

Welcome to our July newsletter

**"If I had my
way, I'd remove
January from
the calendar
altogether and
have an extra
July instead."**

— Roald Dahl

July is hollyhocks and hammocks, fireworks and vacations, hot and steamy weather, cool and refreshing swims, beach picnics, and vegetables all out of the garden." — Jean Hersey

Notable figures born in July include

Diana, Princess of Wales, Ringo Starr, Emmeline Pankhurst and Beatrix Potter

Question: *Why was the beach confused about where the sea was?*

Answer: *It just wasn't shore.*

Living



Laughing



Learning

From the Chair

Living the Dream: The Rise and Fall of Retirement

I recently read a fascinating article by Helen McCarthy, an historian who is soon to publish a book entitled *Living the Dream: The Rise and Fall of Retirement*. She is writing about the remarkable transformation in the experience of life after employment which has come about in our own lifetimes. It picks up on some of the themes I mentioned in my musings 'From the Chair' in June ('Gen Z vs Late Boomers: Which generation is better off?'), and it certainly keys into some themes of interest to members of the Third Age. This is an edited version of her article.

Professor McCarthy describes the experience of two men of retirement age in the 1940s. Turning 80 in 1947, Stanley Jones reluctantly accepted that it was time to throw in his job selling home furnishings in London's East End. While few held on as long as Stanley, earning into old age, his experience was far from uncommon for working-class people. Men became eligible at 65 for the state pension, but 3 in 5 chose to defer in favour of paid work. At 67, 2 in 5 were still employed. "I'll retire when someone poleaxes me," commented Charles Woodman, still in harness as a building labourer in his mid-seventies.

For their descendants, retirement would be transformed into something more recognisable to us today: a period of material comfort and well-earned leisure, stretching to 15, 20 or even 30 years. Yet the generation entering the workplace in 2026 might find Stanley and Charles's experiences a more reliable guide to the future.

Giving up paid work at 60 or 65 is a startlingly recent invention. Some employers began to provide pensions from the 1850s and state pensions were introduced in 1908. These were means-tested and could only be claimed at 70, meaning that earning for as long as physically possible remained, for most, the best defence against poverty in later life. The retirement pensions introduced by Labour after the Second World War were an improvement, but still offered only basic subsistence.

This was the world in which men like Charles and Stanley clung tightly to their jobs, fearful of losing their living and everything that went with it. Nearly a third of men aged 65 or over were still at work in 1951. Thirty years later, the figure was just one in eight. For women, the situation was more complicated: many gave up wage-earning for marriage or motherhood, and those remaining in (or re-entering) paid work became eligible for the state pension at 60. Yet for men and women alike, the trend was towards ever-earlier retirement.

Poverty in old age was still a major risk, but the newly retired were more likely than ever before to have occupational pensions and to own homes. Cheap package holidays, Open University degrees, keep-fit classes and garden centres brought a fresh interest unknown to earlier generations of retirees.

This was the era of 'The Third Age', a phrase quickly becoming shorthand for all the ways in which advances in health, leisure and material security were transforming the lives of older people.

Not everything is golden for the over-sixties in the early 21st century. Yet the bigger story was undoubtedly one of social progress. In 2003 for the first time in postwar history, the proportion of pensioners experiencing relative poverty dropped below the national average. By 2019, pensioner couples were least likely of all household types to be found in the bottom 15 per cent of incomes.

This achievement has prompted remarkably little celebration. Instead, since the 2010s, the growing wealth of the old has fuelled intergenerational tensions.

These economic and political realities have cast a long shadow over retirement's future. For most of the 20th century, Britons expected to retire in greater comfort and with more choice than their parents or grandparents. That dream is now at risk, conveyed in the pessimistic outlook of younger cohorts, who watch the pension age rise as they struggle with low wage growth, high housing costs, expensive childcare and inflated food and energy prices.

Historians are cautious about projecting the past into the present. It is entirely possible that gloomy predictions about the burden of population ageing will be proved wrong by technological change, geopolitical events or environmental catastrophe. For the moment, the hardships that stalked the postwar lives of men like Stanley and Charles in the 1950s seem disturbingly prescient.

