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Newsletter 220 – May 2026

... this month ...

Wednesday 20th May

2pm Cherith Hall

Falling With Style (Parachuting)

Lottie Dale

Lottie's father was a Spitfire, Hurricane and Mustang pilot in World War 2 and he passed his love of flying over to her.

Unable to learn to fly due to the costs involved she took the next best route and learned how to fall out of a perfectly serviceable aircraft. Her first jump was at the age of 31 and she had a malfunctioning canopy on her 12th jump! Undeterred, she persevered and over the next 15 years completed more than 1200 jumps!

She has been part of the Brittany Ferries Air Display Team and the Daily Express Girl's Demo Team - including demos onto Normandy Beaches, Biggin Hill Air Show, Paris Air Show and Wembley Stadium. She has also taken part in Women's British Record Jumps and competed at National Level.

... next month...

Wednesday 17th June

2pm Cherith Hall

Dartmoor Murder Novels

Stephanie Austin (Author)

Stephanie's first crime novel 'Dead in Devon', was set in the Dartmoor town of Ashburton in June 2019. It was her own meandering career path, first as a teacher, then as an artist, astrologer and dabbler in antiques which lead to the creation of her heroine, Juno Browne,

amateur sleuth and reluctant antique shop owner and her eclectic selection of friends. Since then, eight more Juno Brown novels have been published with the latest 'How to get murdered in Devon' out in hardback. Stephanie lives in Ashburton with her husband. When not writing she is actively involved in amateur theatre as an actor and director. 'A Dartmoor Christmas card murder' is due for release this year.

News from the Committee

Your committee have now held their first meeting following the AGM in March when it was agreed that their roles and responsibilities will be as shown at the end of this newsletter. Deborah Lal will have no specific role on the committee to enable her wide experience of u3a matters can be used as best required.

You will be aware that there is currently no entrance fee to attend our monthly meetings. In view of our continued healthy financial position, it was decided that there will be no admission charge for at least a further six months when the situation will be reviewed again.

Refreshments will also continue to be provided free of charge but, if you feel so inclined, a donation towards their cost would be most welcome.

New members

There were no new members this month.

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.

Newsletter

June's Newsletter will be compiled by Lynne Lyddon. Please send your reports to Lynne by **9am Friday 12th June**. Thank you.

Special event held last month

On Friday 24th April, we held a special event provided by Devon Air Ambulance who presented a CPR and defibrillator awareness session which was very successful with many people taking the opportunity to gain hands on experience with carrying out CPR and using a defibrillator.



News from the Interest Groups

Art Appreciation – Gina Brown, Keith Bush, John Massey

We devoted our April meeting to one of the undisputed all-time greats in the history of art, Rembrandt.

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn was born in Leiden in 1606, though he spent most of his adult career in Amsterdam. He achieved great popularity and success, but by the time of his death in 1669 extravagance with money had rendered him virtually bankrupt.

His prolific output included paintings, drawings and etchings. His subjects were portraits, religious scenes and a remarkable series of self-portraits, about 40 produced throughout his life. We looked at representative examples of each. Shown here is the enchanting *Girl at a Window* in the Dulwich Art Gallery; and the British Museum's *Woman Sleeping*, an impressionistic and almost Japanese sketch in brush and brown wash.



We also watched a short video about Rembrandt's erroneously named masterpiece, *The Night Watch*, and another about one of his contemporaries, Gerrit Dou.

Our next meeting will be at the **OHSCC on Thursday 21 May at 2pm**, at which John will be giving us a talk on the Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron.

New group members are always welcome.

Boules

Tuesday Boules – Janet Phythian

We have continued to play boules on Tuesdays at Walrons in Cullompton and have been lucky with the weather, albeit we don't always take our coats off!

At the moment this group is full.

Thursday Boules – Jill Riddiford

We started playing at the beginning of this month and would have liked warmer weather but at least it was dry and we were all in fine form after a winter lay-off. We welcomed some new/returning members and are up to full strength at present, but can start a waiting list if anyone is interested.

