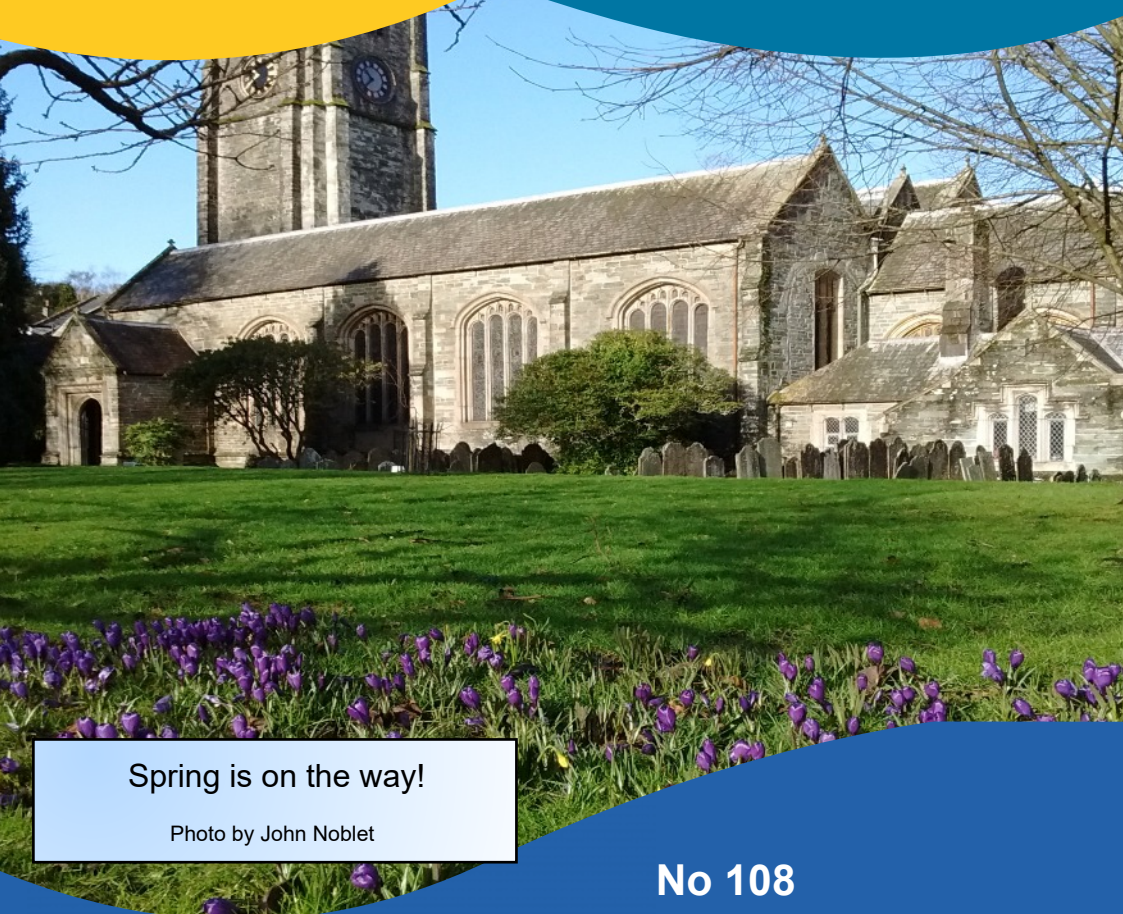


Tavy District u3a

THE NEWSLETTER



Spring is on the way!

Photo by John Noblet

No 108

March 2021

u3a

Who's Who in Tavy District u3a

Chair	Barry Smith
Business Secretary	Robin Neave
Treasurer	Angela Pitt
Membership	Tony Rose
Groups Liaison	Pippa Gardner
Newsletter Distribution	Susan Neal
Speaker's Liaison	Jane Ward
Two Moors Liaison	Barry Smith
Equipment Officer	David Glover

NOTE:

**Contact details
are available to
members on the
Members page of
the website**

Events Committee

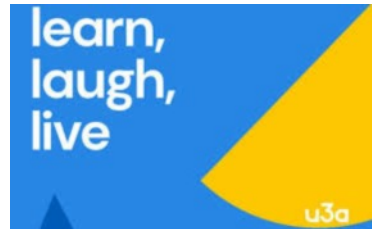
Norma Woodcock

Chris Webb

Diana Smirles

Janet Hunt

Shirley Smith



Webmaster: Jan Draper web@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

Newsletter Editor: John Noblet

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th April 2021

Send contributions to johnnoblet@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

FROM THE CHAIR



Hello and welcome to the March 2021 edition of the Tavy District u3a Newsletter.

I have arrived at the end of my year as “chair” and realise that what I expected (and was rather looking forward to) never happened!

Monthly meetings at the Town Hall (freezing in the winter / boiling in the summer) seeing friends, acquaintances, meeting new visitors and members, all the things that make up the wider fabric of life; stopped!

Without dwelling on the rollercoaster of the last 12 months and having appeared in this world just after WWII, nothing really prepares you for such changes when they crash into your life!

This morning (Breakfast TV, coffee, ginger nuts) we were shown interviews with the general public in closed down towns where the general view was that they did not want to go back “completely” to life as it was.

Yes, the ability to move around without fear, meet friends and family, social gatherings, group activities, what we perceive as the beneficial things in our lives were being welcomed back. What was not there was the rush and tear, noise, pressure, going to work in some cases; but this latter item does not always apply to the u3a membership!

In the main we are a gregarious society and I personally look forward to returning to the new norm where we can enjoy the “bits” of our old life, ie. those we enjoyed, without being overrun by those we did not.

Thank you all for being there over the last year. It’s been interesting and good to know our collective efforts were appreciated.

My personal thanks to the members of the committee for their help and support, and I now look forward to being a member of Tavy District and enjoying what it has to offer for many years to come!

With thanks for the past and very best wishes for the future,

Barry Smith

Final Reminder! Have You Renewed?

After the AGM / monthly meeting on Wednesday 3rd March, we will have to remove the names of anyone who has not renewed their subscriptions from our list of paid-up members. That means that they will not have access to our Zoom meetings or to any groups. So, if you've forgotten to renew – now's the time!