Living the Dream: The Rise and Fall of Retirement, will be published by Allen Lane in 2028.

Lots to think about.

John Vick

Monthly meeting report

RNID - Royal National Institute for Deaf People

There was a disappointingly modest audience to listen to the speaker at our June monthly meeting, but those who were not there missed an excellent talk, and one which has great significance for most households.

Our guest speaker, Sally Robinson, was born deaf. In her childhood, there was not so much awareness of hearing loss for young children and so it was not until she was five that she began to use hearing aids. This is, of course, a very important issue as not being able to hear is a major issue in a child's development.

Sally has devoted her life to helping children and now works to promote the work of the RNID as widely as possible. She stressed to all of us that if you have any concerns over hearing loss, you must not ignore this. There is a great deal of help available, especially from the RNID, and it can be life changing.

Anyone who has concerns about their hearing are able to access a free online hearing check through the RNID website. Follow this link: [Hearing test - 3 minutes, free, online, easy and](#)

[reliable | RNID](#) If the test reveals a reason for concern, you will be given advice on what to do next. I certainly intend to do this.

One in three Britons - 18 million people - have either hearing loss or tinnitus; one in seven have tinnitus alone. Problems can develop as we get older, and over 40% of people over the age of 40 have hearing loss. There are all sorts of indicators: you may feel other people are mumbling; people don't react to you when you speak to them; you find that you are speaking loudly; you are struggling to understand what is being said on the phone; you fail to understand what is being said in company; people need to repeat what they are saying to you; other people may find you have the television on too loud.

Today, technology is able to provide support with effective (and small) hearing aids. There are devices to convert voice into text on the phone and other settings. Sally showed us another device which enables you to focus on an individual speaking in a group when background noise is often a problem, especially with hearing aids. A device such as an alarm is of little use if you cannot hear it, so alternatives such as flashing lights can make all the difference to your safety. The RNID can enable you to access these.

The RNID offers advice to both those who experience hearing loss and to those who live and work with them. They offer communication tips: try waving to people if they are not immediately responding; make sure you face the person you are speaking to; don't cover your face as much lip reading happens without the person speaking realises it (COVID facemasks were an enormous challenge); don't be afraid to repeat something if someone hasn't heard. Above all, if someone doesn't immediately hear what you are saying, never say 'it doesn't matter' as this is very dismissive.

A major theme of the RNID's work is to overcome isolation and to promote inclusion. They also undertake a lot of scientific research and engage in political campaigning. While they have brought about many changes in legislation and attitudes in society to support those with hearing loss, needless to say, much more needs to be done. One area of progress is that BSL (British Sign Language) is now more widely used, but the UK lags behind other countries in making it standard practice when there are major public announcements by politicians.

If you weren't able to hear Sally's talk, you will find a visit to the RNID website extremely helpful - for yourself and also for those who you live with or spend time with. [RNID - National hearing loss charity](#)

We are all affected and have much to learn.

Monthly Meeting – Monday 20th July: Jane Urquhart, 'Upstairs, Downstairs'

The topic at next month's meeting is 'Upstairs, Downstairs', a title which will resonate with those who were watching TV in the 70s – a great many of us! Jane Urquhart writes this about herself:

I was brought up and married into Upstairs. When I was divorced in my early thirties, I found myself no longer Upstairs but a teacher on the half way landing. Sadly, I got in a

pickle with another divorce and found myself as a housekeeper/cook in a rather grand house where there were plenty of other staff and I was definitely eating downstairs and considered to be a Downstairs person.

Subsequently, I started a recruitment agency for domestic staff: butlers, housekeepers, gardeners, cooks and couples; I also started a school for Butlers and Housekeepers.

Now I live in Devon but still have connections to my agency in London and occasionally do a bit of training of household staff. This work has taken me to the most interesting and unusual places where I have met people who live in a world where they are supported in every way by their household staff.

I bring stories and experience but also a high degree of discretion!

This is an intriguing introduction, and I hope it will entice you to come to hear what Jane has to share with us!

John Vick

Interest Group news

Art Appreciation

Molly's presentation on Anatomy in Art seems to be jinxed! After having to cancel last month's meeting, when we tried again in June, we encountered technical problems with the format of the images she planned to show us. All very frustrating – but the good news was that Chris Foote was able to come to the rescue. He had already prepared a presentation for next month and he was able to go ahead impromptu – without notes.

