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Newsletter 221– June 2026

... this 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.

... next month...

Wednesday 15th July

2pm Cherith Hall

Two ARK ROYAL'S Twenty Years Apart

Terry Chapman (Exe Valley U3A Member)

Terry Chapman will show how his 33 year Royal Naval career was book ended by tours in 2 ships called ARK ROYAL.

The first was the famous conventional carrier that featured in the 1970's TV series 'Sailor', in which he serviced Sea King helicopters.

The second, after many years, other ships, squadrons and promotions, he was responsible for the air engineering in the VSTOL (Vertical landing short take off) ARK.

Terry will compare life and aircraft in both ships, bring in a local connection and touch upon current RN fixed-wing operating 'toys'.

News from the Committee

At our last meeting we discussed an invitation we had received from the Alzheimer's Society to talk to us about their Dementia Friends programme. No doubt many of us have loved ones and friends affected by this horrible affliction and perhaps feel somewhat at a loss to know how best to help them manage their illness.

The Society' aim is to increase our understanding of dementia and enable us to make little changes in what we do and say which will make a positive difference to people affected by dementia.

Your Committee believe this is a very worthwhile initiative and consequently have invited the Alzheimer's Society to come along to speak to us at the Cherith Hall on Friday 31st July starting at 10.00am.

Please let Anne Bush know if you would like to attend by writing to her email address aelizbush@aol.com

An email has already been sent out to you advising you of this event but we felt it was of sufficient importance to repeat the message again in this month's newsletter.

We would also like to draw your attention to the u3a Friends newsletter (accessed via the national u3a website) which contains lots of interesting information about activities going on across the country which you may like try.

New members

There are two new members to welcome this month – **Barbara Browse** and **Richard Vale**. 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.

Newsletter

July's Newsletter will be compiled by Lynne Lyddon. Please send your reports to Lynne by 9am Friday 10th July. lynnelyddon@gmail.com Thank you.

Last Month's Meeting

Our speaker at the May Monthly Meeting, Lottie Dale, was extremely popular with our members on her presentation 'Falling with style'.



News from the Interest Groups

Art Appreciation – Gina Brown, Keith Bush, John Massey

At our May meeting we enjoyed a comprehensive talk by John on the life and work of the Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron. Her career was remarkable. While living on the Isle of Wight, she was given her first camera in her late forties, her daughter hoping she would enjoy it as a diversion. Some diversion: she converted a chicken coop into a studio and a coal-house into a darkroom, then went on to produce many hundreds of photographs. Though some of her work – mainly allegorical images involving children – was frequently derided as sentimental and amateurish, she came to be recognised as one of the most important portraitists of the 19th century. Shown here are two of her celebrated portraits, Julia Stephen (Virginia Woolf's mother) and Alfred, Lord Tennyson.



We also watched short videos on the photography pioneer Henry Fox Talbot and the history and science of that other form of early photography, the daguerreotype.

For our **18 June meeting** we are having a group outing to the **Museum of Somerset in Taunton** to see the exhibition of paintings by the Bloomsbury Group artist Roger Fry and his wife Helen Coombe.

Our next formal meeting will be at the **OHSCC on Thursday 16 July at 2pm**, at which we will be sharing images on the theme 'Faces'.

New group members are always welcome.

Boules

Tuesday Boules – Janet Phythian

Thursday Boules – Jill Riddiford

This summer you never know whether to take a rainhat or a sunhat and sun cream. We are enjoying it when we do actually play and although the group is full at present, I am happy to start a waiting list.



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

We met at Lynne's for our June session to do 'Prick and Sew'. Using a template you prick through the card with a pin then start sewing with very fine metallic thread. It was slow going and few of us finished but we were happy to continue doing it at home.



Thanks to Lynne for hosting and leading and for providing all the equipment as well as providing refreshments.

Next month's meeting will be at **2pm on Monday 13th July** making hedgehogs from old books at **Carol's house**.

Cribbage – Keith Dawson

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

Discussion – Marilyn Dawson

There was no Discussion Group meeting in June as several members were away and unavailable to host.

Our next get together will be on **Friday 3rd July at 10:15am at Marilyn's house**.

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

Our group of 13 visited Fursdon House Gardens this month and spent a lovely afternoon, even though the weather could have been better. The hillside gardens are situated in an idyllic part of the countryside with views over the Exe valley and beyond to Dartmoor.

Rising behind the house and sheltered by it there are terraces of roses, herbs and perennials in mixed traditional and contemporary planting. This area is called the Fox Garden and is contained by ancient cob walls and hedges. The Vine Pavilion and thatched Round House are

great places to sit and admire the view and to enjoy the peace and tranquillity. We concluded our visit with cream teas and cake.



