

u3a Totnes
THE THIRD AGE TRUST
March 2024

Newsletter

The Totnes u3a AGM will be taking place on Thursday April 25th. If you can find the time please do come along. The AGM is an important date in the u3a calendar and will include the current status of the Totnes group and the election/re-election of the committee. It is also a great opportunity to think about volunteering your services in some capacity and to support your local u3a. Contrary to popular belief not all AGMs are boring!!

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ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS



Totnes u3a Speakers 2023/2024

Totnes u3a Speakers 2023/2024		
April 25th	Caz Donovan	The relationship between the landscape, plants and geology
May 23rd	Mike Langham	Interactive bird talk
June 27th	Dr Sue Andrew	The 3 Hares motif that is found in many Dartmoor churches
July 25th	Prof. Peter Edwards	The life and works of Leonardo da Vinci
September 26th	Paul Hawthorne	Isaac Singer and his connection to Paignton
October	Mary Smith	A schoolgirl's war. School life during WW2
November 28th	Dr. Todd Gray	The Cathedral Close fire and other historic buildings of Exeter

New Members

Welcome to the following new members; Sue Coulson, Mary Coughlan-Clark and Martin Clark, Paul Graham – associate member

Folk Group

The folk band is in need of 2 new musicians. We meet every 2 weeks on a Tuesday at Dartington Village Hall and would welcome people able to play a basic tune on an instrument. It doesn't matter if you haven't played for a while, we have all levels of ability and just enjoy making music together. Contact Jess for further details and any queries.

Jess

GROUP NEWS

Totnes U3a Walking Group

March Walk:

Four of us braved the forecast for a walk around the Burrator Reservoir on Friday 1st March. After weeks of incessant rain it may have been foolhardy but turned out to be a great outing. We had two brief sleet showers in spite of the forecast. Not even enough to dampen our spirits let alone of clothes. As the footpath around the reservoir was impassable due to the depth of mud we chose to walk on the road apart from one short stretch of footpath which was reasonably clear. The reservoir is full and overflowing as seen in the picture. The 4.5 mile walk was soon done. Our only criticism was that there were no picnic areas on the road, so we had to have our coffee break at the end of the walk please join us in April when we hope to be walking Stover Park.



Luncheon Club 2



A second lunch group has now got off the ground. So far we've visited the Tamarind Tree restaurant and Waterside Bistro. Future venues will include a range of cafes, restaurants, pubs and street food within the town. We meet on the 3rd Friday of each month at 12pm. If interested, email Bob at lunchclub2@u3atotnes.uk



Bob

Music Appreciation

After some thought, we have decided that our meetings, currently on the first Thursday of the month, will revert to the second Thursday.

We shall meet as planned on 4 April, but I should be grateful if you could mention in the next newsletter that we shall be meeting on the second Thursday starting on 9 May.

Best wishes,

Barry

80 Bites 3



Our Moroccan lunch was so good that this was all that was left by the time we had finished. Dishes included flatbread with feta and peppers, Chicken tagine, Moroccan chicken with preserved lemons and coconut and semolina ghriba plus pancakes with fresh orange in honey and cinnamon for dessert.

German Group

I've succeeded in founding a new group: "German conversation". More details to follow.

Tony

Natural History Group

We had, exceptionally, two trips in March. They were both unusual by our standards but very rewarding. On Tuesday 12th we had a leisurely walk up, around, and down the back lanes of Littlehempston village. Jenny has lived there for very many years and could tell us so much about everything we saw.

We started from Post Cottage, Jenny G-F's house. The distance was about one-and-a-half miles; the weather was overcast and mostly dry. Jenny narrates: We stopped by the Triangle (Silverhead) Bridge over the Gatcombe Brook, which is an unusual feature. We saw the first plants of Hemlock Water Dropwort



coming through all along the brook. This is an extremely poisonous plant which lines the Littlehempston waterways; it has attractive white umbelliferous flowers in summer. American Signal Crayfish have unfortunately also been seen in the banks of the brook.

We saw how the railway embankment, constructed in 1848, was at least in part responsible for the notorious flooding in Littlehempston, as it prevents the river Hems from spreading out onto its natural flood plain. The Gatcombe Brook flows into the river Hems (which joins the Dart at Snipe Island by the Waste Water Treatment Works near Totnes) by the railway embankment in the village centre, and one arch of the crossing is now completely silted up, and has now been colonised by plants of various kinds. Near the village bridge is a gunnera plant, which somehow always survives the floods, and was just poking a new leaf upwards.

