



u3a learn,
laugh,
live
exe valley



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National Website <http://www.u3a.org.uk/>
Newsletter 191 – December 2023

Our meeting this month ...

New Venue

Wednesday 20th December
2pm Cherith Hall
The British Music Hall

New Venue

A combination of history, personal engagement and the Good Old Days.

Tim Dyke

Tim will explain his own interest in the Halls, look at the story of Wilton’s Hall and others, show film of some acts from a century ago, and invite you to join the Edwardian stars in some perhaps forgotten songs. (This will be altogether different to his previous talk on this topic). **It would be lovely if you could come in some sort of Victorian / Edwardian dress to add to the atmosphere and get us in the festive mood – even if it’s only a feather in your hat.** After all, as Chairman Sachs used to say, “This time, it’s chiefly YOURSELVES!”

... and next month

Wednesday 17th January
2pm Cherith Hall
Rome: Foundation to Empire

Bryan Short

This talk gives some insight into the way Rome evolved from an insignificant agricultural community to the greatest power on earth. It illuminates the social and moral imperatives and catalytic events that stimulated this transition, leading to the dominance of a single person over the ‘civilised’ world, the brilliant Octavian or Augustus Caesar.

News from the Committee

The committee would like to say **goodbye and a huge thankyou to Margaret Wallwork** who is moving to Bristol in January. Margaret was one of the Exe Valley u3a's earliest members and served in many different capacities including three years as Chairperson, also leading the Poetry group and hosting the Latin group. Not content with all this, Margaret has at times also compiled the newsletter and written questions for the quiz. In particular, Margaret will be remembered as a staunch friend to many. We wish her well in her move and hope she will be happy in her new home.

Invitations have been issued to members who joined during the last twelve months to attend the **New Members Coffee Morning** which is to be held at the Tiverton hotel at 10.30am on Friday 26th January 2024. If you have not yet replied to your invitation or feel you should have received an invitation but have not done so, please contact Anne Bush on 01884 257221 to let her know that you would like to attend.

In conclusion, the committee would like to wish you a very **Happy Christmas** and thank you for your support during the past year. We look forward to seeing you again in 2024.

Final Reminder for Renewal Subscriptions 2024

Many thanks to half of our members who have renewed for next year.

This is a gentle reminder before I go in with the big guns in January that renewal subs are due by 1st January 2024. You can renew at our monthly meeting on 20th December, or by post or online, full details in the renewal form at the end of the Newsletter.

Do let me know if you are having any difficulty with renewing.

Email jriddiford68@gmail.com or 01884 258091.

Also, if you are not re-joining do let me know as it saves me having to chase folks up in the New Year.

Newsletter

Please send reports to Lynne by **9am Friday 12th January**. Thank you!

New Members

We extend a very warm welcome to two new members this month, **Emma Burns** and **Raymond Blackwell**. 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 November meeting we shared images on the theme 'Fire', as we brought our exploration of the four elements in art to a close.

The images included a spectacular painting of the Great Fire of London by an unknown artist, and more spectacle in the form of volcanic eruptions: those of Mount Vesuvius by Joseph Wright of Derby, and Mount Tarawera in New Zealand by Charles Blomfield.

There were also three of Steven Spazuk's remarkable *fumage* (painting with fire) pictures; a photograph of Ottery St Mary's hair-raising Tar Barrels event; the apocalyptic *The Great Day of His Wrath* by John 'Mad' Martin; *Inferno* by American war artist William F Draper, which depicts US Marines invading a Japanese-held island in the Pacific; a beautiful mosaic of Moses and the burning bush from St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula, built round the location of what is traditionally considered to be the site of that Biblical occurrence; and a pair of pictures of furnaces - Philip de Loutherbourg's *Coalbrookdale by Night*, and Graham Sutherland's *A Foundry*, an atmospheric, almost abstract, depiction of a steel works in Cardiff during the Second World War.

The 16th-century painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo – famous for portraits consisting entirely of fruit, vegetables, books etc - painted a series called *The Four Elements* for the Holy Roman Emperor. We naturally had 'Fire' (pictured here), which is built up from fire-related materials: the hair is a bonfire, the moustache a bundle of kindling, the eye a candle stub, and so on.

We rounded off the session by watching a short film about the terrible fire at the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris, and the progress being made with the mammoth task of restoration.