For those who missed the details in the last newsletter (pages 6/7), here they are again:

Individual membership	£10.00
Joint membership (for two people living at the same address)	£18.00
Associate membership (for those who pay their main membership to another u3a)	£6.50
Joint associate membership (for those who pay their main membership to another u3a)	£11.00

Payment of subscriptions

In pre-lockdown life, many members paid their subscriptions in person at the monthly meetings, either in cash or by cheque. This year we have a special request. If you can, could you consider paying by bank transfer? However you decide to pay, **please make the name(s) of the member(s) clear on your payment!!**

Paying by bank transfer:

Recipient: Tavy District U3A

Bank sort code: 77-09-07

Account number: 24972360

Paying via PayPal:

PayPal is also a possibility through the online Tavy District U3A newsletter (under 'Membership' → 'existing members') although you may like to know that when members use this, PayPal reduces the amount paid to Tavy District U3A by 1.4% + 20p per transaction.

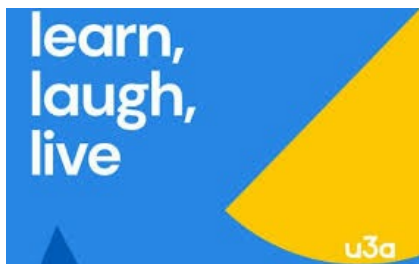
Paying by cheque:

If you prefer to pay by cheque, that is fine; could you send these, made out to **Tavy District U3A**, to the Treasurer (address below).

Tavy District u3a Treasurer / Angela Pitt

34 Westbridge Cottages

Tavistock, PL19 8DQ



Speaker Programme 2021 Part 2

With our monthly meetings continuing via Zoom, here are the details of the next three talks. Membership secretary, Tony Rose, will send details of the meeting link nearer the time, together with a reminder a day or so before.

Wednesday 3rd March 2021 2.30pm – TALK PRECEDED BY AGM STARTING AT 2PM
Reliving our Own Story: a vivid pastiche of our post-war social and cultural revolution. Can you believe it? – Andrew Baker

Andrew Baker, a former headmaster with a particular interest in social, cultural and political change since the First World War and who regularly lectures to a range of audiences including those on cruise ships, describes his talk as a “portrait of a turbulent society, unrecognisable from the bankrupt and exhausted Britain of 1945. A fascinating journey”.

Wednesday 7th April 2021 2.30pm (Join from 2pm)
Time – Anthony Poulton-Smith

“Time - it is found woven into our language and yet why do we use multiples of twelve for various time periods? Why have we not produced a metric clock? Learn the fascinating answers to these and other questions and discover why punctuality and the humble timepieces of yesterday and today have created more than a few funny stories.”

Anthony Poulton-Smith is a freelance journalist and author, currently has 80 books published and many articles, crosswords, puzzles and quizzes - together with some 1,700 articles and over two hundred books as a ghost-writer.

Wednesday 5th May 2021 2.30 (Join from 2pm)
Polperro – Cornwall's Forgotten Art Centre – David Tovey

“During the late nineteenth and for much of the twentieth century, Polperro was considered one of Cornwall's leading art centres. It was referred to as “the haunt of half the artists of Britain”, and as being one of the most painted villages in the world. Yet a visitor to Polperro today would come away completely oblivious that it had any artistic heritage at all.”

David, an independent art historian, who specialises in Cornish art and is an Arts Society lecturer, will present his ground-breaking research into the fascinating story of art in Polperro and, in particular, will highlight how it became the Cornish destination of choice for a number of significant foreign artists. He will also reveal what artists tell us about Polperro's smuggling and fishing past through the changing harbourscape.

And finally...

Many of you attended and by all accounts enjoyed Nick Bailey's talk in February about his career in radio. He is now making use of his skills once again as part of the team involved in **u3a radio**. This takes the form of a monthly podcast which goes out on the 17th of each month and is then available until the next edition comes out. Here is the link to the u3a YouTube channel where you will find a link to the latest podcast.

[youtube.com/user/Theu3a](https://www.youtube.com/user/Theu3a) or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePUwjsF11jw>

Jane Ward
Speaker Secretary

Zooming through Lockdown

The National Trust Visits Group is one of those u3a groups that ticks all the wrong boxes when it comes to Lockdown restrictions.

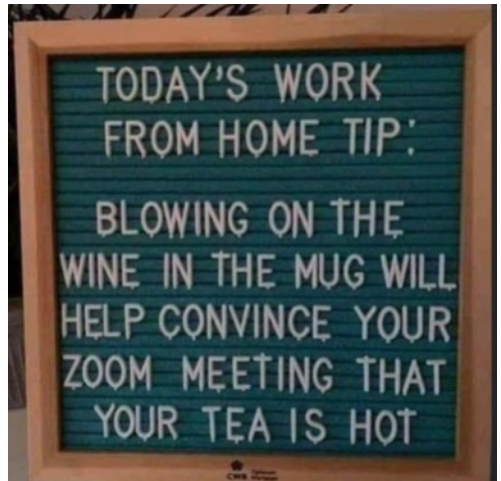
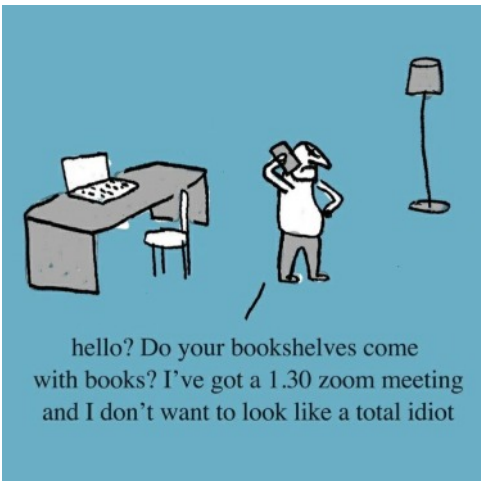
It involves groups of people no longer able to meet, unnecessary travel by public transport (which we are discouraged from using) to visit properties which are closed at present. But thanks to the wonders of the internet and Zoom, all is not doom and gloom.