Bridge

Tuesday Bridge – Doreen Burton

The Tuesday Bridge group play online at 7.30pm most weeks. We also meet to play on Wednesday afternoons to include those in the group that prefer not to play online. Our Wednesday session is now full but we would welcome anyone that would like to play online on a Tuesday evening. We play 'Bridge Base Online'.

Thursday Social Bridge – Tricia Summers

The group continues to play on Thursday afternoons. We play bridge in a friendly social setting while trying to improve our skills. Each week the cards provide varying challenges both in bidding and play.

Canasta – Sue Dark

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

Craft – Elaine Wright

April Meeting

Our group met this month to make rope coasters/mats, ably led by Emma, at our host Jenny's house. Emma had, apart from being very able in demonstrating, made 5 real life cue cards and brought with her the rope cut to the right length to enable us to start straight away. This helped us to see where we were going right (or very wrong!) quite quickly and easily. The work involved weaving the rope in what looked to be a simple design. We were fooled: it was not at all. We all persevered and completed one mat, having our work being checked by Emma when needed. Most of us tried a second time, but not all were successful in mastering the skill when trying to do it without Emma talking us through each stage.



We had an enjoyable time and all went home pleased with our accomplishments and with full tummies thanks to the huge amount of sweet goodies made and provided by Jenny our host.

May meeting

A small but very keen group of us met this month to learn how to create “Dorset Buttons”. These are made using copious amounts of fine wool to be transformed into very pretty and individual “buttons”, or decorations.

We started off with 4 metres of wool, a large curtain ring and a needle. Alison King explained how to get started by winding wool very tightly around the ring to cover it completely. With another 4 metres of wool we then proceeded to make “spokes” which could then be interwoven to make various pretty designs inside the circle.



Some of us were more successful than others at this topic, as can be seen in the photos! Lots of us got our very long pieces of wool tangled & knotted in the process! Elaine was hosting and provided very yummy scones with cream and jam which down very well given the amount of concentration and frustration in the room!

Thanks to Elaine for hosting and Ali for leading.

Cribbage – Keith Dawson

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

Discussion – Marilyn Dawson

A good number of us met at Helen’s house for our May meeting. Our topic was ‘If you could rewind and pause time - when would it be and why?’

Not surprisingly for many of us, times with our younger children before they “grew up” and went to school. For others it was travel with extremely fond memories of both the places visited and the people met on the journey. Reminiscing of course led to getting sidetracked on to many other topics along the way! We discussed what we would change if we could pause and rewind time but the majority thought they would probably not change anything. After all, life experiences are what make each of us the individual person we are. We usually have a definite lighter subject topic to follow the main topic, but there was none set this month. Don’t worry, we weren’t lost for words! We continued to discuss some of the topics that had arisen from earlier on and, as always, there was a mention of Donald Trump and recent political carryings on.

There will be no Discussion Group in June as many of the group are away or are busy with life in general. Thanks to Helen for hosting.

Folk Dancing – John & Hazel Ridd (Tiverton u3a)

This group meets on the **2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month, 2pm – 4pm in Halberton Village Hall**. All are welcome. The dances are walked through and explained well, and everyone is very friendly and helpful to ensure we all have a lovely time.

French Conversation – Deborah Lal

Gardening – Joan Kelly, Jo Jeffrey, Carol Powney

This month our visit to Haldon Grange at Dunchideock surpassed our expectations. Haldon Grange, located near Exeter, is an estate renowned for its historic gardens, particularly featuring rhododendrons and azaleas at this time of year. It is situated within the grounds of the former Haldon House, built around 1735, and has evolved into a family-run garden opened frequently under the National Garden Scheme. The estate includes a 6-acre arboretum, a 19-acre garden with a lake, cascading ponds, a lilac circle, and a wisteria pergola.

The gardens are superbly maintained and the colourful plants and shrubs, particularly the many azaleas and rhododendrons are amazing. We enjoyed the tea and cakes, home made by the owner, at the end of the afternoon.

