression, domestic abuse and coercive control.

We were divided on this book with half of us finding it such a gripping page-turner that we skimmed through it again to find the clues we missed on first reading and the clever misdirections.

3/5

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### **Lunch Club**

We went to Thai Smile Cafe in Teignmouth.  
21 Waterloo Street, TQ14 8 AS.

Na opened the restaurant just for our Dawlish u3a lunch group on Thursday.

We had a great lunch. The set lunch was affordable for all of us. Only £13.

Highly recommended to have your special occasion lunch here.

June 2026 - I'm away.



Khim Sim Tan

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### **Page Turners**

In May the Page Turners read Mark Haddon's 2003 prize-winning novel, 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the NightTime'.

The narrative is told in the first person by 15 year old Christopher who lives in Swindon. He has been described by various commentators as having Aspergers Syndrome or being on the autism spectrum but Haddon himself has said that he is not an expert in these wide-ranging conditions and that Christopher is neuro-diverse and experiences the world in his own unique way. We were grateful that reading this book gave us an insight into the autistic mind, but recognise the need to bear in mind the great diversity of the condition.

Christopher discovers that his neighbour's dog has been killed and he sets out to discover who could have done such a thing. Along the way he discovers family secrets which scare him and lead to him undertaking a journey way beyond his usual experience. We explore Christopher's relationship with both his parents and how they have dealt with his condition. By the end of the book he is rebuilding trust within his family and is optimistic about his future, having realised what he is capable of achieving.

The book is written in a unique way as it portrays the way in which Christopher's mind works. He likes lists and patterns and routine. He struggles to understand other people's feelings and hates being touched and the colours yellow and brown. He is educated in a special school and has never made a journey on his own.

Having Christopher as the narrator challenged us to think about a very different world view.

The book also made us think about the difficulties for parents living with and caring for a neuro-diverse child. Each of his parents coped differently with loving him but finding his behaviour and outbursts hard to manage and we were interested in the effect on the marital relationship.

The descriptive writing in the book was not what we are used to because Christopher had his own way of looking at people and places; some of us enjoyed this whilst others found it difficult.

Christopher was extremely good at maths and throughout the book there are some complex examples of his mathematical thinking - many of us found these parts too complicated.

We did not all love this book but most of us were glad we had read it. If you would like to try it for yourself, do get in touch and perhaps swap our page turner for one of your own.

Deborah Wallis

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## Quiz Group

Only one meeting was held in May and those present were set questions on First names, General Knowledge, Countries with four letters, Back to school, Words and Nicknames of Prime Ministers.

The quizzers played their joker on what they thought would be their best round but it didn't work out that way for a couple. There were some high scoring rounds with one ten out of ten and only four points separating the teams.

The group showed how much they knew about Countries with four letters but were

not up to speed regarding the Back to school round. Perhaps they need to attend a refresher course.

Here is a sample from each round for you to try to answer...

*What first name is linked to a 1938 novel by Daphne du Maurier?*

*In Physics what must an object have to be affected by gravity?*

*The common garden gnome originated in which European country?*

*Which country has an internet code of .tg?*

*The word assassin has its origins in which language?*

*David Cameron once described Boris Johnson as a greased what?*

So there you have it for another month. In June we will be meeting on **Monday 1st and Monday 8th.**

Graham Carey

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## Scrabble

Five dedicated followers of Scrabble opted to meet on a sunny Bank Holiday Monday.

We decided to play two games with all five players.

This was the result of the second game, during which I managed to insert, unchallenged, an illegal word. See if you can spot it.



Unfortunately it did not give me any significant advantage and I finished well down the field in both games, which were both won convincingly by our resident lady expert.

Please catch the number 2 Exeter bus from Teignmouth at 13.09pm or the same bus from Dawlish at 13.25pm to Langdon Hospital.

We're walking up the hospital boundary footpath out into the countryside, then down Port Road across to Dawlish Country Park, then on to our refreshment stop at Hope Church Community café. There are twice hourly buses home from the nearby Sainsburys bus stop.

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

Jean Gitsham, convenor

We look forward to meeting again on **Monday 22nd June.**

George Mansfield

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### Strollers Social Walking Group

There were just Richard and I on our May Strollers walk, though we also had about six apologies.

We walked from Ware Barton, down the lane opposite the bus stop where we spotted lots of rosy garlic in bloom on the grass bank. After crossing the footbridge we walked on down into Kingsteignton then alongside the leat, then on via the churchyard past the old mill and on along the footpath to Greenhill Way. We continued on through Hackney Marshes to our mid walk refreshment stop at the riverside Passage House Inn. After a refreshing lager we walked back to the bus stop via field edge footpaths. The bus was late and there were no seats available until two young ones thankfully stood up for us oldies to sit.

Our next Dawlish & District u3a Strollers walk is on **Thursday June 11<sup>th</sup>.**

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### Tea and Chat

This is just a reminder that all our members are invited to our monthly Tea and Chat meeting at the Riverside Centre on **Thursday 4th June** between 2 and 4 pm.

There will be some committee members attending to answer any questions you might have, and as before we'll have the first part of the afternoon for chatting. There's a free raffle ticket for everyone, and after the winner is drawn you can join in board games, or just keep talking. Kate and



I do hope to see you there.

Michael

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## Dawlish Diary

My name is Peter Hayes and I'm a member of Marina Bowling Club in Dawlish. On **June 27th**, from 10.00am until 4.00pm, we are offering a '**Ladies Taster Day**' to encourage ladies to have a go at the sport.

It is completely free and equipment will be provided. All we ask is that ladies wear flat soled shoes. Is this something that any of your members could be interested in? The club is in Sandy Lane, Dawlish, just down from the sports centre. If anyone is interested, they can contact me on my mobile (07549 509600) or via WhatsApp.

Peter

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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).