Chris spoke to us about the much loved Victorian artist, William Powell Frith (1819-1909). Frith was a highly successful artist who specialised in portraits of the great and the good of Victorian society such as Charles Dickens and John Ruskin, or major public events such as the wedding of the Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra.

He also produced genre paintings, depicting an idealised image of everyday life such as the *Many Happy Returns* and *For Better or Worse*.

He had a particular interest in portraying scenes which were characteristic of British society at the time. *Ramsgate Sands* (1851-53) shows a scene of the newly fashionable seaside holiday. The figures in the foreground are evidently prosperous judging by their unlikely beach clothing (lots of long dresses and hats) who had probably travelled there by the new mode of transport, the railway. They appear to be observed by groups of poorer people in the background.



Derby Day (1855-56) shows people of every age and rank enjoying a day at the races – although the actual horse racing is in the background and seems peripheral. On close inspection one can make out a few horses and jockeys, and the grandstand in the distance but the main focus is on the varied activities of the crowd. There are acrobats entertaining the crowds, gaming, tricksters and hawkers alongside elegantly dressed people in their carriages.

The Railway (1862) is another bustling scene featuring the grand engineering and architecture of Paddington Station. Again, the artist depicts all classes of society with many stories to be told. There is a mother saying farewell to her young son who is probably going off to boarding school, a newlywed couple departing for their honeymoon, and a pickpocket about to be handcuffed by the Peelers. Meanwhile, the business of the railway is going on: a locomotive is waiting to leave, station staff are loading luggage onto the roof of the carriages and covering it with a tarpaulin.

The closer you look at Frith's larger paintings, the more you see and the more insight you gain into Victorian life.

Many thanks to Chris for saving the day. We hope that it will be third time lucky for Molly's presentation on 14th July.

Lynne Vick, Convener

Post Script

After the Art App meeting, I learned that one of our u3a members is a direct descendant of William Powell Frith. He was her great great grandfather, no less. She tells us that the painting, *Derby Day*, is full of portraits of Frith's own family, as no doubt are many other of his paintings.

Beer and Skittles

The Beer & Skittles Group met on 18th June at the Brunswick Arms for the last session before the summer break. We started a little late but nevertheless enjoyed ourselves. We play as two teams to suit the scoreboard but who is in which team is arbitrary, other than couples being split between the teams to encourage friendly rivalry. June's star bowler was Christine!

The photo is from April (delay is my fault) and illustrates that there seems to be more competition for a turn at standing the skittles up than there is to be the best bowler.



If anyone knows the skittles term for sending the ball between the skittles, when they are all standing, without knocking any of them down, we would get more use for that than we do for "strike"!

We resume on **September 17th** at 7pm and I look forward to seeing members old and new.

Richard Lee, Convenor

Board Games

This group was set up so that members could arrange their own games and venues. In addition we offered a games session at Tea and Chat.

Given that most members have now established routine games and venues or ceased playing, there is no need for a dedicated group.

All u3s members are still welcome to play their own games at the riverside centre after the initial meeting of Tea & Chat on the first Thursday of the month. Games start around 2.45pm.

Can I remind Chess players that the Dawlish drop in Chess Group meets every Thursday between 10am and 12 noon, at the Methodist Church Brunswick place, everyone is welcome.

In place of the games group I will be re-starting an old favourite; Rummikub.

Rummikub players will be able to play at the monthly Tea & Chat on the first Thursday of the month. A dedicated Rummikub only group will play at the Methodist Church Brunswick place on the last Tuesday of the month at 10am playing until around 11.30 to 12o'clock.

I hope some new players decide to give this a go.

Barry

French Conversation

Briefly, we met twice in June .

At our first meeting we talked about our favourite places in Devon.



Coleton Fishacre was a popular choice with a sad history of the owners who gave it to the National Trust after the death of their son.

Others chose Plymouth, Great Torrington, Babbacombe, Anstey's Quay and Dawlish where you can sit at home and look out to sea.

We are so lucky to live here!