There is **no meeting in December**, though members will be tested with an art quiz over Christmas. Our next formal meeting will take place at the **OHSCC on Thursday 18 January at 2pm**. Keith will be giving us a talk on the art collection at Petworth House.

New group members are always welcome.

Boules in hibernation until the Spring.

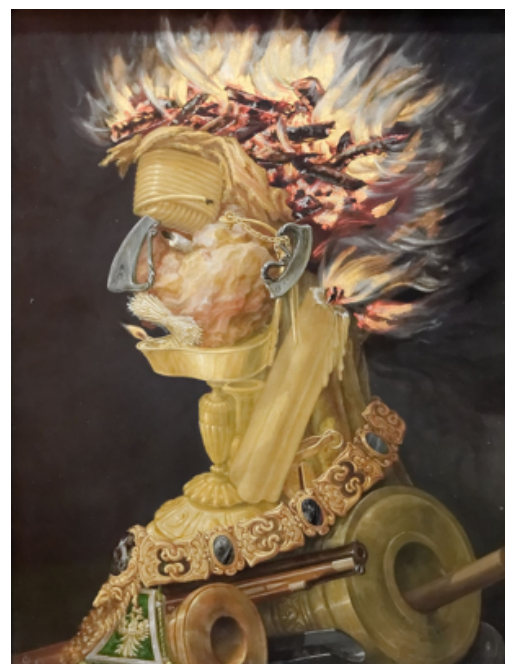
Bridge

Tuesday Bridge Doreen Burton

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

Thursday Social Bridge

Canasta Sue Dark



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

Craft Elaine Wright

We met in November to make woven purses using cardboard and various pieces of wool and ribbon. Fiddly at first but then it becomes meditative and satisfying although it needed concentration to keep going using the correct method. Very pleasant afternoon and thanks to Carol for hosting.



This month we met for Christmas lunch at The Old Well.

Our next meeting will be on **Monday 8th January at Steph's** when we will be having a go at making mosaic knitted gloves.

Cribbage Keith Dawson

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

Discussion Marilyn Dawson

The Discussion Group's last meeting of the year took place on a gorgeous sunny winter's day at Wendy's house which gave us beautiful views over the countryside. We didn't have a specific topic but enjoyed a bring and share lunch.

Our next meeting is on **Friday 5 January at 10:15am at Marilyn's home**.

We wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Folk Dancing John & Hazel Ridd (Tiverton u3a)

We had a splendid afternoon of folk dancing at our Christmas Party, enjoying the music of The Dancing Keys, and all ably directed by Simon our caller.

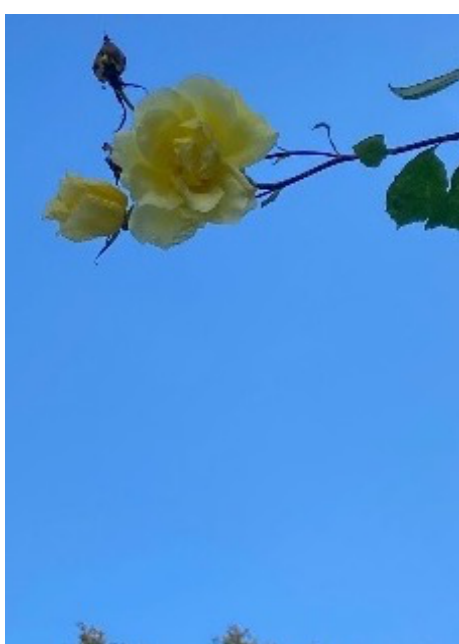
We meet on the **2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month, (January 10th and 24th) 2pm – 4pm in Halberton Village Hall**. All are welcome. The dances are walked through and explained well, and everyone is very kind and friendly.



French Conversation Deborah Lal

Gardening Joan Kelly, Jo Jeffrey, Carol Powney

Our November meeting took place on a blustery day but nevertheless those who braved the weather enjoyed the visit to the Newton St Cyres Arboretum where surprisingly there were some lovely autumn colours and even some flowering shrubs. We joined the rest of our group afterwards at Bernaville Nurseries for some pre-Christmas retail therapy, tea and cake.



Fifteen of us met in December for our pre-Christmas get together at the Tiverton Golf Club and enjoyed an excellent meal.

Our January meeting is on **Monday 8 January at 2 pm at the Old Heathcoat School Community Centre** for a social afternoon and quiz. Please join us if you can.

We wish all our Group a very Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year and look forward to our varied visits in 2024.