If you visit the National Trust website from the comfort of your own home (no need to go out in the wet and cold) it is possible to virtually visit just about every National Trust property in the country. Not only can you see around the properties, but you can learn the history of the buildings, gardens and people and examine in detail their collections of art and furnishings.

And then, of course, there is Zoom. Who had heard of Zoom a year ago let alone envisage that a day would come when we would use it on almost a daily basis. Many organisations, including our own Tavy District u3a, now arrange free Zoom talks and lectures. There are lots of local organisations, including some on our doorstep such as the Dartmoor National Park, organising events that are free.

If you are not Zooming, you are missing out. Enjoy the benefits of Lockdown, and there are some, while you can. It won't last for ever.

John Noblet



Thanks to Margaret Garton and Alison Clish Green

**The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th April
Please send to johnnoblet@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk**

The Website (and more)

Have you looked at the Tavy District u3a website recently?

Let me introduce myself. I am Jan Draper, the new Webmaster for Tavy District u3a. Since the New Year I have been giving the website a facelift. You will know that the u3a changed its branding recently to a much brighter, lighter, easy to read format. This new brand has been introduced on our website and a lot more besides.

We have had a website <https://www.tavydistrictu3a.org.uk> for several years, but is it enough to just have a website? In this modern age it's expected isn't it? But what makes a good website? It must look good, contain the information that the target audience wants, **that's you**, and be easy to find your way around.

The website is intended to complement the excellent newsletter and become the "go to" place for information. Don't forget, there is a Members page which is password protected.

So please take the time and have a look and see if you think it is heading in the right direction. Constructive comments are welcome via the contact page

On a slightly different, but related, subject, some of the interest groups are meeting via Zoom and there is a list of those groups on the website. Could your group meet by Zoom? There is lots of help available if you want to use Zoom. Just use the contact form on the website and help will be at hand.

If you haven't yet joined the monthly meetings on Zoom, you have missed some interesting speakers. If you are unsure how to use Zoom or to join the monthly meeting, I have put an outline on the home page of the website on how to do this.

Jan Draper

Tavistock Heritage Trust

Tavistock Heritage Trust is launching a fascinating collection of fortnightly Zoom arts and heritage talks from around the World.

The talks cost £5 with all profits going to THT and the Guildhall Project.

Further information and booking details are available from <https://www.outsavvy.com/organiser/tavistock-heritage-trust>



Covid

Please keep an eye on the national u3a website at u3a.org.uk to keep up to date with the latest guidance and how it affects u3a groups

A strange year for the Woodtowners

In January 2020 I welcomed our monthly gathering at my house as usual, before everything changed. A few weeks later we enjoyed our delicious annual lunch at Peter Tavy Inn followed by our discussion at a member's comfortable home afterwards. Then Lockdown came.

We decided to write email reviews of the library books which we were still able to borrow with our subscription. This idea worked well enough but we greatly missed our face to face meetings. Then we had to purchase our own copies and attempted, with varying degrees of success, to discuss our ideas via Zoom. In September, we resumed our customary meetings in person with renewed enjoyment. The Tavistock librarians had organised a special room with all basic requirements and a safe environment, and we were promised new book sets of our choice.

Now that Lockdown restrictions have returned, we need to Zoom until we "meet again some sunny day".

Despite the descriptions of the glittering spectacle of the magical "Night Circus" by Erin Morgenstern, the modern fantasy genre does not appeal to our group. The Romantic notion of Knights and Chivalry as reworked in "The Death of King Arthur" by Peter Ackroyd seems more acceptable in glorious Pre-Raphaelite paintings than in numerous gory skirmishes between opposing factions in bosky woods and on desolate heaths.

Most of our favoured choices in 2020 involved autobiographies with variations in period and background.

The life of a quiet unassuming Victorian governess is a fictional work by Ann Brontë in which she embellishes many of her own difficult experiences. As a young woman working for aristocratic families, Agnes Grey is a heroine who finds happiness after many tribulations.

"All Passion Spent" by Vita Sackville-West was an opportunity to read an outstanding novel about Edwardian life. The author was about forty years old yet she recounts the innermost thoughts of an elderly widow looking back over important moments in her long life. Lyrical descriptions convey the atmosphere and pivotal incidents remembered from her youth.



In "Mothering Sunday", Graham Swift imagines the experience of an orphan who becomes a maid in a "well-to-do" household in the 1920s. Jane describes in great detail her relationship with a young gentleman Paul from a neighbouring wealthy family. The entire book is her intimate account of the events of a single day. She fully understands their morning together is their last meeting as her lover leaves her to meet his fiancée and to celebrate their engagement. Learning of his sudden death, later in the afternoon, Jane relates her complex range of emotions as the tale unfolds. This "heroine" will succeed with her grit and determination!

These novels led to much discussion about social issues, the education of children and the class structure in the past (and the present?)

Woodtowners *Continued*

We moved on to the 1950s in "The Librarian" by Sally Vickers. Several of us enjoyed this account of the post war years and the book choices of the children because we had known these books ourselves. Here, we have an atmospheric picture of life in a rural village community rather than a wealthy country estate.

On to Northern Ireland in the 1970s. Belfast is the setting for a fictional young woman experiencing the troubled times there. "Milkman" by Anna Burns proved to be a most interesting novel. The themes encompass divisions between religions, between different parts of the city, even different sides of a street, areas of No Man's Land. There is an atmosphere of violence both general and domestic, distrust and fear. The place of women in society is reflected in every aspect and in many of the events described so vividly in this memorable novel.

Travelling across the world to coastal China, also in the 1970s, we find a pre-industrialised backwater, almost medieval in its rural poverty. Some situations appear universal. Starvation, domestic violence and child abuse feature in "Once upon a time in the East", the autobiography of Guo Xiaolu. The narrator's life story seems to be a truthful record without need for embellishment. As a baby she was given away by her parents but is then brought up by illiterate grandparents. (It is difficult for us to realise that in 1970 some elderly women could only hobble on feet bound in infancy). Yet the author's determination to ask questions and to study led to higher education, a scholarship and a successful career.

To become a published author of several novels in English is in itself a remarkable achievement. Guo's story exemplifies extreme courage in adversity.