Next month we visit Fursdon House Gardens, Cadbury EX5 5JS. Meeting there **WEDNESDAY 10th June 2pm**.



Local History – David Meredith

This month, Alison Holmes, Curator of the Devon and Cornwall Police Museum, presented the history of policing in the 2 counties with special attention given to the Tiverton area which had its own Force from 1845 to 1943. Alison, supported by a retired police officer who worked in Tiverton, spoke of local characters and events, how uniforms changed, how whistles replaced rattles, motors replaced bicycles and ladies and dogs were accepted into the force. Items from the Museum included these handcuffs, ably demonstrated by our Chair of Exe Valley u3a. Thanks Mike.

Many of the audience had police family connections and stories, including a father arrested in Tiverton for riding two on a bike! Even the small and usually law abiding village of Bickleigh had its own Policeman and Police House. Perhaps poaching rabbits or salmon in the Exe were considered major crimes.

Next month on **Thursday June 11th at 2pm at the Cherith Hall**, Tim Dyke will be speaking about the Tolpuddle Martyrs and the poverty and unrest in this normally peaceful Dorset town. Tim describes it as "Not so much a Talk, more a Shout of Indignation ... with slides, exploration of farmworkers' wages and conditions, lots of contemporary quotes and comments about a disgraceful miscarriage of justice... and songs!" Sounds wonderful.

Free admission and free refreshments! Doors open from 1.30pm. What's not to like! New members welcome.



Lunch Club – Wendy Cook

A very select group met at the Catherine Wheel in Hemyock on Thursday 16th April and enjoyed a really tasty and very good value lunch, as you can see in the photo.

It made a nice change having a small group as it meant that we could all join in one conversation where we managed to put the world to rights. Our next outing will be on Thursday 21st May. We are an open group and always welcome new members. If you are interested in trying local eateries, please contact Wendy Cook, via the website.



Mah Jong – Heather Edwards

We meet on the **first Friday of the month**, playing simple Mah Jong i.e. clean and dirty hands. Currently our list is full but you're welcome to join our waiting list.

MOTO (Members On Their Own) – Wendy Cook

If you are on your own and would like to meet up with other in the same situation, then come along to our coffee morning. We meet once a month on the fourth Saturday at the Flying Pickle in Tiverton, where the chat is lively and the coffee hot. We also arrange lunches and other outings to the cinema or walks in our lovely countryside. If you are interested in coming along, please contact Wendy Cook. Our next coffee morning will be on **Saturday 23rd May at 10.30 at the Flying Pickle, Tiverton.**

Poetry – Tim Dyke

After March's meeting had to be postponed, the poetry group reconvened in April to share poems on the interesting theme of Events. In the event, we had enormous fun and learned a huge amount, from the Tay Bridge disaster commemorated by the world's worst poet, William McGonagall (he who walked 60 miles to Balmoral to read his work to Queen Victoria, only to find her out and be refused admittance), to Sylvia Plath's musings on her sleeping newborn, Larkin's Whitsun Weddings, Beer's celebration of the marvellous Devonian Parson Hawker and Lois Clark's Pictures from the Blitz.

Much enjoyment was had in hearing again Val Doonican's Unicorn song ("Green alligators and long-necked geese ...") after C S Lewis's Sailing of the Ark, and in finally deciphering Don Maclean's American Pie (who knew he saw Mick Jagger as Satan after the Altamont festival disaster?), and wondering whether Woodstock was really the Free Love mecca it claimed, since most people in the crowd photos seem to be young men.

Then we shared childhood memories after hearing Billy Collins' On Turning Ten, delighted in Kathleen Jamie's Glaswegian Queen of Sheba ("Whae do you think y'ur?") and wondered at the patience of someone who recreated the Battle of Hastings in lego, after Kath Hall's unusual Rictameter poem. Perhaps what struck the sharpest chord, however, was Dorothy Parker's One Perfect Rose, as she complained "Why is it no one ever sent me yet One perfect limousine?"