Local History David Meredith

At our nautical themed December meeting we were given a very descriptive account of the lives of the ordinary sailor in Nelson's navy. Husband and wife historians and authors, Roy and Lesley Adkins, illustrated their talk and quoted extracts from resources of the period. A hard life indeed only made bearable by the daily allowance of grog (watered down rum!) and the hopes of receiving a share of the "prize" money after capturing enemy ships. Many it would seem on returning to shore were preyed on by ladies of the night and left penniless until the next trip.

More sailors died of scurvy than were killed by other means until lemons and limes were introduced from around the year 1800? Rat pie and mouse hair in the butter were part of the daily diet!

Surprisingly women were on board including one lady from Exmouth who survived three sailor husbands and lived till 93! Copies of the book 'Jack Tar' along with other titles were on sale.

We begin our 2024 monthly programme on **Thursday January 11th at 2pm at the Cherith Hall** with a joint presentation by two senior staff from Killerton House. Tom Coombe, Collections and House Manager, will give the 400 year history of the Acland family and Robert Meakings, Conservation Manager, will show the Aclands as artistic patrons using material he collected during his fellowship with the National Gallery. Entry costs £2 to include refreshments.

Lunch Club Wendy Cook

Mah Jong Heather Edwards

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

MOTO (Members On Their Own) Wendy Cook

Early in November, we met for lunch at Spelt in Bampton, which was excellent. Thank you Sandra for organising it.

Coffee was good on Saturday 25th November, the conversation ranged from standards of driving on the motorways and idiots overtaking to cruising the Greek Islands in small boats.

We have **decided not to meet in December** as the coffee morning would have been 23rd, and we are all pretty busy round about then. We shall get together again on **27th January, 10.30 at the Flying Pickle in Tiverton.**

In the meantime, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Poetry Margaret Wallwork

Postponed from October, our November theme, Points of the Compass, proved unexpectedly productive, throwing up several poets we had not encountered before (William E Stafford, Ian Stuart, John Challis, Sandra Jacks), as well as many old favourites (Rudyard Kipling, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Anne Bronte, Robert Frost, Philip Larkin, W H Auden, T S Eliot, a couple of hymns – and a John Masefield poem NOT about the sea!). We also listened to versions of



the medieval Westron Winde, and enjoyed Spike Milligan's spoof "Go North, South, East and West, Young Man".

There was also some lively discussion about where exactly the North begins (Bristol? Watford? Nottingham?), whether there are badgers in America (yes, but not quite like ours), whether sunflowers can grow in Hull (?), and how Going West has very different connotations across the Atlantic. While Hamlet's line "I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw" continues to intrigue.



We were very sad to find this was Margaret's last meeting as our leader before departing for Bristol in the New Year (going North!). She has been a welcoming, hospitable, inspirational and wise guide and coordinator for so many years, and will be sorely missed. This means we have a few spaces in our number now and anyone interested should contact Tim on dyke397@btinternet.com.

We cannot meet over Christmas, so gather again at **2pm on January 25th at Tim's**. Being Burns Night, our theme is, naturally, All Things Scottish.

Rambling Ray Rice

New members are most welcome to join us. E-mail me on riceray@btinternet.com. Our walks are largely 4-5 miles in length, and we usually manage to find a pub or other venue in which to enjoy a convivial lunch, usually finishing around 2pm.

Reading

Reading Group 1 Alison Rice

A Year of Marvellous Ways by Sarah Winman was requested by a couple of members of the group this year. They had enjoyed Winman's other books *When God was a Rabbit* and *Still Life* and so were pleased when their request was chosen by the library for November.

Marvellous Ways - yes that's her name - is an independent 89 year old woman who lives a watery life by, on and in a remote Cornish creek dreaming of her past. Francis Drake is a young soldier who washes up in her creek shattered by fighting in the Second World War and broken hearted. Winman weaves their stories, with those of other characters from the past and the present, into a story of contrived coincidences.

Discussion got off to a rapid start with members vying for words to describe Winman's style. Poetic, faux poetic, rich in transferred epithets, beautiful and evocative, self-conscious, overblown imagery, winsome even; her extravagant descriptions annoyed some of the group and pleased others who enjoyed her use of language and were carried along by it into her world of inexplicable imaginings and magical realism.

There were some less magical strands in the story which interested all members of the group such as life in London during and immediately after the Blitz, the trauma of fighting in the war, life in a remote and decaying Cornish settlement, bread making and the ethnicity of Marvellous whose mother was widely accepted to be a mermaid.