More travelling in the present century to the Gambia in West Africa! "Swing Time" by Zadie Smith is written as an autobiography but is a novel about fictional characters. We follow the childhood dreams, friendships and rivalries of two mixed race girls growing up in London. As a young adult, the narrator is hired by an internationally famous pop star. This Aimee believes that money can buy anything and anyone. She founds a charitable girls' school in a Gambian village without thought of the consequences.

The narrator's task is to report on the progress made. Although paid a salary, she is obliged to follow Aimee's every whim and is, in essence, a slave of her employer. This issue of slavery in various forms is a recurrent theme throughout the book. Breaking away from Aimee will indeed be the starting point of freedom for the narrator.

Our last fictional autobiography "Machines Like Me" by Ian McEwan is unnervingly 21st century! A humanoid robotic male is programmed by a young couple who have just set up home together. The partners' ideas are combined to form the basis of the robot's emotions, desires and intellect. He is in fact their child brought to life as a fully formed man.

This fascinating book is the robot's own journal, the revelation of the world around him and how he reacts to situations.....and the problem of being a robot with emotions. One wonders if this imagined difficulty of humans living with intelligent robots may well become a reality in the near future?

We have travelled through time and to places far and near recently. I trust we have a similar rich variety in our choice of novels in 2021!

Frances Stephens

Pixies Cross

In these unprecedented times, when we are urged to stay at home except for daily exercise, many of those folk who live in Tavistock and Whitchurch will be getting to know Whitchurch Down rather better than before.

On a raised bank amid the gorse bushes stands Pixies Cross, as if surveying the scene. It is possible that some people may not have noticed it before and there was a time, not so very long ago, when it was partly hidden by gorse, but that is no longer the case.

Everybody knows there are pixies on Dartmoor and there are other places to be found that have associations with pixies. That great authority on all things Dartmoor, William Crossing, even wrote a book entitled "Tales of Dartmoor Pixies". In general, they are considered amiable and helpful, unless, of course, you upset them!

But there is a story associated with Pixies Cross that you may not know. It concerns a newly appointed vicar to the parish of Walkhampton, during the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century.

In order to follow the Puritan ethic, he set out to rid his parish of all religious idols, such as crucifixes, statues of saints and wayside crosses. When he found out about the Pixies Cross, he gave instructions to his parishioners that it was to be destroyed. Unable to find any volunteers to undertake this task, he picked up his tools and decided to do the job himself. He had not been working long, when he became aware of a snorting presence behind him. Carefully glancing around, he found himself face to face with a large and vicious-looking black bull.

Quickly weighing up the options he decided that it would be futile to try and run away and did the next best thing by shinning up the cross. There he sat, astride the cross with his legs over the



arms and with the bull looking up at him. The bull was a very determined creature and kept up a constant vigil throughout the whole of the day and the night that followed. There was no way in which he was going to let this outsider destroy the cross.

Early the next morning, a little old lady was crossing the common on her way to sell her wares at the Tavistock Market. In the morning gloom and from a distance, the figure cloaked in black, sitting astride the cross and with a large horned animal at its feet, gave the appearance of a visit by the devil with his horned goat. She gave the scene a wide berth and managed to reach the safety of Whitchurch village, where she reported her sighting to a group of local men.

Being of an inquisitive nature, several of these men decided to walk up to the common to investigate this sighting. On arriving at the cross, they realised not only that it was their vicar that the old lady saw, but also the reason for him being there in the first place. The men were able to drive the bull away and rescue their vicar, but not before they had extracted a promise from him that the cross would be allowed to remain unharmed.

But why is it called Pixies Cross? Well, that's another story!

John Noblet

Art Appreciation – Artemesia Gentileschi

The painter Artemisia Gentileschi was the topic for our November Zoom. She has been much in the news this year with an exhibition of some of her work currently being held at the National Gallery, the most celebrated female painter of the 17th century.

Born in 1593 in Rome she was the daughter of the artist Orazio Gentileschi who was a friend and follower of Caravaggio. Growing up in her father's workshop she showed her talent at quite a young age and her first known work is *Susanna and the Elders* probably painted when she was 16.



A year later Artemisia was raped by the painter Agostino Tassi, an acquaintance and collaborator of her father's. An infamous trial ensued in 1612 during which Artemisia underwent internal examination and was also subjected to *sibille*, a process in which string was tied to her fingers and progressively tightened. The practice was meant to divine whether or not she was telling the truth. Tassi was found guilty and banished from Rome, though his punishment was never enforced.

Following the trial Artemisia married a little-known Florentine artist by the name of Pierantonio Stiattesi, and left Rome for Florence shortly afterwards. Artemisia's brutal painting of 'Judith slaying Holofernes' in 1614 may have been partly revenge for the humiliation she suffered from the rape and during the trial.



She established herself as an independent artist, becoming the first woman to gain membership to the Academy of the Arts of Drawing in 1616. Artemisia returned to Rome in 1620, beset by creditors after running up debts, and she remained there for 10 years

From 1630 she settled in Naples, where she ran a successful studio until her death. She briefly visited London in 1639, perhaps to assist her ailing father on the ceiling painting of the Queen's House in Greenwich. The precise date of her death is not known but a recently discovered document records her still living in Naples in August 1654.

Liz Heaton

**The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th April
Please send to johnnoble@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk**





and Fortune:-

Take a Want, a Wish, a Desire
Blind in Need on a Stone cold Fire
Induce emotion, Bubbling and Seething
And the concoction while Craving lies Breathing
Scatter the page with seeds of Learning
Concentrate Soul to focus the Yearning
Meld your thoughts, let bubbles Burst
Feed the Hunger, sate the Thirst
Yield to the Longing, Segment and Slice
Release the Passion,
Now, roll the Dice

The Grimoire by Rod Taylor

Music and History

Making the best of things – music provides one means of doing that anyway. This was one of the themes of our last history meeting before we had to suspend everything. (There's a bug going around – have you heard?)

We started by looking at the songs of the 1930's Slump. So everyone's out of work and the world is a desperate place but you might still make some cash writing a song about it. You need to strike the right chord though, not too raw. Bessie Smith's extraordinary 'Nobody Knows You when You're Down and Out', recorded before the '29 Crash turned out to be maybe a bit too stark. 'Brother Can You Spare a Dime', originally from a 1932 review, struck perhaps a more acceptably melodramatic tone. By contrast with Bessie Smith's song of course it was also clearly the lament of a white man. It was a song which helped propel Bing Crosby to national fame and there were also spin offs.