After wars, springtime and birthdays, it was something of a relief to hear that May's theme will be the more contained Time (thyme?), though no doubt some will discover unusual perspectives on this too – 2pm on 28th at Tim's. Sorry, no vacancies.



Rambling – Pat

McGee

We met up at the Tiverton Road Bridge between Tiverton and Halberton for a 10.00 hrs start. Ten walkers turned out on a coolish but dry Spring morning, with some sunshine, but lots of clouds. We crossed the swing bridge to access the towpath, and started our walk along the stretch of the canal known as the Swan's Neck (because of the shape when seen from on high!). The path is a very quiet one here, with the odd dog walker, runner and cyclist. Lots of Spring flowers adorned the path, yellow iris, as well as the occasional patch of orchids. As we walked along, we admired the hard work and ingenuity of the canal designers and builders, as they sculpted the landscape so as to eliminate the need for locks on this stretch of the canal, which meant taking put chunks of hills, and building up other stretches to keep it all on the same level. We passed a couple of bridges, where local roads crossed the canal, and eventually left the towpath, to access a footpath, through meadows with grazing sheep, which led down to the High Street in Halberton. There we turned right for 50 yards or so walking along the road we all know so well, and turned left down Pond Hill, a road that few of us will have travelled before. It leads down to the Old Mill Pond, a delightful and hidden gem of this village. The path led up to the church, which we visited briefly, admiring the lovely stained glass windows, before accessing a footpath alongside the cemetery which led us back to the canal, and the car park.



We went for a very pleasant lunch at the Tiverton Golf Club, just a half mile up the road from the canal car park. All enjoyed the food, and the ambience of the location, as well as the very pleasant staff serving us.

Reading

Reading Group 1 – Alison Rice

We were all looking forward to reading this book as Hilary Mantel is a much respected writer whom we had read before. However, not many of us were enthusiastic about this novel. Some found its subject matter put them off as the main character, Alison, is a psychic and her friendship circle are too. Alison offers a job as her manager to one of her clients, Colette, who is not sure if she believes in the spirit world or not but hopes to make money out of her

association with Alison. Colette half believes that Alison is plagued by restless spirits from her past but is generally unsympathetic and unpleasant. The book centres around Alison's relationship with Colette and her relationship with these spirits.

The book is quite long and hard to get into but those who persevered to the end were glad they did so. The reader becomes aware that the spirits are people who were part of Alison's early life growing up with a prostitute mother and her clients. Hints are dropped that there is a very nasty story lurking in Alison's background and this does get revealed towards the end. Mantel is brilliant at dialogue and the voices of the spirits conjure up a clear picture of exactly what sort of people they were when alive.

Fay Weldon comments "if as a reader, you feel briskly and brightly that dead is dead, and alive is alive, and anything else is nonsense, this novel is probably not for you."

But that is not all that this novel is. Mantel writes brilliantly about English suburbia and is very funny for example about the process of buying a house off plan on a new estate. You can also read it as a psychological novel and the "haunting" effect in later life of early childhood trauma. Some of us now want to read more about Mantel's early life as the novel leaves an excoriating effect - a feeling that the writer was deeply driven to write this somewhat long and bitter novel.

Our next meeting will be on **Monday 25 May at the Alison's house.**

Reading Group 2 – Heather Peters

Holidays and health issues reduced our numbers for our April meeting in Wendy's conservatory, but we had plenty to say about Rhidian Brook's excellent novel *The Aftermath* - almost all of it complimentary. He writes well and unobtrusively and reveals his characters gradually with good insight, giving their actions and emotions an inevitability and drawing the reader into the developing relationships, whether of friendship, romance or division, between individuals and within groups. He manages to give his characters the sort of formal, stilted emotional communication we associate with the period and this enhances the sense of time and place.

The novel is set amongst the complete devastation of Hamburg in the immediate aftermath of WW2, where the British Army is engaged in rebuilding the infrastructure obliterated by Allied bombs amidst a starving, homeless and desperate citizenry with whom the occupying forces, and their families who join them, are instructed not to fraternise or interact in any way.