Two members had read the book twice and felt it was all the better for that; they had been able to enjoy the imagery more fully but the contrived coincidences in the story and the rambling and often repetitive sections left us feeling that Winman had missed the mark - but what that was we couldn't say. Definitely not as good as other books by her.

We won't be meeting in December but on **January 29** we'll be **at Alison's** again and talking about *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro.

Reading Group 2 Chris Redhead

Our book this month was *Exposure* by Helen Dunmore.

Some of us, having gathered that the book was set in the Cold War years, had expected a more exciting spy thriller but it turned out to be more of a slow burn with an unexpected violent penultimate scene. The actual ending was described by one or two members as a bit Mills and Boon but overall the writing, the symbolism and the subtle hints of what was to come which were contained in the prologue were appreciated. As in the real world, what was actually going on in the world of espionage was somewhat opaque, but one of the themes of the book was that in fact all the time it was there in clear sight. The Exposure of the title referred to the unmasking of deceit and espionage.

We didn't empathise with all the characters. We thought maybe the resilience of the three young children whose father Simon was imprisoned (shades of *The Railway Children*?) wouldn't be true of children nowadays. Some of us disliked the non-chronological storytelling and the tedious hospital scenes (though the care and kindness Giles received there did seem to motivate him to do the decent thing when he knew he was definitely dying). I think most of us appreciated the character of Lily and how she dealt with life during Simon's imprisonment.

After thoroughly dissecting the novel, we turned our attention to the lovely refreshments provided by Wendy and Jenny.

As our usual Monday to meet falls on New Year's Day we shall meet a week later on **January 8th at Wendy's house**.

Reading Group 3 Sheelagh Bourdon

This month we have read "*The Night Manager*" by John le Carrè. At the start, Jonathan Pine is merely the night manager at a luxury hotel. But when a single attempt to pass on information to the British authorities - about an international businessman at the hotel with suspicious dealings - backfires terribly and people close to Pine begin to die, he commits himself to a battle against powerful forces he cannot begin to imagine. It is a chilling tale of corrupt intelligence agencies, billion-dollar price tags and the truth of the brutal arms trade. The book provoked a lively discussion. It was felt by some that reading it was "hard work". The politics in the story caused some confusion plus the "jargon". One of us thought it was a bit like "Yes Minister"! Other points mentioned - it was half way through that the action picked up, the mini series on television had a different ending, the series was more enjoyable than the book, the climax was distressing, politicians are out for glory, too much description made it confusing.

Our next meeting is on **December 28th**.

Skittles

Tuesday Skittles – Kathy Senior

The Tuesday Skittles team are enjoying their games at The Half Moon Tiverton. We play from 11am - 1pm with a coffee break halfway. We are a friendly group who have a fun morning and are looking for some more members to join us. If you feel you might enjoy playing skittles and want to give it a go please contact Kathy Senior our group leader.

We will be meeting on **December 19th, January 2nd and weekly thereafter**.

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Thursday Skittles – Jill Riddiford

Well, every Thursday an intrepid band of players has been turning up in all weathers to the warmth of the Skittle alley and surprisingly getting a fair amount of exercise.

We shall meet on the **21st December** and then start up again on **4th January** and continue through January.

What we have noticed Chris & Gina Brown

This was our last meeting for 2023 and we had an enjoyable time.

* One member talked about a book she had read on Venice and how it led to researching the Misericordia charity and brought back memories of an earlier Italian holiday.

*Another introduced the topic of global warming based on a newspaper article.

*Then we heard about a sat. nav. mistake on a coach holiday that resulted in a difficult trip down a narrow lane. How is this still happening?

*Staying with bus and train transport we heard how easy it was to travel from Tiverton to Teignmouth via the '55' bus (for Exeter Central Station) and onwards by train (Aslef strikes allowing!).

*Then it was by train to the Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds where one can view Henry VIII's armour, among other interesting exhibits.

*Finally it was 'behind the scenes' in Cardiff Museum to see a famous Tissot painting in storage. Who knew you could do this?

Our next meeting is **Tuesday 2nd January 2024 at 10.30.**

Wine Group Helen White, Deborah Lal

We meet on the **second Wednesday of the month** and welcome new members in the New Year – please see Helen or Deborah.

