



u3a learn,
laugh,
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exe valley



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Newsletter 195 – April 2024

Our meeting this month ...

Wednesday 17^h April

2pm Cherith Hall

Passports, Assassins, Traitors and Spies

Martin Lloyd

Be thrilled by stories of how three passports have played their influential role in the course of history: an attempted assassination which altered the regulations for issuing passports: the capture of a spy which caused a worldwide modification to the design of the document and for our person the passport itself which turned into a killer.

... and next month

Wednesday 15^h May

2pm Cherith Hall

**Setting the Record Straight:
Myths in Physiotherapy, Pain and Exercise**

Harry Gough

Harry is a qualified Physiotherapist with 7 years' experience. His talk involves a game of 'myth and fact' where he presents a statement and the audience will tell him whether they think it is a myth or a fact and he will then give the answer to the best of his scientific evidence. He will give some time to talk about exercise classes, including one he gives in Cadeleigh called the Bone Class. This is an exercise class targeted at improving bone density.

News from the Committee

Thank you to everyone who attended our AGM on 20th March when we were pleased to welcome Lyn Chapman onto the Committee. Lyn has agreed to take on the role of Publicity

Secretary, a post which has been vacant for at least two years. We are looking forward to working with Lyn and to hearing the fresh thoughts and ideas that she will bring to our discussions.

Thanks to your co-operation the committee were pleased to note that the introduction of the new “two queues” system for the Cherith Hall worked very well, reducing congestion in the entrance lobby and making it easier for members to pay their entry fees.

Moving the book swap table to its new position away from the serving hatch has also made it easier to browse the books on offer and for people to access the serving hatch for a welcome cup of tea.

One of the consequences of moving our monthly meeting to the Cherith Hall is that we do have to put away the chairs after the meeting has finished and we are grateful to the many people who have ensured that the chairs are indeed being put away. However, we have noticed that there is a tendency to be “a bit quick off the mark” with chairs being put away almost as soon as the speaker has finished their talk. Whilst this enthusiasm to clear away is most welcome it does mean that people wishing to stay on for refreshments and conversation are finding they have nowhere to sit! As the opportunity to take the time to have a cup of tea together, converse with friends and hopefully meet new people, is an important part of the afternoon, we would be grateful if people could be allowed time to do this.

Thank you for your co-operation and understanding as we iron out the little teething troubles that we have experienced in moving to our new home.

Quiz Night

A fully booked and fun quiz supper evening went well with people enjoying the questions set by York and his scorer Phillipa. Thanks go to everyone who helped out on the night, setting up, selling and calling raffle tickets, preparing and serving the food and manning the bar, clearing up afterwards, washing up and sweeping the floor, u3a and non u3a members alike.

Newsletter

Please send reports to **Nigel Tupman** by **9am Friday 10th May**. Thank you!

New Members

We extend a very warm welcome to four new members - **Sue and Mike Barlow, Annie Foot, and Tony McGee**. We hope you enjoy your time with us.

Welfare Officer

Marilyn Dawson

Marilyn prefers to be contacted by email. If you know of anyone who is ill or has been admitted to hospital, or anyone who has a special anniversary to celebrate, please email Marilyn with details and she will send a card on our behalf. We will also add an item to the monthly committee agenda so that Marilyn can let the committee know via the secretary if she has sent anyone a card. It would also be helpful if group leaders could keep Marilyn informed of anyone in their group who they think should receive such a card.

News from the Interest Groups

Art Appreciation Gina Brown, Keith Bush, John Massey

At our March meeting Kay gave us a most enjoyable talk on an artist few of us were much acquainted with, the Italian painter Sofonisba Anguissola.

Born into a noble family in Cremona in 1532, Sofonisba became the first woman we know of to find fame as an artist in her own lifetime. She paved the way for later painters such as Lavinia Fontana and Artemisia Gentileschi.