Next month we visit **Burrow Farm Gardens, Dalwood Road, Axminster EX13 7ET.** Meeting there Friday 17th July at 1.30pm.

Local History – David Meredith



"Tim in Tolpuddle dress standing up for injustice."

Unrest and discord within the Dorset countryside and wider afield was very much in evidence in the first part of 19th century England. Tim, our speaker, highlighted the poverty, working conditions and injustice affecting rural workers ruled over by uncaring Lords and Masters, Clergy and Government. With pleas to improve wages ignored - and pay reduced - 6 agricultural workers living in Tolpuddle, led by George Lovelace and strong Methodist principles, met and swore a secret oath to campaign for improvement. Arrested and tried in 1834 for swearing a secret oath, the six were sentenced to 7 years transportation to Australia despite growing support for them throughout the country.

Many thanks Tim for the story with excellent illustrations and musical clips from protest songs such as this;

*"They can bring down our wages, starve all our children,
In chains they can bind us, steal all our land;
They can mock our religion, from our families divide us,
But they can't break the oath of a Tolpuddle Man."*

An annual Tolpuddle march is held each July to commemorate the protests that took place demanding the release of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

On Thursday July 9th 2026 we welcome the return of Jon Bell an Exeter Red Coat guide. Last year he presented “Tales of the Land and Songs of the Sea” highlighting the history of Exeter as a major port until the arrival of the railways.

This time his topic is; **“Dead Famous in Exeter”**.... a fascinating account of some of the more intriguing personalities who ended their days in Exeter and the stories they have to tell. Some of these tales are local, others connected with major national and international events, but all give insights into the past; if you like, a kind of short-cut into history. The talk is well illustrated with archive and modern illustrations and even contains a couple of songs!

Doors open 1.30pm. Admission £2 to include refreshments.

For our **August meeting on Thursday 13th 2026 at 2pm** I am planning a visit to West Middlewick Farm, Nomansland. An easy journey from Tiverton on the country road to Witheridge and South Molton. The Family will tell us about the Farm’s history, its sustainable farming methods and reputation for providing free range produce including award winning raw or pasteurised milk bottled fresh every day. Browse the farm shop and take refreshment in the Hayloft café. I will need to take numbers so please let me know if you would like to come along either at the July meeting or by email.

Lunch Club – Wendy Cook

In May twelve of us went to The Mitre in Witheridge where we received a friendly welcome and our own dining room enabling convivial private conversations . Despite not having to preorder any of the food, it never ceases to amaze me how a pub can serve such delicious wholesome food so efficiently. Despite generous portions, a few still manged desserts which included a great syrup sponge. If you have never tried this pub, do visit it yourself and also, why not join the Lunch Group to experience a good range of pubs and restaurants.



The next meeting of the lunch group is on **Thursday 18th June** at **Al Dente in Cullompton** at **12.30**.

Mah Jong – Heather Edwards

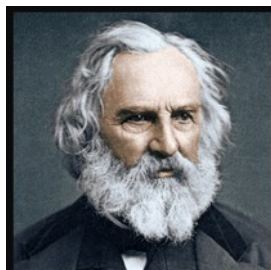
We meet on the **first Friday of the month**, playing simple Mah Jong i.e. clean and dirty hands. Currently our list is full but you’re welcome to join our waiting list.

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 27th June at 10.30 at the Flying Pickle, Tiverton.**

Poetry – Tim Dyke

May saw us, in a refreshingly different venue, pooling poems on the theme of Time. Though some writers were old favourites (Auden, Eliot, Larkin, Patten, Duffy, Clare, Hardy, Frost, Keats and, of course, Shakespeare and Ecclesiastes), others we had not come across as poets before (Raleigh, Cavafy, Sillitoe, Sandberg), and some were completely new (Rosenbaum, Upton, Rogers).



Pictured: Constantine Cavafy, Walter de la Mare, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Ursula Fanthorpe, Elaine Maria Upton.

We were somewhat bemused as we went down the rabbit hole of time present containing also the echoes of the past and foretastes of the future, while anguished by the fate of the little boy in detention till 2.30, who had not yet learned to read the clock. We sighed for loves lost and wrinkles gained, somewhat daunted by the image of candles extinguished as we passed them, even when on birthday cakes, with fewer still alight in front of us. A sad image also was of someone sorting through old clothes – why do we buy something for Best and then hardly ever wear it? But there was comfort in the notion of the best memories and verses defying time's ravages.

Perhaps most scary was the prospect of ChatGPT being able to churn out passable Shakespearean sonnets about itself in just five seconds. (Hard to think about how unreliable all images and texts are becoming as AI becomes more effective and Truth less evident).