'The Forgotten Man' was a song sequence tacked inconsequentially onto the end of Busby Berkeley's splendidly ridiculous film 'Gold Diggers of 1933'. The song had absolutely nothing to do with the plot, such as it was, of the film and was clearly a recycled version of 'Brother Can You Spare a Dime' with a Franklin Roosevelt election slogan for the title.

This was pure musical opportunism, distributed in the wake of Roosevelt's inaugural declaration of the New Deal, but it's worth saying that the whole thing really takes off when a black singer takes up the refrain; top marks to Busby Berkeley for that anyway.

Then there was Rudy Vallee's coy, sugar coated offering, in which the twenties and the Slump were likened to the end of a really good party.

The refrain was;

'No more money in the bank,

No cute babies left to spank.

So, what's to do about it?

Let's put out the lights and go to bed.'

Apparently John Reith of the BBC didn't like this at all and only allowed the song to be broadcast with the final line re-written as; 'Let's put out the lights and go to sleep.' Economic conditions notwithstanding, no hanky panky in the dark then.

All this was to be the history group's launch pad for looking at music across history. Well, that's been something of a Covid bellyflop, but there will be so much waiting for us when we re-assemble.

Of course some music we will only be able to read about, never hear. What did Taillefer the Norman jongleur really sound like when he rode out singing in front of the Saxon enemy at Hastings? All we do know is that this was one of the first musical acts in history to die the death – literally – they killed him. What was it about Blondel's songs that could sooth even the rages of King Richard (surely history's first example of pre-minstrel tension)? We will never know for sure. Some words survive but nothing of the music that carried them.

There are people of course who don't get music. Such a man was the Russian soviet writer Mikhail Zoschenko. Elizabeth Wilson in 'Shostakovich, A Life Remembered' tells us that music wasn't really Zoschenko's thing but when Shostakovich' compositions fell foul of Stalin the writer knew whose side he ought to be on. Although he'd never had a clue as to what Shostakovich's music was about, he decided with great heroism (he knew the risks) to make a public show of support and turned up at the first performance of the Fifth Symphony.

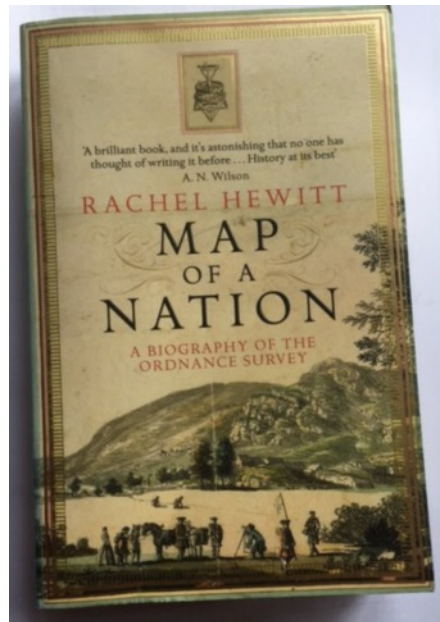
Music and History *Continued*

Shostakovich recalled that as he was pacing nervously to and fro across the foyer in the interval Zoschenko sought him out to congratulate him on the first half of the concert. Listening intently Mikhail Mikhailoviich had become increasingly excited by what he heard.

He was, he had found, understanding it, moved to tears by it and he threw his arms round the composer saying; 'Mitya! I always knew you were able to write beautiful and melodic music!' The composer didn't have the heart to tell him that his piece was to be performed in the second half. Zoschenko had just been listening to Tchaikovsky.

Poor, brave Zoschenko; not so surprising perhaps to find an anecdote about someone with a tin ear in a book all about musicians. But what might be the least likely book in which to find a musical story? What about buried deep in a history of the Ordnance Survey? This is where Rachel Hewitt succeeds in surprising us in 'Map of a Nation', with the tale of red haired Duncan and his doomed violin.

It all started in 1773 when the Reverend Nevile Maskelyne, the Astronomer Royal read a paper to the Royal Society concerning the gravitational attraction of mountainous masses and the relevance of this to assessments of the density of the earth. (This sort of thing fire your enthusiasm? Well it's page 58). The Royal Society was enthused anyway, to the point of sending out a surveyor to scour Britain for the ideal place to carry out relevant measurements. He returned triumphantly to London to declare he'd found the perfect spot, a place several giant strides behind the back of beyond. It then came as a less than pleasant surprise to Maskelyne that he was to be given the honour of carrying out the observations there.



It was thus a very grumpy Astronomer Royal who in 1774 arrived, in the depths of the Scottish highlands, at the foot of the mighty 3554-foot mountain of Schiehallion, to discover that his assistants had set up his instruments inside a small hut, on the very peak of the hill whose name in Gaelic means "Constant Storm". He was to spend four months at the summit with telescopes, plumb lines and all manner of instrumentation, carrying out his work during the rare moments when Schiehallion was not living up to its name.

The experience turned out to be better than he might have hoped. Maskelyne enjoyed a constant stream of visits from admiring colleagues but was also touched by the generosity of locals, toiling up the hill with food and supplies for him. A particular favourite was *Donnaeha Ruadh*, red haired Duncan who, besides helping out, would while away the long evenings on the mountain singing folk songs for the English visitors and playing his treasured violin.

Music and History *Continued*

Before he left in October Maskelyne held a farewell party for Duncan and all the local people who had been so helpful to him – and where else but in the bothy at the top of Schiehallion? The party went very well to begin with – perhaps a little too well, lubricated it seems by a locally produced hooch which apparently goes by the name of whisky. In the end things got so uproarious that the hut caught fire and burnt down. The instruments were all safely rescued, with the exception of the musical one; Duncan's beloved fiddle, reduced to ashes inside the bothy. The boy was heartbroken and watched the English party leave the next morning with Maskelyne's sympathetic words ringing in his ears – and the promise that he would be sent a replacement violin.