She received a good education and became apprenticed to local artists. Later, in Rome, Michelangelo recognised her talent and guided her development. She became successful in Italy and known even abroad, which led to King Philip II of Spain inviting her to become a court painter in Madrid.

Most of her surviving work consists of portraits, often of herself or members of her family, but also of aristocracy such as the Duke of Alba, King Philip, and his queen, Elizabeth of Valois.

Sofonisba died in 1625 at the age of 93. Her fame diminished as, over time, many of her pictures became ascribed to male painters. But scholarship has since restored the correct attribution, and about fifty works are now accepted as having been by her hand. One of them, the *Portrait of Prince Alessandro Farnese* – which exemplifies her skill at rendering facial expression and the

details of ornate garments – is shown here.

Kay also brought in her collection of art exhibition fridge magnets, and made a friendly competition out of the challenge of identifying the artists.

And we had a look at the famous photo of a dress that became a viral phenomenon on the internet, and found that we, like so many others, were divided along blue/black and white/gold lines. A true mystery of perception.

Finally, Maggie handed out copies of her Easter art quiz.

Our next meeting will take place at the **OHSCC on Thursday 18 April at 2pm**, when we will be sharing images on the theme ‘Gardens’.

New group members are always welcome.



Boules

Thursday Boules Jill Riddiford

We plan to start playing on **Thursday 25th April at 10am** at **Walronds in Cullompton** and we are praying like mad for dry weather. We have a full group at present so I have started a waiting list.

Bridge

Tuesday Bridge Doreen Burton

Tuesday Bridge group are playing online at 7.30pm most weeks. We have also managed to meet up to play on quite a few Wednesday afternoons for those in the group that prefer not to play online. If anyone wants to join us, please get in touch.

Thursday Social Bridge Tricia Summers

Canasta Sue Dark

This Group meets on the **2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month** in each other's homes.

Craft Elaine Wright

A lovely afternoon spent in the depths of the Devon countryside learning how to quilt. We made a square by hand stitching strips of contrasting material using the pattern developed on the Isle of Man called Manx patchwork. Enjoyable but, as with everything else, not as easy as it looks. Thank you to Elaine for organising all the kits and hosting with tea and biscuits.



Thank you to the drivers who ferried us through the potholes and muddy lanes. A shout out to Carol who was unable to attend due to a bad fall, sending best wishes for a full recovery.

Next month's meeting is at **2pm on Monday 13th May** at **Anne's** doing Macrame part 2 led by Emma.

Cribbage Keith Dawson

Our normal routine is to play on the **2nd and 4th Monday afternoon each month**.

Discussion Marilyn Dawson

Due to ongoing road works we met at Helen's home to talk about, 'The NHS - how and if it could be fixed'. A very important organisation for all of us and we have had good and bad experiences, unfortunately, recently getting worse. One member told of being taken to hospital by emergency ambulance and waiting 5 hours on a trolley and sent home to a 'virtual' ward, which was a phone call 3 days later! It was easy to mention all the things wrong with the NHS, trying to obtain a GP appointment, long A&E waits, routine surgery often delayed and bed blocking etc. More difficult to find a solution but effective management was an important target along with better use of resources, good pay and rewards for staff. Communication between Community Services and Hospitals could be improved by working more closely together. We also mentioned the possibility of paying to see a GP, as happens in many other countries and a penalty for continually missing appointments. There is no short-term solution to the number of new doctors and nurses required for an aging population and of course a large amount of money is needed for any improvements!

Our second much lighter chat was about 'Are you ever too old for Easter Eggs'. This was a

resounding 'NO' although we agreed to try to eat them in moderation!

Our next meeting on **3 May at 10.15am is back at Marilyn's home.**

Folk Dancing John & Hazel Ridd (Tiverton u3a)

We meet on the **2nd** and **4th** **Wednesdays** of the month, **2pm – 4pm** in **Halberton Village Hall**. All are welcome. The dances are walked through and explained well, and everyone is very kind and friendly.