There was a good chit chat in our second session which I missed

Bridie

In Our Own Write

Rather fittingly the title for our short story was "*They met on a Monday*" and there were five totally different works produced.

1. A very descriptive piece about a super- recogniser noticing that she was being followed by two people in various guises. When she challenged them she found out that they wanted to recruit

her and they offered her a job to utilise her skills.

2. A girl called into a coffee shop before work and noticed a good looking man who was always there at the same time. Some time later he introduced himself and they continued to meet up but then he told her that he couldn't see her again as she reminded him too much of his sister who had been killed in a car crash.

The girl subsequently started a new job nearby and to her distress found out that history had repeated itself and the man, who had worked at the same company had been killed on the anniversary of his sister's death.

3. A lonely widow literally bumped into a younger dog walker who went out of his way to charm her. He offered to take her out for meals and days out but never paid and gradually insinuated himself into her routine alienating her from others. He was very secretive and refused to have his photo taken.

He suggested that if she bought a car and he just happened to have a friend who would sell her one for cash, he could take her out more often. He was most upset when she said that she was going to keep it at her home .

One day he fell asleep in her garden and she took advantage of that and took his photo and checked his wallet discovering that he had a different name from how she knew him.

Before she could challenge him she fell and had to be hospitalised and arranged for a friend to come and stay

with her to look after her. She declined his offer to arrange for a private nurse and he disappeared from her life.

Subsequently she saw him in a local park giving a repeat performance of how he "accidentally " met her. Worried that he was going to try and con another lady she went to the police showing them the photo that she had taken and the name in his wallet. To her horror she later found out that he had a history of befriending older women and was arrested for the murder of one three years previously. A lucky escape indeed.

4. A girl grew up in a family where her father played the violin and the piano. She moved away but returned home after a relationship breakdown and her father asked her to help spruce him up which she did.

He went out every Wednesday and one night came back with a smudge of lipstick on his cheek. Worried that he might be having an affair, she followed him one Wednesday night. To her relief she discovered that he was actually a very popular pianist at an upmarket hotel and the lipstick mark came from one of the young assistants.

5. I will confess that my story of a U3a writing group was loosely based on ours. However as far as I am aware none of us are government assassins and Ruth's Smart car does not have built in rocket launchers. It really doesn't pay to underestimate the elderly and we have a huge advantage in that to some people we are invisible. So if you are an extremely bad person and a "doddery old dear" accidentally

bumps into you I suggest that you check for needle marks, if you have time before you meet your Maker.

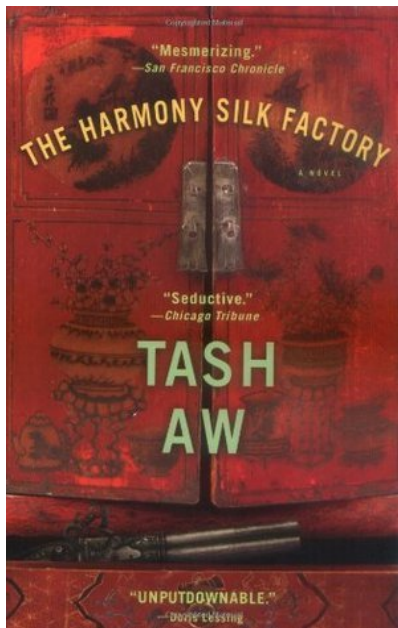


Our next meeting will be on the **13th July** and the topic is "An uninvited or unexpected guest".

Travina

Literature

The Harmony Silk Factory by Tash Aw



This novel is set in Malaya just before the Japanese invasion and relates the life of enigmatic businessman Johnny Lim, son of Chinese migrant workers.

It is, however, told Rashomon style by three unreliable narrators which gave us much to discuss at our meeting, trying to go back over the character's stories and what motivated them to exaggerate or lie, if indeed they did. Truth is very subjective, look at on-line reviews.

The historical background is real and the Malaysian countryside is very well described, as is its pre-war cultural and racial hierarchy.

Johnny's son, Jasper, has researched his father's life and career and we, at first, take his account at face value.

He has amassed evidence, or so it seems, that Johnny, widowed when Jasper's mother died in childbirth, had stopped at absolutely nothing to gain prestige and wealth. Jasper has attributed all manner of criminal behaviour to his father including murder, arson, wartime collaboration, stealing "taxes" to give to the Japanese and even betraying the resistance army.