This month's theme is **Clothing – 2pm on 25th at Tim's.**

Rambling – Pat McGee

Marion and Jackie led a small, but chatty group who enjoyed an approximately 4 mile walk around country lanes from Kentisbeare, despite changeable weather where every so often hoods and umbrellas would go up only to be taken down soon after as the rain had stopped. Luckily no one ended up soaked. We passed through various hamlets including Croyle, Pirzwell and Stoford water.



We finished our walk. We ended up with a delicious lunch, and general chatting and laughing, at the Keepers Cottage Inn on the Honiton Road.

Our **next walk is 2nd July** location to be decided .

Reading

Reading Group 1 – Alison Rice

Our book this month was *The Enchanted April* by Elizabeth Von Arnim. First published in 1922, it's the story of four women, previously unknown to each other, who escape a relentlessly dreary and wet April in London - and also their husbands (or suitors)- for a month in an Italian medieval castle overlooking a sparkling Mediterranean Sea. The sunshine, the flowers, the beauty and tranquillity of their surroundings gradually bring about positive changes in each of the women. The emotional warming of each one lead to friendship between them and eventually husbands too; new possibilities of happiness emerge for all. We've had some particularly challenging and somewhat depressing reads in the past months so some of us welcomed an easy, light hearted and, we felt, well written story. Von Arnim had herself spent a holiday in a castle on the Italian Riviera and we felt her writing successfully evoked the sights, sounds and scents of the place. Her descriptions made us want, like her characters, to drop everything and head for Italy. She also writes about her characters with a sardonic sense of humour which some of us enjoyed very much but others labelled the book 'chic lit of the 1920s' with little merit beyond being a light holiday read. We agreed that the plot was a bit predictable and the end rushed but it led to a discussion on what does makes a satisfactory ending to a novel which in turn led to a somewhat heated debate on the definition of a classic - definitely not this book it was decided. There was also an interesting interpretation of the fact that two different spellings of the plant name wisteria and wistaria are used in the book. Was it a printing error or a device used by the author to draw attention to the importance of this beautiful climbing legume? Who knows? Elizabeth Von Arnim had an extraordinary life and the summary of it at the beginning of the book reads like the basis for a novel in itself. She was an exceptional woman of her time.

We meet next at **2.30 on 29th June at Alison's house**

Reading Group 2 – Heather Peters

All 10 members were present at Helen's to discuss *The Square of Sevens* by Laura Shepherd-Robinson. As usual, some enjoyed this tome of 536 pages while others were more ambivalent: two skipped a chunk in the middle and at least one unapologetic member abandoned it half-way through. Even those who enjoyed it had a caveat though: after a while they gave up trying to get to grips with all the characters (despite a family tree being provided!) so they just relaxed into the unfolding events - which were certainly exciting. Our discussion revealed that none of us was entirely sure who had done what to whom, and various interpretations were explored.

Curious to know how many characters appear, I consulted Google and learn that this book "...features a sprawling, Dickensian-style cast of many characters. Because the book focuses on a massive, multi-generational web of secrets between rival families, the exact number is too large to pinpoint ... " So even AI can't work it out, which makes us feel better. Last word goes to Deborah, who thought the book somehow manages to be both convoluted and superficial.

The next meeting is on **Wednesday 24 June at Jenny's house**, when we will discuss Fay Weldon's *Before The War*.

Reading Group 3 – Vicki Bristow

Our book for May was *A Winter Grave* by well-known author of detective novels Peter May. This book by Peter May was unusual in that it is set in 2051 with descriptions of just some of the consequences of global warming woven into the main story. Most of felt that this added interest to the story and quite a lot of our discussion was centred around this.

The main story was about a detective called Cameron Brodie who having just been diagnosed with terminal cancer volunteers to fly up to an isolated village in the Highlands where a body has been found entombed in ice.

While following his unravelling of the mystery we also gradually discover a lot about his personal history particularly the events which led up to his estrangement from his daughter.

Most of the group very much enjoyed this book. It was thought to be well written with a satisfying twist at the end. One member found it thoroughly depressing and another objected to the swapping of time lines and would have preferred a straight forward detective novel but nevertheless this was one of our more popular choices.

Our **next meeting** is on **June 25th at Vicki's**.

Tuesday Skittles – Kathy Senior Thursday Skittles – Jill Riddiford

In hibernation until the autumn.