French Conversation Deborah Lal

Gardening Joan Kelly, Jo Jeffrey, Carol Powney

Unfortunately we had to cancel our visit to Kia-Ora Gardens this month as the grounds there were too wet and considered unsafe. We're hoping the weather will improve over the next few weeks as we plan to visit Chevithorne Barton Gardens EX16 7QB for a guided tour by the head gardener, meeting there **Monday 13 May 2pm.**

Local History David Meredith

This month our group presented at the Cherith "BRANDY FOR THE PARSON" - A celebration of Devon's connection with the Sea. This was a nautical mix of interesting and amusing stories from Devon's coastlines and beaches, featuring smugglers, fishermen, traders, pirates, sailing the high seas, navy life, customs, superstitions, grog, knots, and sea shanties.

Many thanks to all our volunteer contributors; to Tim for pictures, music and videos; to Rob and Anne for setting a nautical background complete with fresh seaweed, silver fish and even a hungry seagull; and to Pete from Tiverton Sea cadets for his expertise with knots. Many salty tales of family connections with the sea were told over tea and biscuits. The seas around us have certainly had a powerful influence on Devon's history and will continue to do so.

Next month on **Thursday May 9th** we meet at the **Cherith Hall at 2pm**, when Devon County Archaeologist, Bill Horner, makes a welcome return. Following on from his last talk on the 'Romans in Devon' he will tell us about the discoveries made by his team at Hembury hillfort near Payhembury. Evidence from the Neolithic and Iron Age periods has been found and also indicates that it served as a base for the Roman Army in the middle of the 1st century AD. Doors open from 1.30pm. Admission £2

Lunch Club Wendy Cook

The Lunch Group gets together on the third Thursday every month and members take it in turn to organise. Pubs, restaurants and farm shops are all within easy distance of Tiverton and we car share where possible. It's up to the member organising to book the venue, circulate the menu if we need to order in advance and pass on the information to the eatery.

Mah Jong Heather Edwards

We meet on the **first Friday in the month.**

MOTO (Members On Their Own) Wendy Cook

A very select few met for coffee on Saturday 23rd March, but we enjoyed our drinks and a conversation that ranged from the pleasures and pitfalls of coach travel to how often it rains in Oban, with many stops on the way.

Our next get together will be on **Saturday 27th April, 10.30 at the Flying Pickle in Tiverton**, new and old members on their own always welcome.

Poetry **Tim Dyke**

A slightly reduced group this month explored a challenging theme: Nothingness. In the event, the poems chosen ranged from the utterly depressing - Hopkins' "No worst, there is none", through the challenging "Words of Mass Destruction" by [Winged Warrior](#) to [Emily Dickinson's](#) "I'm Nobody! Who Are You" with some delightful e e cummings and [William Carlos Williams](#).

"Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost might have been depressing, but "Never" by Stewart Watkins reminded us to "Never stop going..... Just keep growing", and "Losing a Language" by W. S. Merwin made us sigh at how "the young have fewer words and many of the things our words were about no longer exist".

Finally W H Auden's "Poetry makes nothing happen" helped us keep a sense of perspective: good company and nice biscuits can make even the darkest moments survivable.

We meet again on **April 25th at 2 at Tim's** for a brighter subject: Light.

Rambling **Ray Rice**

Seven hardy souls made the April walk, which took place on Thursday April 4th. Our ranks were depleted significantly by the proximity to Easter, and family commitments related thereto.

Our walk was a circular walk based on the Ashill Inn, near Uffculme. We were due to do a 5.2 mile route through footpaths and farm lanes, but a recce soon showed that the originally planned route was impassable, due to mud, water and yet more mud! An alternative walk involving much the same terrain, but based more on road walking, proved a more pleasant option, and was even a mile or so shorter.

We passed Craddock House, Northcott House, a natural burial ground, and finished with a long downhill footpath through farm lanes, which got muddy at the bottom, but no real problem to get through. The spring flowers were out in abundance, and the rain held off (mostly!). We then enjoyed a pleasant lunch at the Ashill Inn, as the photo shows.



