

SOUTH WEST REGION NEWSLETTER

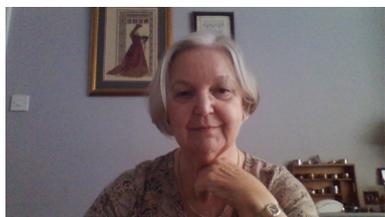
Issue: 3

April 2021

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide useful information to our Networks, u3as and their Members within the South West Region.



Message from Trustee for the South West

Hello Everybody, I'm sitting in my study with the sun streaming through the window with the daffodils and tulips brightening the garden and the early honeysuckle beginning to open its flowers on the garden wall.

By now we will all have been offered our Covid vaccinations and the restrictions are beginning to lift; now we can meet outdoors in small groups and if all goes well some of the halls that we use will start to open and we can start a slow return to something that feels more normal.

June 2nd is **u3a Day** and **u3as** all over the region are making plans. Even if you are unable to make a big splash on that day use that day to advertise your **u3a** and your plans for the future in the local press, social media, posters, any way you can. If we all highlight the **u3a** on the same day we can raise the profile of the **u3a** so that no longer do people say 'what is that?' when you say 'I belong to the **u3a**.'

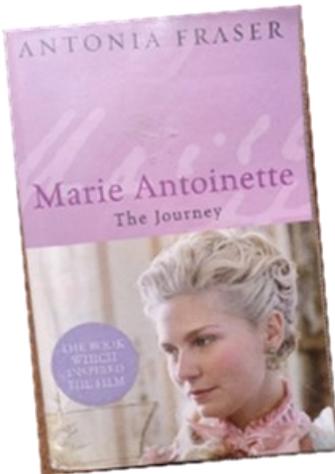
Let's all look forward to *Learning, Laughing & Living* in the company of our friends before very much longer.

Take care,

Susan

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE REGION

ISLES OF SCILLY BOOKWORMS GROUP



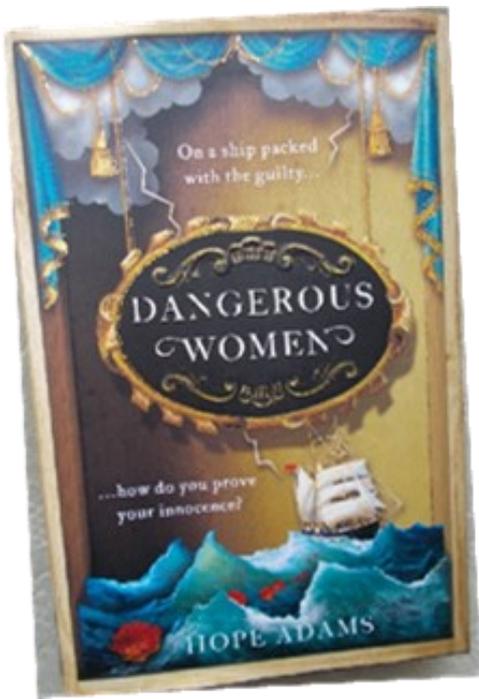
At the beginning of February, we met on Zoom to discuss 'The Journey', a biography of Marie Antoinette by Antonia Fraser. With almost 550 pages of small print, it was a challenge! Of course, we all know the outcome of this tragic story but the twists and turns of events and their impact on a family already devastated by the death of two children, turns this into a compelling story which will always remain in the reader's memory.

The following review is a compilation of our thoughts on the book.

To begin with we focused our discussion on the question, 'Was the fate of Marie Antoinette inevitable?' Arguments were put forward for and against. However, it was agreed that from the moment she married the Dauphin, later crowned Louis XVI, MA was under suspicion because she was an Austrian Archduchess and the two countries were historically at war with each other.

France's economy was on the verge of bankruptcy; wars and the extravagance of the French Court being the main reasons but Marie Antoinette was continually vilified and blamed for the country's debt and accused of being a dangerous agent of a foreign power. However, from Antonia Fraser's research, it appears that MA's main concern was her family - the King and their children. Marie Therese was their first child and until his death at the age of eight, Louis Joseph, the Dauphin, had been in poor health. A daughter, Sophie, died as an infant.

We would highly recommend this biography. Antonia Fraser's research was second to none. It is a well written, tragic and memorable story. Parallels can also be drawn with the present day. Lies and false accusations are still powerful weapons for those looking for a scapegoat.



Also, at the beginning of the month we learned that we had won a set of the book 'Dangerous Women' by Hope Adams to be published early in March, courtesy of the Reading Agency. Thanks to our St. Mary's Library, we are notified of these events. All I had to do was fill in a short questionnaire about our book group and a week later we were told the good news. In exchange for the books, the RA have asked us to submit reviews on various Internet sites. It tells the story of 180 female convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania, on the 'Rajah' in 1841 and there is an ingenious mix of fact and fiction.

The 'Rajah' did actually sail with 180 female convicts to Van Diemen's Land in 1841 and over 20 women were involved in creating the beautiful coverlet, later known as the 'Rajah Quilt'. It is now displayed in the National Gallery of Australia's Textiles Collection. Adams was inspired to write the story when she saw the quilt when it was on loan to the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. What happens on board the 'Rajah' is fiction.

The following is Jenny's captivating review -

"The whole presentation was like opening a big box of chocolates with anticipation of what is inside! You are not disappointed as the story keeps you in its thrall from the first page to the last.

The characters are well drawn but I wanted to know more about the lives of the little group of quiltmakers after they disembarked in Hobart. As Kezia Hayter, the matron and person who shared the quilt making with them said, 'I've grown fond of them and I'll miss them. But the work of their hands abides.'