The background of destruction and hatred on both sides, understandable though it is in its context and of its time, is a disturbing element and some found it a difficult read at this particular time of global conflict and political uncertainty.

The next EVu3aRG2 meeting is on Wednesday 27 May at Helen's house, when we will discuss *The Square of Sevens* by Laura Shepherd-Robinson.

Reading Group 3 – Vicki Bristow

Our book for April was *Woman in the window* by A J Finn.

This is a book about a woman with agoraphobia who spends a lot of her time watching the comings and goings of her neighbours.

When new people move in across the road they appear to be a perfect example of family life until one evening Anna hears a scream and witnesses a horrifying event. She subsequently feels compelled to discover the truth about what she has seen and the book leads us through many twists and turns to a very unexpected ending.

This book had mixed reactions from the group. Some loved it from the start. Others started it reluctantly but admitted to being quickly drawn in, and two didn't read it at all.

All of us that read it agreed that it was cleverly written with the author gradually feeding the reader more information about Anna and the circumstances which led up to her being unable to leave her apartment. The suspense was sustained until the very end of the book with the climax taking us all by surprise.

Skittles

Tuesday Skittles – Kathy Senior

The Tuesday am Skittles group have ended their season.

Thursday Skittles – Jill Riddiford

We have now stowed away the skittles for the summer months and plan to resume again in October.

What We Have Noticed – Chris & Gina Brown

14th April

We had an interesting discussion about the following topics:

The Postal Service in the past (when there was a Christmas day delivery) and now.

The Tolpuddle Martyrs and the harsh and unfair conditions workers faced.

Allotments in Tiverton and the opportunity for socialising, being out in nature and growing fruit and vegetables.

Ability.Net and the helpful volunteer who came to sort out computer problems.

12th May

We met today to share more interesting places. The Mariana Trench, Salisbury, Plymouth and Tiverton allotments!

The Mariana Trench was the subject of a Radio 4 'In our times ' programme. It was a fascinating story and included the fish with two jaws.

Salisbury was the place for an interesting day trip and included a Paddington bear bench .

Royal William's Yard Plymouth was a navy victualling depot that has been transformed into a leisure destination just a short ferry ride from the Barbican.

Lastly, the peaceful yet productive and friendly Beech Road allotment was described.

We also talked about current affairs and how the world is changing.

There is no meeting in June . We meet again on Tuesday July 14th at 10 30.

Wine Appreciation Group – Helen White, Deborah Lal

We met at Peter and Jane's for this month's wine tasting. Jane presented the three wines which all came from Australia, in celebration of Deborah's recent return from her family visit there. **Elephant in the Room** was a ruby red wine from the Pinot Noir grape grown in vineyards near Mount Gambier where the higher altitude and cool evening temperatures suit the grape. After fermentation all components are blended before three quarters are matured in stainless steel and a quarter matured in French oak for four months before bottling. First tasting was surprising with largely negative remarks, but the wine improved with further sips when the flavours of ripe red berries and soft spice aromas came through. This wine can also be served slightly chilled. On offer in Tesco at £8, volume 13%. Our second red came from a different region, Victoria. **Andrew Pearce Shiraz** was a blended wine with shiraz (Syrah) and Tempranillo grapes. A full-bodied wine with typical ripe black fruit flavours with a hint of cherry, these grapes are harvested at night to capture the freshness before pressing and fermenting in stainless steel tanks for three weeks before French oak chips are added before final fermentation. Jane gave us information on the soil of the region and the history of the Peace family. 13% vol and £6.25 on offer at Tesco. Finally we tasted a white wine from South Eastern Australia. It took a while to guess this was a Chardonnay grape! **19 Crimes Australian Chardonnay** was full bodied with bold fruit flavours and notes of vanilla and oak. By scanning the code on the bottle we were able to "bring to life" one of the convict's stories – a bit of a novelty. Again on offer at Tesco at £8, vol 13%

Wine Group meets on the second Wednesday of the month, but due to low numbers there will be no meeting in June so the next will be on 8th July at 7pm. Do speak to Helen or Deborah if you would like to come along for a taster session to see if you would enjoy joining our friendly group.