Maskelyne was true to his word and months later a overjoyed Duncan was unwrapping his replacement fiddle, the arrival of which he celebrated with a brand new song;

'On the trip to Schiehallion

I lost my wealth and my darling

But Mr. Maskelyne the hero

Did not leave me long a widower.

He sent me my choice treasure

That will leave me thankful while I live.'

It is our loss that we cannot hear the Gaelic running along with Duncan's melody, but we can be assured that it would have been a charming combination. And the thing is that the fiddle that so delighted Duncan wasn't even brand new. It was a second hand Italian job, knocked up some decades before in Cremona by one Signor Antonio Stradivari. So red haired Duncan can it seems set us all in our own straitened times a fine example of how to make the best of things.

Kevin Dickens

King Lear Prizes

King Lear Prizes is the national creative arts competition for older people during the Covid 19 pandemic. The latest round of the competition is open to entries until 19th March.

The competition is specifically for amateurs and beginners who are over the age of 65. The competition accepts entries in poetry, real stories (short stories from people's lives), art and musical performance, and there are over £2,000 of prizes on offer. The winners will be picked by our panel of expert judges including Gyles Brandreth and Julian Lloyd Webber.

More information is on the website
www.kinglearprizes.org.uk

The organisers say that "it is a great creative project for people to get stuck into particularly during this lockdown, and it's an opportunity for people to improve their creative skills".

If you decide to have a go, why not share your entry with Tavy District u3a.
Send a copy to johnnoble@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk



Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944)

His work in Tavistock and beyond



deliberately made to look as though it consisted of differing styles, suggesting that changes had been made to it through the ages.

It took around 20 years to complete. The interior offered the ultimate in modern living and convenience, with all the technology and comforts of the age.

The castle had many problems with leaks, partly due to Drewe's insistence upon it having a flat roof. A 7 year project, undertaken by the National Trust to make the building watertight, is nearing completion.

Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens was one of the greatest British architects, known for his iconic buildings and structures at home and abroad. His projects include designs for Hampstead Garden Suburb, the Imperial War Graves Commission, New Delhi – and Tavistock.

Here are just a few examples of his work:

Lindisfarne Castle

At the age of 20, Lutyens had met Gertrude Jekyll, already a well-established garden designer. She knew William Morris and introduced "Ned" to her friends and clients. Her connections and influence, and their collaborations, played an important part in his career. One such collaboration was Lutyens' renovation and redesign of the castle, the instruction from his client having been to turn it into a comfortable holiday home. Ned redesigned the walls of the old, enclosed garden, and Jekyll was responsible for the garden and the castle surrounds.

Castle Drogo

Built for Julius Drewe, a food retailing magnate. His dream was to have an imposing granite fortress that would appear to have existed for hundreds of years. It was



The Cenotaph

In 1919, Lutyens was invited by David Lloyd George to design a temporary catafalque for the peace procession in Whitehall on 19th July. Lutyens designated it a 'Cenotaph'



'The Glorious Dead' and symbolises the unprecedented losses suffered during the First World War. It was immediately acclaimed and re-created in Portland stone on the same site in 1920, becoming the central focus for the remembrance and commemoration events in Britain.

Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944)

His work in Tavistock and beyond *Continued*

Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, Thiepval

The Thiepval Memorial was unveiled in July 1932. It bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20th March 1918 and have no known grave. Both the British Union Jack and the French Tricolore are flown on the memorial, representing the alliance of Britain and France in the Somme offensive.

The Stone of Remembrance, also known as the War Stone, bears the words "Their Name Liveth For Evermore". This was suggested by Rudyard Kipling and is taken from Ecclesiasticus.



Littlecourt in Tavistock

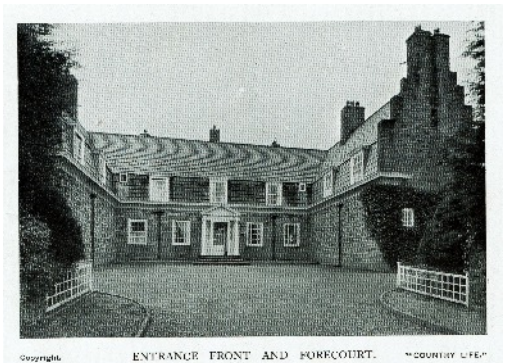
In 1910 Lutyens was commissioned by the Duke of Bedford to build a house in Tavistock for his land agent, Captain Gallie. Permission had been granted to build houses in Down Road, which was constructed by the Duke in 1909/10, providing each plot was at least 1 acre. "Littlecourt" was the first house to be built at the top of Down Road.

At the Duke's request, Lutyens' first design was modified to make the house smaller. The design was innovative. It was constructed of Hurdwick stone with a brick interior - one of the earliest buildings to have a cavity wall. It was also the first house in Tavistock to use gas; there was no supply in the town, so Littlecourt had its own generator.

In October 1925, Country Life magazine featured an article about the house, with the heading "The Lesser Country Houses of Today".

Sadly, there was a devastating fire in 1945, caused by a blow torch igniting the roof felt while decorations were being carried out. The community did what they could to limit the damage. Teachers from Mount House School organised pupils to form a human chain, carrying water and removing furniture.

Sadly, only the ground floor remained intact and a shortage of building materials during World War II limited the restoration. A flat roof was constructed, and this remained until, as part of the renovations done by the present owners, a pitched roof was reinstated. The gables were not replaced, and the roof is now around 3 metres lower than when the house was first built. The stones and other building materials used for the original construction were salvaged and re-used as much as possible. Many of the original features on the ground floor have been retained.



Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944)

His work in Tavistock and beyond *Continued*

The Pimple

This well-known local landmark was originally designed as a tower, and marks the entrance to a now disused reservoir. The shape was revised, and the design copied from the roof of one of Littlecourt's outbuildings.

Lutyens wanted it to be a focal point that people would want to visit for pleasurable purposes, so built it on a mound from which they could enjoy far-reaching views.

The Pimple is Grade II-listed and is thought to be the smallest structure to have been designed by Lutyens.



**The deadline for the next
Newsletter is 20th April
Please send to
[johnnoble@tavydistrictu3a
.org.uk](mailto:johnnoble@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk)**

Milton Abbot

Another commission came from the Duke of Bedford for a row of cottages in the Arts and Crafts style. It is believed that Lutyens wanted to build a village pub in the same style, but this suggestion was declined.