It could be that he felt the need to aggrandise his father into a larger than life monstrous villain to try to make sense of his cruel and unloving behavior towards his son.

Snow Soong, Jasper's mother, is the second narrator. She keeps a journal during a nightmarish belated honeymoon to the mysterious Seven Maidens. The couple are accompanied by two Englishmen, one a typical colonial type and the other, Peter, who is unconventional and doesn't fit into the rigid ex-pat society.

Also joining them is Kunichika, later revealed to be a member of the ruthless Japanese army secret police.

Snow is deeply attracted to him and it is strongly suggested that he is Jasper's father.

Snow writes that she regrets her marriage to the uneducated and apathetic Johnny and, apparently, it has not been consummated.

It could be that she is excusing herself for her affair.

Peter is towards the end of his life when he tells his side of the story.

He says that Johnny regarded him as his friend and confidant. He loved Johnny and also cared for Snow and there is no hint of suspicion that Johnny was a criminal mastermind. We are, of course, seeing him from the viewpoint of Peter, a perpetually lonely man who valued this rare friendship.

This novel challenged us by not providing any answers to who Johnny really is.

Normally there is a moment when everything becomes clear and without this resolution the story has a haunting quality.

Some of us enjoyed that aspect of the novel but others wanted to read Johnny's true version of events.

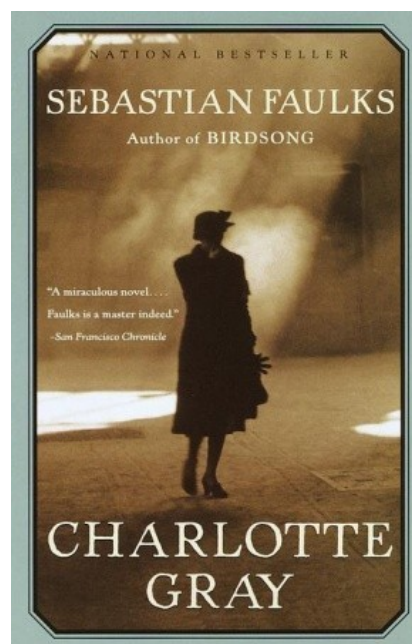
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Page Turners

In June the Page Turners read Sebastian Faulks' 1998 novel 'Charlotte Gray'.

Charlotte becomes an agent of Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE) assigned to work with the French Resistance in Vichy France, during World War II.

After completing her first mission she remains in France and tries to locate her lover, a pilot who is missing in action. Before she finally returns to England, Charlotte becomes more involved with the French community and particularly with the efforts to conceal local Jewish people from the Nazis. The book has some particularly harrowing scenes as we follow the fate of these Jews.



We agreed that the book was well written. In particular the descriptive writing gives a good sense of place and the depiction of the realities of hardship, loss and the impact of war on individuals and communities is powerful. We also learnt something of the politics of France at the time. However many of us failed to engage with the central character and this led to us not particularly enjoying the book. About three years ago we read a non-fiction book about the work of SOE agents and some of us remembered this and compared Charlotte unfavourably with those real-life heroines.

This is perhaps not a beach read - one of us felt it might be more suited to a winter

afternoon! - however if you would like to read it for yourself, do get in touch and perhaps swap it for a page turner of your own.

Quiz Group

We quizzed two Mondays on the trot and covered a varying range of subjects, along with the main stay of General Knowledge.

Our first set of questions were based around the themes of Inventors, Shakespeare in a sentence, Take a trip, Sweet Music and Literature.

No one played their joker in what turned out to be their best round. Taking a trip was way ahead when it comes to points on the board. However the teams struggled to amass a good overall total when it came to Inventors and dear Mr Shakespeare..

Here is a snap shot from the first quiz and would you have given the correct answers?

Martin Cooper invented the mobile phone

Julius Caesar was the Shakespeare play with the clue given of 'Group project goes wrong when the leader is stabbed'

Acrophobia is a fear of heights

Male is the Capital of the Maldives

Haydn composed 104 symphonies

Anthony Buckeridge wrote the Jennings series of children's books

The second quiz revealed that the team's best subject turned out to be 'What's the male'? Whilst lagging far behind was the Animation round. Perhaps a visit to the cinema to see Toy Story 5 might help!