The walk next month will be led by Carol and will take place on **Thursday May 2nd**. Details will be provided nearer the date. New members welcome, contact Group Administrator Ray.

Reading

Reading Group 1 **Alison Rice**

Wild Swans by Jung Chang was published in 1991. It has sold 13 million copies and is a critically acclaimed history of China in the 20th century.

Jung Chang tells the story of three generations of women in her family. That of her

grandmother, who was given as a concubine to a warlord; of her mother, a committed communist; and her own story from being a young devotee of Mao, through disillusionment to academic success and eventual UK citizenship.

The horror of the sufferings of this family, their friends, their communities and indeed the whole country, is hard to read. Chang reveals a culture of insane indoctrination, persecution and violence. Her father remained true to communism to the end but others learnt to bend with it under the most extreme conditions.

Most of the group had read *Wild Swans* in the 90s but did not remember having been so shocked by it then as this time.

It's impossible to criticise such a poignant document but we talked about the amount of detail Chang included and it was thought that perhaps the memoir could have been edited to include fewer references to individuals whose storylines were fleeting. Descriptions of the beauty of the countryside were welcome, and the loving support of this family through so much suffering is both heart-warming and heart-breaking. How did they survive, let alone flourish once again as the country began to open up under the influence of Zhou Enlai?

It's 'a must read' for everyone. Other books by Chang which we feel we would like to read are *Big Sister*, *Little Sister*, *Red Sister* and *Mao: The Unknown Story*.

We meet next at **2.30 on 29 April at Chris and Dave's** to talk about *We, The Survivors* by Tash Aw.

Reading Group 2 Chris Redhead

This month we read *Alone in Berlin* by Hans Fallada. It was set in Nazi Germany and was based on a true story of a couple who tried to join the resistance by distributing postcards bearing anti-Nazi messages. The book was a thick paperback with small print and was quite a challenge to read both because of that and because of its subject matter, which was obviously disturbing. Some of us gave up reading it but those who persisted were impressed with the writing and became engrossed in it. There were small elements of redemption towards the end but in comparison with the horrors also included it was a difficult read. The group talked a lot about the characters in the story, some of whom managed to be amusing. It was tempting to let the discussion wander into broader political areas but we decided instead to drink tea and eat biscuits and post-Easter chocolates as we were meeting on Easter Bank Holiday Monday.

Our next book is *War Doctor* by David Nott and we meet next on **Monday 6 May at 2pm at Jenny's home.**

Reading Group 3 Sheelagh Bourdon

This month our book was "*Love is Blind*" by William Boyd. Around the turn of the twentieth century young pianist, Brodie Moncur leaves Edinburgh's slate skies for the lights of Paris. There he joins forces with the Irish virtuoso, John Kilbarron and together the pair take Europe by storm. But when he falls for Kilbarron's lover - the mesmerising Russian soprano, Lika Blum - Brodie quickly realises that the tide has turned and he must flee across a continent, haunted by his love for Lika, and pursued by the vengeful wrath of his rival.

The book had a mixed reaction. Some of us really enjoyed it and one of us liked it so much that she selected another William Boyd novel for this coming year and another has since bought another William Boyd novel from a charity shop. A few "new" words were learnt, including - calumny - false accusation, homonym - words having the same sound/ spelling but different meanings. A couple of us did not enjoy it at all and gave up on it! One of us found it

really boring. It was voiced that TB used to be a horrendous illness. It was felt to be a kind gesture that in the cemetery after the burial of Brodie that a bottle of champagne was produced. Apparently it is usual in Germany. Another comment - "Love is blind" in this story! Lika, the "heroine", was a trickster and looked after herself but did come back in the end - to the graveside. Other thoughts voiced - "It could have had a happy ending. Very involved. Learnt a lot about piano tuning. Very well written."

The book for the coming month is "*Homecoming*" by Kate Morton. A very thick book for us to "get our teeth into"!

