

Dear member,

February's Open Meeting was well-attended and very interesting as you will see from the summary below. March's Open Meeting looks equally interesting but very different! Remember that if you have trouble hearing or seeing the speaker, we have seats reserved at the front. We are trying out another new idea this month. We are very aware that there is not much time for social chat at the Open Meetings, so after the talk this month, we will serve more tea/coffee/biscuits as well as making tables and chairs available for socialising. There will be time to talk about the special interest groups and perhaps sign up for one or two. Committee members will also be available, and we will always welcome new ideas. If this is successful, then we will hold extended meetings every 3 or 4 months.

Lynne Carroll has been thrilled by the response to the short essay competition set up by the Creative Writing group, so much so that as well as a £10 first prize, she will be offering two further prizes of £5. The competition closes on April 1st, and you're welcome to submit more than one entry. Although you'll only get one prize! All you have to do is write a short story in exactly 26 words. Each word must begin with every letter of the alphabet, following in correct alphabetical sequence. Your story can be broken down into a maximum of two sentences. Send your entries to her email: lynnecarroll@btinternet.com

Liz Ouldrige (Chair)

Important dates

March 19th Monthly coffee morning for all at 'The Hayloft' Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am

March 20th Open Meeting at the Boniface Centre: Peter Isaacson 'Medical Detection Dogs, Super Sniffers'. Refreshments from 9:30am, the talk starts at 10:20am, refreshments also available after the talk.

April 16th Monthly coffee morning for all at 'The Hayloft' Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am

April 17th Open Meeting and **AGM** at the Boniface Centre: Refreshments from 9:30am, **AGM** at 10:00, talk starts at 10:30.

News from the Groups

In a recent radio series, 'A Thorough Examination by Drs. Chris and Xand', exercise was described as a 'miracle cure'. Appropriate exercise can, apparently, help to prevent type 2 diabetes, dementia, high blood pressure and depression. It can also promote your immune system. Exercise isn't just about running the marathon and at u3a we have many special interest groups which can help increase the amount of exercise you do fairly painlessly. The groups are listed below. Why not try one? If you want to know more, then details are posted on the groups page of our u3a website (just search on Crediton u3a). Or you can contact Jo Penning, our groups coordinator (see the website or talk to her at the coffee mornings or Open Meetings).

- 1) Penny Matthews leads classes based on Pilates, suitable for both men and women, which helps with concentration, breathing, co-ordination, balance and movement. Classes last for 1 hour each week, on Wednesday, 2-3pm or Thursday, 11-12 and are still Covid aware.

- 2) The Carpet Bowls group meets on the 3rd Monday of the month from 10-12. All welcome.
- 3) The Dance group meets every fortnight on Mondays and uses gentle movement based on belly dancing with a bit of flamenco as well. It will suit all abilities. They meet at 12:30 and dance for an hour.
- 4) The Short Walks group takes place every 4th Wednesday of each month for a gentle 2-3 miles walk in the surrounding area on a circular route.
- 5) The intermediate walks group takes place on the 1st Tuesday of the month and is planned to be between 4-5 miles.
- 6) The Cycle group currently meets on the 3rd Monday of the month at 9.30. They generally do around 20 miles in the rolling mid-Devon hills with a stop for coffee and cake. Numbers vary from 4 to 12 and around half the peddlers have e-bikes.
- 7) Moorrambler walks range from 6 miles up to 8 miles. They meet on the 3rd Thursday of each month in Crediton Station car park at 9.15am and Whiddon Down at 9.50 to share cars to the start of the walk.

February's talk: Brian Fernley 'The Battle of Britain outside London: Exeter's role in the conflict.'

Brian came to talk to us from the South West Airfields Heritage Trust. They have two sites near Exeter that are worth visiting, Dunkeswell Airfield Heritage Centre and Upottery Airfield Heritage Centre; both near Honiton. However, there were other airfields around Exeter during WWII.

Brian told us that the Battle of Britain arose because the German military wished to gain air superiority before a full-scale invasion. Most of the action happened in the South East but there were battles all along the south coast, Weymouth being a particular target for the Germans. Brian spoke briefly about the rise to power of the Nazi party and German rearmament. Britain was slow to rearm after WWI, and in the 1930s, the RAF was small and old fashioned. However, the new Hurricane and Spitfire aircraft proved significant in defending the South Coast when they came on stream. There were three squadrons stationed near Exeter, 213, 87, and at the end, 601, and they all flew Hurricanes. The officers were accommodated at the Rougemont Hotel, whilst the other ranks camped out in tents.

Brian was able to tell us fascinating stories about individual pilots, based on the pilots' own diaries. Several poignant features became apparent. Firstly, the pilots were all young men. Most were between 18 and 25. If you were over 30, you were likely to be called 'the old man'. Secondly, large numbers of aircraft were involved in each battle. This meant 'friendly' fire was a real risk. Squadron Leader Lovell Gregg was probably shot down by one of his own flight who failed to identify his plane correctly. Gregg's plane crashed near Abbotsbury Swannery and sadly, he died. John Cock was also shot down by a fellow pilot when he accidentally flew between the pilot and a German plane which was under attack. Cock survived a crash into the sea near Portland Bill. He ditched his parachute, shoes and trousers so that he could swim to shore. Alas, he recorded in his diary, he realised too late that the trousers contained a five-pound note and he had to watch them both float away!

The Battle of Britain lasted only from 10th July 1940 to 31st October 1940. In September, Hitler ordered less priority to be placed on bombing British airfields and the Luftwaffe then moved on. This was most fortunate for us, as more planes were being lost than made and Britain could not have maintained its level of defence much longer.