Here were the themes :

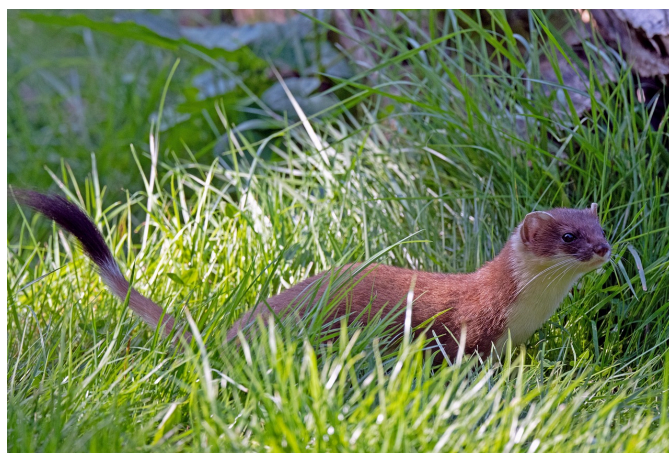
Green fingers, Character's tastes, What's the male called, Animation and The Swinging Sixties.

So do you have any idea as to...

What flower is associated with the 1968 hit song recorded by the Foundations?

What food was linked to Garfield?

What is a male weasel called?



The Tragicus and Antitragicus are found in which part of the body?

Which Tchaikovsky ballet features in the film Fantasia?

Who played the lead role in the TV drama 'The Prisoner?'

Our **July** quizzes are scheduled due **Mondays 6th and 20th.**

Graham Carey

Scrabble

Only three of us joined for an afternoon of Scrabble this month. The first game passed without incident and was comfortably won by our lady expert, although I believe it was a close run tussle for second place which I ultimately lost.



The second game proved to be much more

contentious. A seven letter word, FOULERS was produced and challenged. The challenge was defended by an online scrabble dictionary showing it to be an acceptable word. This was countered by the challenger producing an entry stating that this word is not allowed. Impasse, not helped by myself

being unable to connect my phone to the internet. Ultimately the challenge was upheld and the word withdrawn. A tense situation averted and we all departed amicably.

Our next meeting is due to take place on **27th July.**

George Mansfield

Strollers Social Walking Group

There were five of us on our June Dawlish & District u3a walk.

As planned, we walked along the green lane which borders Langdon Hospital then down Port Road. We crossed the main Exeter to Dawlish road then walked on via Dawlish Country Park to our end of walk refreshment stop at the Hope Church Community cafe near Sainsbury's.

David A is leading our **July 9th** walk. It will be a new walk for us around the Decoy area. You'll find out the route on the day!

We're catching the train to Newton Abbot leaving Dawlish at 13.13pm and Teignmouth at 13.18pm. The return trains leave Newton at 15.39pm, 16.11pm and 16.33pm.

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

Jean Gitsham, convenor

Other news:

I would like to introduce myself to the Dawlish U3A group.

My name is Kerry Good. I'm the vice chair and I would like to be considered for the chair position in the next elections in September as John Vick is stepping down from this role.

I have lived in Dawlish for 30 years and I feel extremely fortunate to be part of such a great town and it's U3A. I would love to have the opportunity for a chat with members to share ideas and I would value their input.

My vision is for our U3A to remain exciting, welcoming, and active ensuring members will enjoy the groups and also starting new groups that members would like.

We have so many incredible volunteers and to build on this, encouraging others to participate so I hope to play this important role for the Dawlish U3A.

I look forward to the months ahead, making the groups and continuing to bring friendships together throughout the year ahead.

I look forward to meeting with you all.

Best Wishes

Kerry Good



Contact us

You are invited to send us all your group news and updates.

Newsletter Editor: Please contact Roz Summerton via newsletter@u3a.dawlish.info.

Webmasters: Please contact Dave and Miggie Pickton via webmaster@u3a.dawlish.info

Want to know more about Dawlish & District u3a? Check out our website: u3a.dawlish.info.