



Dear member,

Those of us who braved the weather on January 18<sup>th</sup> (a total of 57 brave souls) heard a very moving talk by Natalia Letch on “Russia and the Ukraine”. We held a collection after the talk and raised £206.40p. This has been given to the DEC Ukraine Crisis appeal via the Red Cross. Thank you to everyone who came and donated and thanks also to Natalia. I hope my summary below does her credit.

February is a busy month; we have a Zoom talk and a special coffee morning for **group leaders** as well as the usual meetings. The zoom talk is action packed. It will briefly cover Inheritance Tax and recent changes to it, care and how, if people have over £23,250, they will be expected to pay for their own care fees. They will describe options that may help prevent people having to sell their homes to pay care fees. The speaker will also discuss what happens if there is a re-marriage and you want to protect your assets to ensure they go to those you have chosen to benefit, rather than to someone else, (this is known as Sideways Disinheritance) and the various forms of Lasting Powers of Attorney. You have already been sent a link to the meeting by email, but we will send out a second one nearer the meeting.

Unusually, this newsletter flows onto a second page, as I thought it might be useful to send you the entire calendar for this year’s Open Meetings and Natalia’s talk is too important to be very brief.

Liz Ouldrige (Chair)

### Important dates

**February 8<sup>th</sup>** Niki Gardenier “Tax, Care and the Other Guy” **Zoom Talk**

**February 15<sup>th</sup>** Open Meeting at the Boniface Centre, Richard Ward “Access to the Health Service” Refreshments from 9:30am, announcements start at 10:00am. The talk starts at 10:15

**February 17<sup>th</sup>** Group Leaders’ only Coffee Morning (see below)

**February 21<sup>st</sup>** Monthly coffee morning for all at ‘The Hayloft’ Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am,

**March 15<sup>th</sup>** Open Meeting at the Boniface Centre, James Haskell “Mapping Broadband” Refreshments from 9:30am, announcements start at 10:00am. The talk starts at 10:15

**March 21<sup>st</sup>** Monthly coffee morning at ‘The Hayloft’ Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am

### News from the Groups

A coffee morning is being held for **group leaders** on February 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am. It will be in the Elephant on the Green. This is Crediton’s new “neighbourhood venue “. You will find it opposite St Lawrence Green, by the traffic lights where the old ‘Landscape’ stores used to be. There will be coffee or tea and cakes. There are bus stops very close by or if you are coming by car there is a public car park at St Saviours Way just five minutes away. Group leaders, please let Jo know if you can come.

The Creative Writing Group continues to thrive, but currently has space for 2 more writers or would-be writers. The group meets 10-12am on the first Wednesday morning of the month at Downes Golf Club. They aim to improve our story-writing by learning new writing techniques combined with lively discussion. They deliberately keep the group number under 10 to ensure every member has opportunity to contribute and to receive peer feedback on their projects. Contact the Group leader, Lynne Carroll, for more information. You can do this by the interactive link on the Creative Writing page of the Website.

## January's Open Meeting "Russia and the Ukraine" by Natalia Letch

Natalia is in a unique position to describe the current situation in the Ukraine. Born to a Ukrainian father and a Russian mother, as a child she lived in both Kyiv and Moscow. In adult life, she was for many years a TV broadcaster in Moscow before moving to the UK.

Natalia described how the Ukraine seceded from the Soviet Union in 1991. This was part of the general break-up of the USSR. Natalia emphasized that the Ukraine followed a legal process enshrined in the original constitution of the USSR and Russia guaranteed to recognize its border provided certain conditions were met. This included the relinquishing of nuclear weapons. However, Russia was left with a problem for its Black Sea fleet, which until the break-up of the USSR, had its main base in Sevastopol in the Crimea. An agreement was made for the base to continue here but it left the Russian Navy very vulnerable. This was a strong reason for Russia to annex the Crimea, which it tried to do unsuccessfully in the 1990s, but succeeding in 2014.

Meanwhile, Ukraine became closer to Western Europe and the EU. Although for a time, President Yanukovich (Ukraine's 4<sup>th</sup> president) was sympathetic to Russia. His corrupt practices and slowing down of negotiations with the West were unpopular and he was ousted from power, fleeing to Russia in 2014.

In Russia, President Putin came to power in 2000 and has been so ever since, except for a stint as prime minister with a 'puppet president' from 2008-12. At first, he portrayed himself as pro-democracy and liberal. However, Natalia described that, as time went on, the state became more totalitarian. She was glad to leave to come to the UK.

For some time, there had been unrest in the eastern part of the Ukraine. There are native Russian speakers throughout the Ukraine, and perhaps not surprisingly, many along the border with Russia. Some of these felt poorly treated by the Ukrainian government. Small groups of Russian-backed fighters sought independence from the Ukraine and in 2022, the area was annexed by Russia as part of their invasion. Though, despite Russian claims to the contrary, Natalia told us there were no strong feeling pro the Russian state in the area. Her view is that by annexing these states, Russian has obtained a land bridge between Russia and the Crimea, which was probably Putin's intention from the beginning.

Natalia showed us photos of Kyiv taken before the war; it was a truly beautiful city. She finished by playing us a traditional Ukrainian New Year song set to images of the Ukraine as it was and as it is now. It was most moving. Thank you, Natalia, for a wonderful talk.

## Crediton u3a Open meetings 2023

January 18 <sup>th</sup>	Natalia Letch	"Russia and the Ukraine"
February 8 <sup>th</sup>	Niki Gardenier	"Tax, Care and the Other Guy" <b>Zoom Talk</b>
February 15 <sup>th</sup>	Richard Ward	"Access to the Health Service"
March 15 <sup>th</sup>	James Haskell	"Mapping Broadband"
April 19 <sup>th</sup>	Martin Pailthorpe	"In Search of Disney's Yeti"
May 17 <sup>th</sup>	Prof. Roy Sambles	"Some Light Reflections" (Mirrors)
June 21 <sup>st</sup>	Mark Branwell	"The Spanish Guitar for Today"
July 19 <sup>th</sup>	Laura Jones	"The Origins of Mass Production of Fashion"
August 16 <sup>th</sup>	Stewart Raine	"The Merry Wives of Saxe-Coburg"
September 20 <sup>th</sup>	Peter Chave	"A Century of Water Quality"
October 18 <sup>th</sup>	Roger Brown	"The Story of Tin Pan Alley"
November 15 <sup>th</sup>	Prof. Peter Edwards	"The Life and Times of Galileo."