What We Have Noticed – Chris & Gina Brown

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

Wine Appreciation Group – Helen White, Deborah Lal

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

Chris Mumford was our speaker at the May meeting and yet again Chris found one of those people, who perhaps most of us hadn't heard about, who turn out to have had very interesting lives and been important in their spheres of activity. His subject was Vice Admiral Robert FitzRoy 1805 –1865, an officer in the Royal Navy and most celebrated as the captain of the HMS Beagle during Darwin's famous voyage. However he was also a politician and a scientist and served as the second governor of New Zealand. Perhaps his most lasting legacy was as a pioneering meteorologist who made accurate daily weather predictions, which he called by a name of his own invention: 'forecasts'. In 1854 he established what would later be called the Met office, and created systems to get weather information to sailors and



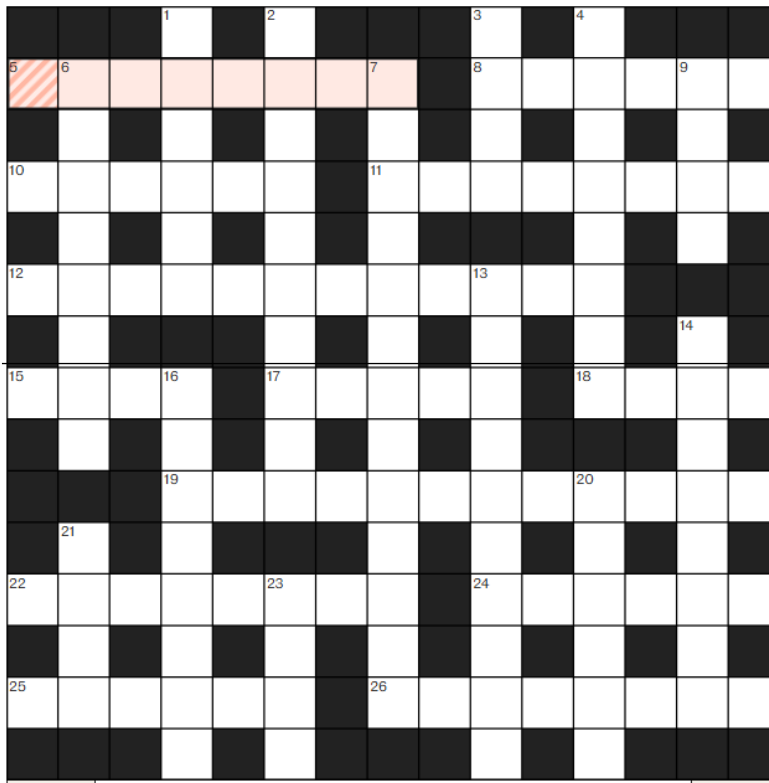
fishermen for their safety. This was the start of the shipping forecast and today one of the shipping areas is called Fitzroy.

Next month on **June 15th** as usual **2pm, Room 2, OHSCC, Dave Harvey** will be telling us about the Mountain Men, frontiersmen and fur trappers who explored the North American wilderness, particularly in the Rocky Mountains, between 1800 and 1890. They were essential to Western expansion, mapping unknown territory, establishing trading posts, and discovering vital routes for settlers. Men such as Jim Bridger, Kit Carson and Hugh Glass (portrayed by Leonardo DiCaprio in the movie ‘The Revenant’) are entwined with American Western history.

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Welfare Officer	Marilyn Dawson	
PA / Technician	Tim Dyke	

Cryptic Crossword

(Solution below)



Across

- 5 Funny venue (4,4)
- 8 Pop's major dictionary does not support this word (6)
- 10 If crab gets mixed up it will make fibres (6)
- 11 The croc will need a hook for this craft (8)
- 12 Better than a Major & better than a pole but get the work done! (7,5)
- 15 Initially it's one of the roles of the agenda? (4)
- 17 He who did this, won! (5)
- 18 In is out for a doggy stick (4)
- 19 Illogically, supporter follows allocation of international Iranian number plates (12)
- 22 Tough money means no credit (4,4)
- 24 Fingers and palm readily available on this (2,4)
- 25 Top crackpots disagreeing where to drink (6)
- 26 Pit vipers heard making metallic sound (8)

Down

- 1 He covers his ears for his final transport (6)
- 2 Rowan's a dark horse snake! (10)
- 3 Repeated musical note is pretty average (2-2)
- 4 Short species and fickle is quite distinct (8)
- 6 Forcefully persuaded but used for support (6,2)
- 7 Bet on the itcher to provide a grooming tool! (4, 9)
- 9 Right-leaning sissies in turmoil (4)
- 13 Defeated, general hands fort over first, etc (3,2,5)
- 14 Sole representative of holiday fleet is laughable (3-5)
- 16 With the first of day picador mixes a sweet (4,4)
- 20 Have no break in a long time – temporarily (6)
- 21 This lady could be senile! (4)
- 23 Short account to north east erupts on face (4)

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