There was tension throughout, not least because of the murder mystery, but between the women and the crew, often among themselves, and always there was Kezia fighting in their corner against male prejudice.

Conditions on the 'Rajah' are described in great detail and from the outset you feel as though you are on the 'ceaselessly moving, rolling and pitching' ship with these abandoned women, experiencing the difficulties of sharing a small space with so many people. The passing of time is cleverly employed; the black expanse of the unknown stretching to a black horizon.

The women were encouraged to use the time at sea to improve their lives, and the group chosen to make the Rajah Quilt took time to settle into a routine, but that offered more than the satisfaction of creating this beautiful work of art, they found companionship, tranquillity and a portent of something better to come."

Linda Wornes

'The Hills of Devon'; the story behind a Lockdown song

It is always good to have an unexpected pleasant surprise and a special song



composed, sung and recorded by one of our own members during Lockdown was just that. We were busy arranging a programme of entertainment by and for our Ex-mouth and District u3a members in December 2020 when one of many e-mails caught my attention. It contained a recording of 'The Hills

of Devon' by Deirdre Mackness; I listened to it once and then played it over and over again. The strong lyrics with Deirdre's well-chosen words and beautiful voice certainly captured the essence of living by the sea with the distinctive red cliffs of the World Heritage Jurassic Coast. So what to do next!

I wanted to share the song with as many people as possible. "Have you heard this fabulous new song by one of own members?"

The 'chat' box of 'Zoom' was full of congratulatory comments. So much so that we decided to devote one of our regular Thursday morning online sessions to Deirdre's story and song.

So it was in Lockdown this February that we heard the background to Deirdre's song. It had come about following an emotionally difficult year in 2019 with the death of Deirdre's best friend in May. In November of that year Deirdre ended up in a brace for 7 weeks having broken the meniscus in her left leg. With time on her hands Deirdre had time to grieve for her friend and to really look around. From her hill top home Deirdre saw the ocean change every day, the sun rise, casting warm colours across the sea, then sparkling, with the noise of the waves being joined by the sound of people chatting to their dog walking friends on early morning walks. As the light changed throughout the day, the hills seemed to rise from the sea until the sun set and the sky darkened.

As soon as Deirdre was able to get out and about again she made the most of the wonderful seascape on her doorstep. Walking on the pristine beach and staring up at the awesome red cliffs a tune and words came together over time. Despite the restrictions of Lockdown Deirdre was determined that her song would reach further than the few people who heard it as she went on her daily walks. She found a talented local musician, Simon Carter who could play by ear and his wonderful arrangement on the keyboard was saved and sent to Rapunzels, a one man recording studio in Seaton.

Finally in December 2020 with her own song now successfully recorded Deirdre sent the recording to John Smith who organises our u3a band. He sent it to me as Chair and with Deirdre's permission I set about adding photographs for an audio visual sequence of 'The Hills of Devon'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsZES6wwojk> Living by the sea the RNLI is very close to our hearts and vital to locals and visitors if they ever find themselves in difficulty, so donations for Deirdre's song will go to the Lifeboat station in Exmouth.

Contact: Deirdre Mackness <https://u3asites.org.uk/exmouth/contact>

Photo: *Exmouth's Red Cliffs by Christine Chittock, CPAGB*

Christine Chittock , Chair and Speakers' Coordinator, Exmouth and District u3a

NEW INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE

A Facebook Public Group page has been created for [Devon Link u3a](#).

[Social Media for u3a Day Event Presentation](#) can be viewed for ideas in the use of Social Media to promote your u3a and the movement.

The Institute of Cancer Research are conducting a survey to see what peoples' views would be on completing questionnaires electronically rather than on paper. These questionnaires are used to collect information from trial participants on the impact that treatments and health conditions may be having upon their quality of life. These are normally completed on paper.

Further information on this research work, including a link to the survey, can be found [here](#).

The [Model Constitution](#) (England & Wales) dated February 2021 is now available to view / download. This includes additional clauses to support your u3a and to futureproof them going forward including an option for online meetings, proxy voting and the casual vacancy clause.

[Retention & Recruitment](#) event presentation on keeping members and attracting new members is now available to view.

The [u3a website tour presentation](#) shows members how to navigate around the Third Age Trust's website.

The previous Research and Shared Learning Projects pages have been merged and all information can now be found under [Research & SL](#).

[Introduction of the recruitment toolkit](#) index is now available through the u3a website 'Sources – Recruitment'.

Are you missing playing Bridge? If so, you may be interested in playing Online Bridge with other u3as in the UK, please read this article [Online Bridge for u3as](#) .

Network / Link	Name
Avalon Network	Val Warren
Bath & Wiltshire Network	Gordon Pardy
Bristol, Yate & Sodbury Link	Lindsay Gough
Cotswold Link	Jeremy Furtado
Devon Link	Frances Berry
East Devon Network	June Brown
East Dorset Network	Val Warren
Mid Cornwall	Pippa Boardman
North Devon Link	Gillian Kerr
Northern Somerset Network	Colin Tincknell
Tamar Valley Network	Amanda Smith
Two Moors Network	Malcolm Tulip
Far West Cornwall Network	Linda Wornes
West Dorset Network	Hilary Smith
West Somerset Network	Pamela Young

Contributions for inclusion in the next Newsletter would be most welcome and should be sent to the Editor by 9th June.

[SOUTH WEST REGION WEBSITE](#)

Individual u3a/Network contributions are welcome for publication on the South West Region Website and should be sent to the [Webmaster](#) using the link on the contact page.

The members of the editorial team are as follows:

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