We walked in a clockwise direction up from the village past Grattons Farm. Although early in the year, there was still a lot to look at. Snowdrops were going over, but greater stitchwort, primroses and lesser celandines were out, and violets both white and blue (probably pale early dog violets.) Along the hedges Alexanders (*Smyrnum olusatrum*) were starting to show. These were introduced by the Romans as a vegetable, and only grow near the coast. There was a lot of valerian, navelwort and ivy-leaved toadflax in the stone walls.

Apart from the rooks circling the church tower, birds were not very much in evidence. The site at the top of Grattons Lane where skylarks, curl buntings and yellowhammers are sometimes to be seen was empty. Our Merlin birdsong phone app did not pick up any either.

Halfway down the lane, Jenny drew the attention of the group to the place on the bank where a patch of Bastard Balm (*Melittis melissophyllum*) had flourished for many years, but disappeared about three years ago. This is a pity, as the very first mention of this plant is in How's *Phylostigia Britannica* of 1560 which locates it 'in a wood near Totnes.' Other mentions refer to it as being 'on Mr Champernown's (ie Dartington) land' - that is, across the Dart. So 'our' plant could not have been the original specimen! We agreed we would look out for Bastard Balm on our visit to Orley Common, as we saw one clump of it growing there last year.

Further on, we saw plants of *Allium Triquetrum* (Three-cornered leek) growing near someone's gate, and shoots of hedge bedstraw.

We descended the steep lane back to the village centre, noting on the right the large walled garden belonging to Parkhill, and the clever stone leat that was originally constructed to bring water to the garden before a piped supply was connected.

We ended the walk at Jenny's with tea and biscuits.

Jenny Galton-Fenzi

And on Sunday 24th 7 of us went to Wistmans Wood, one of three areas of gnarled ancient oak woodland, all festooned with epiphytes, on Dartmoor. Pam Gorman takes up the story:



Off to Wistman's Wood with our U3A Nat Hist group. I'd not been there for 40yrs or more. I was young, fit and healthy then but now after a double mastectomy last year and my ninetieth birthday coming up this year, I'm not that person any more. But hey ho I have a lift with Helen and Paul, I'd filled a roll for a picnic lunch, packed my carton of coconut water, my walking pole at the ready. It's

time to go. The gorse on the moors was amazing and the sun smiling down on us.

The car park was busy but we found a space. Caz showed us rocks in the quarry (a tiny SSSI) while we waited for Tony, Carol and Howard to arrive. Finding the

car park full they had resorted to parking in the hotel car park. We set off up the track.

It wasn't how I remembered it at all. Things had changed, as they do. I am much older now and feeling unsure as to if I could make it to the woods and catch up with long lost memories.

The track started off okay but it soon became full of obstacles that I hadn't remembered. Black sticky mud lay between large slippery boulders. SO glad that I had my walking pole.

The stile was another hurdle along the obstacle course. My legs don't bend like they used to and the stile seemed much higher. I had difficulty getting my foot over the top rung and there were boulders to negotiate on the other side but I'd come this far I couldn't give up now could I?

Onwards and upwards as the old saying goes. Carol encouraged me by saying that the trees were in sight. What a relief but it still seemed miles away.

Thankfully I made it and how happy I was to sit on a large flat rock refusing to go any further. I so enjoyed my picnic looking at the stunted trees and large moss covered magic boulders which hadn't changed very much at all. My memory flitted amongst times gone by and I was in heaven. I guess I'll never get there again but this time I had made it and with some lovely people. Thankyou.