World History – Helen Booth

Our very own Knight, Tim Dyke, rode into our April meeting to narrate his tale of 'From Jerusalem to Tiverton: the Story of the Knights Templar'. Founded in 1119 to protect pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, the Knights Templars grew from a small band of warriors into a powerful, wealthy, military and financial order during the Crusades, including founding an early banking system. They existed for nearly two centuries until jealousy of their power and influence led to their fall, creating numerous legends about them, often involving esoteric knowledge and hidden treasure. With many estates across Europe having been owned by the Templars, their name is today still found in many place names and churches. We have nearby Templeton.



Next month on May 18th, as usual 2pm, Room 2, OHSCC, Chris Mumford will be telling us about the life of Vice Admiral Robert FitzRoy 1805 –1865. Captain of HMS Beagle during Darwin's famous voyage, he was also a pioneering meteorologist who made daily weather predictions, which he named 'forecasts'. In 1854 he established what would later be called the Met Office, and created systems to get weather information to sailors and fishermen for their safety. It was the start of the shipping forecast.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

01884 861053

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 Treasurer **Paul Sadler**
 Programme Coordinator **John Langley**
 Beacon Administrator **Jo Jeffrey**
 Membership Secretary **Jill Riddiford**
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 Monthly Meeting Organiser **Anne Bush**
 Website Manager **Paul Sadler**
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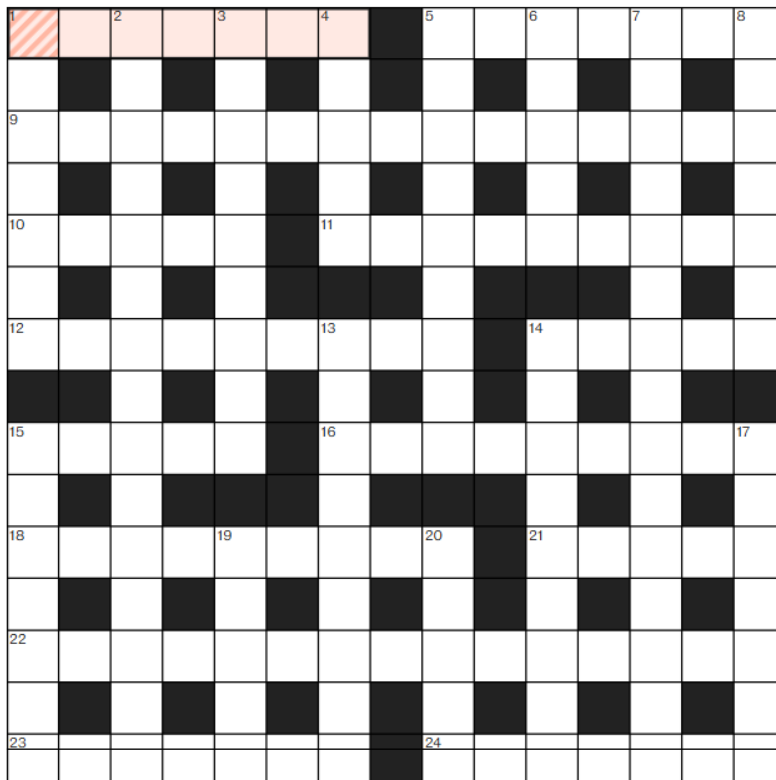
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NON-COMMITTEE

Printer / IT **Carol Boote and Ray McIntosh**
 Newsletter Editor **Lynne Lyddon**
 Welfare Officer **Marilyn Dawson**
 PA / Technician **Tim Dyke**

Cryptic Crossword

Cryptic Crossword April 2026



Across

Memorised - close to the core (2,5)
 Disneyland is a nasty attraction

Down

1 Containers. American pales reportedly