Our next meeting will be on **Thursday 25th April at 10.30.**

Skittles

Tuesday Skittles – Kathy Senior

Tuesday Skittles is going from strength to strength with another new member, although we hope to be outside for the Tuesday boules soon weather permitting.

In the event of bad weather, the Half Moon have kindly agreed to let us play skittles on the Tuesdays when we are prevented from playing our boules game outside.

Tuesday Skittles continues to play at **The Half Moon in Tiverton every week 11am - 1pm** and is a good fun morning. If you fancy joining us then please contact Group Leader Kathy.

Thursday Skittles – Jill Riddiford

Thursday Skittles are now in hibernation until October.

What we have noticed Chris & Gina Brown

We had another interesting meeting which covered much more ground than just the topics introduced.

We heard about a larger than life character called 'The Great Farini' who walked a Blondin tightrope across the Niagara Falls carrying a washing machine - as you do. He was also credited with inventing the human cannonball trick, and travelling extensively, crossing the Kalahari Desert in Africa.

Next was the news of a 'flock that rocks' that has appeared in Tiverton. These are models of swans decorated by local artists. Maps are available so that you can follow the trail on a walk around Tiverton. One is outside the library, one outside Banburys, where are the others??

A moment of synchronicity was shared regarding an unexpected sighting of an impressive tenor saxophone that had been sold 3 years earlier and was now in the hands of its new owner. Neither knew the other but it was a joy to connect over a shared love of music - for the first owner to know the valuable instrument was in good hands and for the new owner to know its provenance.

Lastly there was the April Fools Day newspaper story about Prince Harry launching a crypto currency. This resulted in discussions about the Royal family and also how safe this virtual money is.

We will meet next month on **Tuesday May 7th at 10.30.**

Wine Group Helen White, Deborah Lal

Nine of us met, back after four years to the Wall in the Hall, Old Heathcoat Community Centre, for our April meeting. We were pleased to have David back again and hope next month to welcome five new members who were unable to attend this month.

Helen presented the wines and had chosen three wines for us to taste. The first was "Cotes de Gascogne" a wine from the Gascony region in south west France. This region principally produces white wine and this Vin de Pays (country wine) complies with a decree in 1982 obliging producers to respect the stricter rules and production standard. The grapes used in this white wine were colombard and gros manseng. We enjoyed this crisp, dry wine with its flavours of citrus (we were told to expect lime and blossom but we were only able to pick out grapefruit). This was one of Tesco's Finest wines at £7.50 and 11.5% volume. It apparently improves with age - unlike some of us perhaps!

We next tried another French wine "LC Pinot Noir" this time from north east France between Dijon and Lyon. Pinot Noir grapes are an early variety, susceptible to spring frosts and ideally need slow ripening in a cool climate. They are best grown in limestone clay soils. This red wine can also be enjoyed chilled, but we tasted it at room temperature. The wine was dry and said to be low in tannins, medium bodied with medium-high acidity. We were told to expect strawberry and subtle light fruit notes of cherry and leather, but could only smell cherry. We could taste cherry but felt the wine lacked body. 12.5% volume at £6 from Aldi.

The last time we met we really enjoyed a white "Dark Horse" Californian wine so for our final tasting we thought we'd try a red one this time from the same winemaker, to see how it compared. This "Dark Horse Cabernet Sauvignon" was bottled in 2021, produced in ideal conditions - dry and warm weather making canopy management key to allowing just the right amount of sunlight on the berries. An early bud break was followed by an early harvest producing this bold, smooth, semi-dry wine. We were told to expect the taste of jammy fruit, cherry and spice and to look out for a dark chocolate espresso finish - which some of us did indeed find. This enjoyable wine can be kept for two years. 14.5% volume on offer at Tesco for £9 (usually £10).

We meet on the second Wednesday of the month, the next being **8th May at OHSCC** in the **Wall in the Hall at 7pm till 9pm**. This group is now full.