Pamela Sandry Gorman

TOTNES u3a GROUPS

&

Meeting Dates

TOPIC	MEETING DATE
Around the World in 80 Bites 1	Monthly meeting in members' houses
Around the World in 80 Bites 3	Monthly meeting in members' houses
Book Club	First Thursday 2.30p.m. in a member's house
Bridge	Tues weekly 1.30 p.m.
Chess	1 st and 3 rd Monday at Quayside and 1.30pm for beginners, 2.30pm for regular players
Choir	Weds 10.00 a.m.
Creative Writing	
Digital Photography	2 nd Monday 10.30 a.m. Dartmouth Inn, Totnes
Discussion Group	2 nd Monday p.m. & 4 th Monday on Zoom
Folk Band and Recorders	Tues fortnightly 10.00 a.m.
French Conversation	3 rd Tuesday 2.30 p.m. Dartmouth Inn
Gardening 1	2 nd Mon p.m.
Gardening 2	1 st Thursday at 2.30 p.m.
Gardening 3	2 nd Wednesday
Geology	Dates variable
Luncheon Club	2 nd Thurs lunchtime
Luncheon Club2	3 rd Friday at 12pm
Music Appreciation	1st Thurs 10.30 a.m. Quaker Centre
Natural History	
Petanque	Wed & Thurs 11:00 a.m.
Play Reading	2 nd Fri a.m.
Play Reading 2	2 nd and 4 th Fridays from 1030-1230 at Quayside
Psychology	2 nd Tues 10 30a.m – 12p.m. Quaker Meeting House, Ticklemore St.
Walking	1 st Fri
Longer Walking Group	3rd Thursday
Women's Interest Group	2 nd Thurs at 11.00 a.m. Various venues
Writing Group	4 th Monday of the month 1030. Dartmouth Inn

TOTNES u3a GROUPS
&
GROUP LEADERS

STUDY/SOCIAL

Around the World in 80 Bites 1
 Around the World in 80 Bites 3
 Book Club
 Bridge
 Chess
 Choir
 Creative Writing
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 French Conversation
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 Petanque
 Play Reading
 Play Reading 2
 Psychology
 Walking
 Longer Walking Group
 Women's Interest Group
 Writing Group

LEAD

Anne Eames
 Sue Collyer
 Alison Sale
 Howard Burchell
 Roger Porkess
 Hazel Lewis
 Rita Trotman
 Bob Dow
 Rosemary Gillam
 Bob Carpenter
 Keith Smith
 Jess Price
 Marie Moore
 Mavis Schindler
 Liz Allen
 Jane Smith
 Caz Donovan
 Barry Northam
 Tony Cooper
 Nigel Woodward
 David Wilks
 Edwina Ratcliffe
 Amy Summers
 Richard Scheffer
 Bob Carpenter
 Ros Hills
 Rita Trotman

email address

80bites1@u3atotnes.uk
80bites3@u3atotnes.uk
bookclub@u3atotnes.uk
bridge@u3atotnes.uk
chess@u3atotnes.uk
choir@u3atotnes.uk
creative writing@u3atotnes.uk
photography@u3atotnes.uk
lunch@u3atotnes.uk
lunchclub2@u3a.uk
discussion@u3atotnes.uk
folkband@u3atotnes.uk
frenchconversation@u3atotnes.uk
gardening1@u3atotnes.uk
gardening2@u3atotnes.uk
gardening3@u3atotnes.uk
geology@u3atotnes.uk
music@u3atotnes.uk
nature@u3atotnes.uk
petanque43@u3atotnes.uk
playreading@u3atotnes.uk
playreading2@u3atotnes.uk
psychology@u3atotnes.uk
walking@u3atotnes.uk
longerwalks@u3atotnes.uk
women@u3atotnes.uk
writing@u3atotnes.uk

YOUR COMMITTEE

Officers (ex officio):

CHAIRMAN	Bob Dow	chair@u3atotnes.uk
TREASURER	Richard Scheffer	treasurer@u3atotnes.uk
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Carolyn Nash	membership@u3atotnes.uk
GROUPS CO ORDINATOR	Jaquetta Selley	groups@u3atotnes.uk
SECRETARY	Rosemary Gillam	secretary@u3atotnes.uk
WEBMASTER	Tony Cooper	webmaster@u3atotnes.uk
COMMITTEE MEMBER	Roger Porkess	chess@u3atotnes.uk
COMMITTEE MEMBER	Roy Williams	committee1@u3atotnes.uk
COMMITTEE MEMBER	Maureen Wilmott	committee2@u3atotnes.uk

The committee is ably assisted by:

NEWS EDITOR	Tim Marsh	news@u3atotnes.uk
SPEAKER COORDINATOR	Caz Donovan	geology@u3atotnes.uk
MEET & GREET	Sue Webster	meetandgreet@u3atotnes.uk

Web <https://u3asites.org.uk/totnes.home>

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