Chris Rose

N.B. Lutyens and his work are to be featured in a future exhibition at Tavistock Museum.

Devon and Cornwall **ALERT**

Devon and Cornwall police issued an alert a few weeks ago regarding fake vaccine scams but as all of our members will no doubt have had the jab by now, this is probably irrelevant.

However, please be wary of other scams related to COVID-19 which may include:

- Fake links claiming to take you to a Government website for a COVID-19 related payment
- Offers of health supplements that will prevent you from becoming infected
- Financial support offers that appear to be from your bank
- Fines suggesting you have breached lockdown

If you have any concerns you are asked to email 101@dc.police.uk or phone 101.

French Novel Group

Lockdowns come and go! But in 2020 our group has continued undaunted and has read some of our best choices ever.

We started last year with two Marcel Pagnol classics. Having read and discussed "Jean de Florette", we watched the film of "Manon des Sources" one winter afternoon, for our last face-to-face meeting. It was a welcome escape to the Provençal landscape and life in the 1920's.

Our next venture was to modern Paris with life seen through the eyes of a self-employed taxi driver, recovering from the shock of his brother's disappearance to join the forces of Isis. His perception of the world is somewhat hazy....but we now know all the French phrases needed to purchase marijuana in the back streets! He believes that Grand Frère returns and so has to plot and plan their escape from retribution and the law. The brother recounts his experiences as a medical assistant in the terrorist enclave in Chad. This is obviously not an autobiography but is a prize winning novel inspired by modern events and attitudes towards the problems of radical Islam.

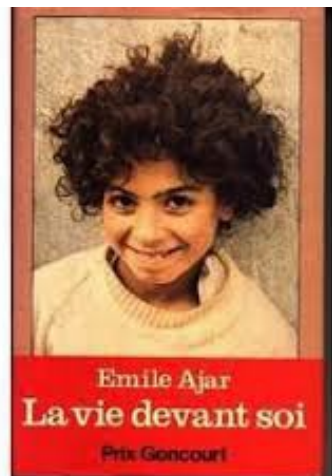
For this book we sent our opinions via email to each other because of Lockdown 1. The most enjoyable set of outstanding book reviews was the result! The next month we read a detective novel of our own choice, classic or modern. The great variety was a pleasure to see in the emailed accounts.

Then we started Zooming! And with what a marvellous thriller! "Maman a tort" by Michel Bussi was also serialised on television. The novel was gripping from the first chapter. A three year old boy has witnessed a robbery in which a couple had been shot by the police. The investigation into his true identity and the whereabouts of an injured suspect discloses a tangled web of intrigue. A story with an excellent twist at the end.

More questions to be answered in August, with "Le Mystère Henri Pick". The discovery of a potential best seller amongst a collection of unpublished novels in Brittany is the starting point. How this original document changes the lives and fortunes of so many people is fascinating. There are investigations into the authentic nature of the special book which uncover some truths but many lies. And again, the final revelations increase one's enjoyment of the quest.

Then the "tours de force" of an eccentric French (originally Lithuanian) renowned author, diplomat, linguist, a man of many parts. Even his autobiography, published after his death, is apparently more fiction than fact.

As a young author in 1956, Romain Gary won the Prix Goncourt for his novel about ecology and the environment set in Chad, at that time a French colony. Many themes and differing opinions concerning tribal culture, the deforestation of jungle areas, big game hunting, elephants and the ivory trade, colonial administration and the idea of self-government are all discussed. Although a variety of fictional events are described with great clarity, they are typical of incidents prevalent at that period.



French Novel Group *Continued*

The Prix Goncourt is still the most prestigious book award in France and is only granted once to an author, however great that writer is or becomes. Romain Gary is the exception. He became a French ambassador in Los Angeles and, after his divorce, married the film star Jeanne Seberg. He wrote novels in English around this time. He then adopted a "nom de plume", Émile Ajar, and those books became increasingly popular. So much so, that he arranged for a cousin to personify this Émile Ajar for photographs at important gatherings. The judges of the Prix Goncourt panel were convinced of the merit of "La vie devant soi" and awarded it the prize.

Romain Gary took legal advice but the judgement had been made and he therefore gained a second Prix Goncourt in 1975!

Another delight from the opening lines! A young Arab lad, Momo, is cared for by Madame Rosa, a retired Jewish prostitute, in a block of flats in the

Parisian suburbs. It's a multicultural neighbourhood brimming with eccentric characters.

When the old lady becomes ill, Momo devotes himself to her welfare and does all he can to assist. Neighbours also help to entertain her with African tribal dances and drumming. Madame Lola, the ex-boxer from Senegal, brings smoked salmon and champagne!

I trust the English translation of "La vie devant soi" will be as well written as the original!. With a change of setting from Paris to Naples, Sophia Loren has recently appeared as Madame Rosa in the film version of the novel. I look forward to seeing this.

My thanks to the members of the group who have continued to contribute such interesting ideas in our monthly discussions (in English) during 2020.....our first year without scones!

Frances Stephens

Is it Fact or Fiction?

One of the books that I have been reading during Lockdown, or at least when the sun was not shining, was Ken Ward's "Six Feet to Land's End".

It is a mix of fact and fiction. The story is about three old codgers (I wonder on whom they were modelled?) who walk from their homes in Gloucestershire to Land's End. The fiction of their adventure is mixed with fact about the places through which they travel. As it is all in the Westcountry, and mostly Devon and Cornwall, much of the landscape is familiar territory. It has to be said that the factual parts are well researched and certainly add a "local" touch to the narrative. The trio arrive in Tavistock by way of Widecombe and Princetown in time for lunch at Café Liaison. Then they set off again for the Cornish border.

"The moment they left Tavistock the walking became awful.

Muddy overgrown footpaths.

Stiles either cat's cradles of scrap timber, or obstacles of trampled brambles and barbed wire.

Hard foot-slapping roads between claustrophobic hedges.

Really awful".

Fact or fiction? I leave the walkers amongst you to judge.