World History Helen Booth

We remember many people's names from our history, whilst others, equally deserving, seem to have been forgotten. We heard about one of these at our November meeting, when Patricia Bailey told us about Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1814-1906, who most of us had not heard of. Inheriting great wealth from her grandfather from the Coutts banking family, she became known as the 'Queen of the Poor' and was described by Edward VII as 'after my mother, the most remarkable woman in the kingdom'. Her money went into philanthropy, scholarships and charity sponsorships, too numerous to list here, but including helping to found both the NSPCC and RSPCA. In many ways, she was a modern woman - she had a stalker for 18 years, received numerous begging letters, was followed by the Press, proposed marriage aged 33, to the 79-year-old Duke of Wellington, and scandalised society when aged 67 she married her 29 year old secretary. In 1871, in recognition of her philanthropic work, Queen Victoria conferred on



her a peerage making her Baroness Burdett-Coutts and in 1872 she became the first woman to be presented with the Freedom for the City of London.

On **December 18th**, as usual at **OHSCC, 2pm in Room 2**, our 'Christmassy' topic will be the History of Wassailing.

Our first meeting of 2024 will be on **January 15th**.

DIARY

DECEMBER

Monday 18th

2pm World History OHSCC Room 2

Tuesday 19th

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online

Wednesday 20th

2pm Monthly Meeting Cherith Hall

The British Music Hall - Tim Dyke

New Venue

Thursday 21st

10am Thursday Skittles The Half Moon, Tiverton

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 22nd

Monday 25th CHRISTMAS DAY

Tuesday 26th BOXING DAY

Wednesday 27th

Thursday 28th

10.30am Reading Group 3 *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 29th

JANUARY 2024

Monday 1st NEW YEAR'S DAY

Subscriptions due

Tuesday 2nd

10.30am What We Have Noticed *Contact Group Leader*

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online

Wednesday 3rd

Thursday 4th

10am Thursday Skittles The Half Moon, Tiverton

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 5th

10.15am Discussion Group Marilyn's Home

Mah Jong Group *Contact Group Leader*

Monday 8th

2pm Cribbage *Contact Group Leader*

2pm Gardening Group OHSCC

2pm Reading Group 2 Wendy's house

2pm Craft Steph's house

Tuesday 9th

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online

Wednesday 10th

Canasta *Contact Group Leader*

2pm Folk Dancing Halberton Village Hall

Wine Group *Contact Group Leader*

Thursday 11th

10am Thursday Skittles The Half Moon, Tiverton

2pm Local History Cherith Hall

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 12th

9am Newsletter contributions to Lynne

Monday 15th

2pm World History OHSCC Room 2

Tuesday 16th

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online

Wednesday 17th

2pm Monthly Meeting Cherith Hall

Rome: Foundation to Empire - Bryan Short

Thursday 18th

10am Thursday Skittles The Half Moon, Tiverton

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

Wednesday 24th

2pm Folk Dancing Halberton Village Hall

Canasta *Contact Group Leader*

Thursday 25th

10am Thursday Skittles The Half Moon, Tiverton

2pm Poetry Tim's house

2pm Bridge *Contact Group Leader*

Friday 26th

10.30am New Members Coffee Morning Tiverton Hotel

Saturday 27th

10.30am MOTO Coffee Flying Pickle, Tiverton

Monday 29th

2pm Reading Group 1 Alison's house

Tuesday 30th

11am Tuesday Skittles The Half Moon Tiverton

7.30pm Bridge Online

Wednesday 31st

LOOKING AHEAD

MARCH

Friday 22nd

Quiz evening

MAY

Thursday 9th

Treasure Hunt

OCTOBER

Wednesday 30th

Ann Widdecombe

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair	Mike Turner	07885 515630
Vice-Chair	Deborah Lal	
Secretary	Chris Redhead	
Treasurer	Paul Sadler	
Programme Organiser	Joan Kelly	
Beacon Administrator	Jo Jeffrey	
Membership Secretary	Jill Riddiford	01884 258091
Group Co-ordinator	Karyl Huntley- Sadler	
Minutes Secretary	Joan Kelly	
I.T. & Printing	Carol Boote	
Socials & Meetings	Anne Bush	
Publicity Officer	Could this be you?	
Committee Member	Eric Oakley	

NON-COMMITTEE

Website Manager	Wendy Cook
Welfare	Marilyn Dawson
Newsletter Editor	Lynne Lyddon
Technician	Tim Dyke