World History Helen Booth

At our March meeting, a rousing song from Les Miserables put us in the mood to man the barricades for Tim Dykes' presentation, 'Could you eat an elephant?' Tim ran through the causes of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 and then described the horrors of the Siege of Paris. With food supplies dwindling, Parisians first turned to horses for fresh meat, then dogs, cats and rats and then to the zoo animals. Even elephants Castor and Pollux were



slaughtered for their meat. Dishes on a Christmas menu of 1870 included stuffed donkey's head, elephant [consommé](#), roast camel, kangaroo stew, [antelope terrine](#), bear ribs and wolf haunch in deer sauce. Peace came in May 1871 but France had to surrender Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. France's resentment at this was a contributory factor to the causes of World War I.

Our next meeting on **April 15th**, as usual **2pm at OHSCC**, will be an afternoon of Victorian Social Conscience. Jill Riddiford will tell us about the building of Saltaire by Titus Salt to provide better housing for his workers, and Kay Morris will explain the role played by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, a campaigner for women's suffrage by legal means, who in 2018 became the first woman commemorated with [a statue in Parliament Square](#).

As usual all are welcome to attend.

DIARY

APRIL 2024

Monday 15th

2pm World History OHSCC Room 2

Tuesday 16th

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online *Contact Group Leader*

Wednesday 17th

2pm Monthly Meeting Cherith Hall

Passports, Assassins, Traitors and Spies Martin Lloyd

Thursday 18th

2pm Art Appreciation OHSCC

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 19th

Monday 22nd

2pm Cribbage *Contact Group Leader*

Tuesday 23rd

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online *Contact Group Leader*

Wednesday 24th

2pm Folk Dancing Halberton Village Hall

Canasta *Contact Group Leader*

Thursday 25th

10am Thursday Boules Walronds, Cullompton

10.30am Reading Group 3 *Contact Group Leader*

2pm Poetry Tim's house

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 26th

Saturday 27th

10.30am MOTO Coffee Flying Pickle, Tiverton

Monday 29th

2pm Reading Group 1 Chris and Dave's house

Tuesday 30th

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online *Contact Group Leader*

MAY 2024

Wednesday 1st

9.30am **Committee Meeting** OHSCC

Thursday 2nd

10am Thursday Boules Walronds, Cullompton

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Rambling Group *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 3rd

10.15am Discussion Group Marilyn's Home

Mah Jong Group *Contact Group Leader*

Monday 6th

2pm Reading Group 2 Jenny's house

Tuesday 7th

10.30am What We Have Noticed *Contact Group Leader*

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online

Wednesday 8th

2pm Folk Dancing Halberton Village Hall

7pm Wine Group OHSCC, The Wall in the Hall

Canasta *Contact Group Leader*

Thursday 9th

10am Thursday Boules Walronds, Cullompton

2pm Local History Cherith Hall

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 10th

9am **Newsletter contributions to Nigel Tupman**

Monday 13th

2pm Craft Anne's house

2pm Gardening Group Chevithorne Barton Gardens EX16 7QB

2pm Cribbage *Contact Group Leader*

Tuesday 14th

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online

Wednesday 15th

2pm Monthly Meeting Cherith Hall **Harry Gough**

Setting the Record Straight: Myths in Physiotherapy, Pain and Exercise

Thursday 16th

10am Thursday Boules Walronds, Cullompton

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 17th

Monday 20th

Tuesday 21st

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online

Wednesday 22nd

2pm Folk Dancing Halberton Village Hall

Canasta Contact Group Leader

Thursday 23rd

10am Thursday Boules Walronds, Cullompton

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 24th

Saturday 25th

10.30am MOTO Coffee Flying Pickle, Tiverton

Monday 27th

2pm Cribbage *Contact Group Leader*

Tuesday 28th

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online

Wednesday 29th

Thursday 30th

10am Thursday Boules Walronds, Cullompton

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 31st

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair	Mike Turner	07885 515630
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Socials & Meetings	Anne Bush	
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Newsletter Editor	Lynne Lyddon
Technician	Tim Dyke