John Noblet

Simnel Cake

It is a scary thought, but it will soon be Easter. Here is a traditional marzipan and fruit cake recipe to celebrate.

Makes one 20cm/8in round cake

225g softened butter
225g caster sugar
4 eggs, beaten
500g mixed dried fruit
115g glacé cherries
3 tbsp sherry (optional)
275g plain flour
1 tbsp mixed spice
1 tsp baking powder
675g yellow marzipan
(extra 325g if you wish to make 11 Apostle balls)
1 egg yolk, beaten



Plus ribbons, sugared eggs and little rabbits or chicks to decorate if you wish.

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 160C or Gas 3. Grease a deep 20cm/8in round cake tin, line with a double thickness of baking parchment and grease the paper.
2. Beat together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in the eggs. Stir in the dried fruit, glacé cherries and sherry, if using. Sift over the flour, mixed spice and baking powder, then fold in.
3. Roll out half the marzipan to a 20cm/8in round. Spoon half of the cake mixture into the cake tin and place the round of marzipan on top. Add the other half of the cake mixture and smooth the surface.
4. Bake for 2.5 hours, or until golden and springy to the touch. Leave in the tin for 15 minutes, then turn out on to a wire rack, peel off the lining paper and leave to cool.
5. Roll out the reserved marzipan to fit the cake. Brush the cake top with the egg yolk and place the marzipan on the top. Flute the edges and make a pattern on the top with a fork. Brush with more egg yolk. If you are making 11 apostle balls, roll to approximately 2.5 cms/1 inch. Use egg white as a glue to stick the balls to the cake. Put the cake on a baking sheet and grill for five minutes to brown the top lightly. Cool before decorating with little sugared eggs and animals.

Pauline Noblet

The Return to Something Near Normal

Time to stretch your minds so you can cope with the (possibly limited) freedom which we hope is not too far away.

Science fiction is a useful starting point. There are many tales and films of space-ships roaming the universe, but have you ever thought about what they are supposed to be doing? They apparently visit other stars and galaxies, and here's the point where we should stop and think.

Pluto is the outermost large body in our solar system. Its orbit varies but it lies roughly 4,500 million miles from the sun – nearly fifty times further out than we are. Once you leave Pluto behind and head out into space the nearest stars in our Milky Way galaxy are called Alpha Centauri A & B.

The fastest satellite launched so far is the Parker Solar Probe, orbiting the sun at 289,900 mph. Suppose that our mythical space ship 'Tavy' leaves Pluto behind and heads out at (say) 300,000 mph. At that speed it will take them 9,500 years to reach those nearest stars. To make the journey slightly more practical, the 'Tavy' would have to travel at 335 *million* mph (half the speed of light) to get there in something just under nine years.

That sounds ever so slightly more sensible, but the solar system we live in is a very minor affair in a very large galaxy. The good ship 'Tavy' would have to travel at the scientifically impossible speed of light (671 million mph) for 25,000 years even to get to the centre, let alone explore its outer reaches.

Already we are beginning to see that the idea of space ships roaming even our galaxy, let alone all the others, is somewhat ridiculous. This is why science fiction authors and script-writers make them travel at 'warp speed' or go through 'wormholes', whatever all that means.

Our galaxy, we are told by the astronomers, has billions of stars. And there are billions of galaxies. The nearest ones to our Milky Way are the Large and Small Magellanic Clouds, and here it becomes really hard to believe anyone from earth will roam the universe in 'Tavy' or any other kind of conveyance. A trip to the Magellanic Cloud galaxies would take 160 million years even at the speed of light.

To think this through we need to look at comets. You all know about Halley's Comet, of course, which you probably saw when it came to see us in 1986. It will be back in 2061. There was another in July last year – Comet Neowise, first discovered by the **Widefield Infrared Survey Explorer** telescope. It got quite close to us – only 64 million miles at one point, which in space terms is very close indeed.

It ran too close to Jupiter, apparently, which altered its previous orbit and resulted in it being expected back in our skies again around the year 8750. No, I know even the great-grandchildren won't see it, but think what that means. How will our earth have changed 6,700 years into the future?

Looking back 6,700 years there were only about 7 million people on this earth, the same as live in Hong Kong today. Tiny groups of hunters on Dartmoor were beginning to make small clearings in the dense forest to grow the first crops. Think how much has changed since that time. It was another five millenia before the first traces of Tavistock appeared.

Go the same distance into the future and who knows what life will be like? By then a new design of the spacecraft 'Tavy' may indeed be able to roam through the universe and come back to tell great tales of other lives and civilisations, just as the science fiction writers are telling us today. Think about it – go on, stretch your mind.

Ivor Williams

And Finally

As I sat, strapped in my seat waiting during the countdown, one thought kept crossing my mind ...every part of this rocket was supplied by the lowest bidder. **John Glenn**

When the white missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land. **Desmond Tutu**

I'm not a paranoid, deranged millionaire. I'm a billionaire. **Howard Hughes**

After the game, the King and the Pawn go into the same box. **Italian proverb**

I've been married to a communist and a fascist, and neither would take out the garbage. **Zsa Zsa Gabor**

When a man opens a car door for his wife, it's either a new car or a new wife. **Prince Philip**

Wood burns faster when you have to cut and chop it yourself. **Harrison Ford**

The best cure for sea sickness, is to sit under a tree. **Spike Milligan**

Kill one man and you're a murderer, kill a million and you're a conqueror. **Jean Rostand.**

Having more money doesn't make you happier. I have 50 million dollars but I'm just as happy as when I had 48 million. **Arnold Schwarzenegger.**

We are here on earth to do good unto others. What the others are here for, I have no idea. **W. H Auden**

If life were fair Elvis would still be alive today and all the impersonators would be dead **Johnny Carson**

The first piece of luggage on the carousel never belongs to anyone. **George Roberts**

If God had intended us to fly he would have made it easier to get to the airport. **Jonathan Winter**

I have kleptomania, but when it gets bad, I take something for it. **Robert Benchley**

The weather person is the only person that I know, that can be wrong 99.9 % of the time and still have a job the next day. **Johnny Carson**

Thanks to **Pauline Noblet**

u3a Day

Wednesday 2nd June

Put the date in your diaries NOW!

Details to follow soon.