

Tavy District u3a

THE NEWSLETTER



December rainbow near Bel Tor

Photo by John Noblet

u3a

No 107

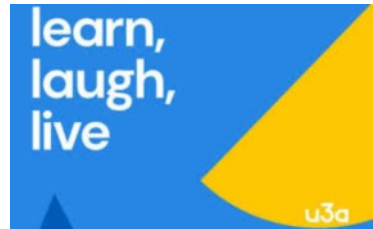
January 2021

Who's Who in Tavy District U3A

Chair	Barry Smith	611076
Business Secretary	Robin Neave	854766
Treasurer	Angela Pitt	07519 886578
Membership	Tony Rose	481569
Groups Liaison	Pippa Gardner	616007
Newsletter Distribution	Susan Neal	611076
Speaker's Liaison	Jane Ward	610608
Two Moors Liaison	Barry Smith	611076
Equipment Officer	David Glover	618261

Events Committee

Norma Woodcock	613597
Chris Webb	613884
Diana Smirles	612763
Janet Hunt	613088
Shirley Smith	614964



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The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th February 2021

Send contributions to johnnoblet@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Since March we have had various restrictions that limit what we do and how we do it but we appreciate that it's for all our best interests. In the main it has been fine, we found ways to carry on life as best we could. In many ways it's proved better!

I'm sitting here, mid December, and the only thing that is presently "restricting" what we want to do is the weather!

Is my memory fading or did we have quite a pleasant Summer? We found that although we could not do what we normally did (skittles, theatre visits, coach trips out, bridge, language groups, crafts, walks ; all the normal u3a stuff) this was replaced by other things, things we had put off because the other stuff was there!

We now have shorter, greyer days and the to do list is almost empty. Mother Nature seems to be providing a supply of incessant rain and the joy of waking to the occasional blue sky, and being able to escape the confines of inside, has become a too infrequent luxury!

As you no doubt have guessed I'm writing this while the rain is lashing down again, this will not give you a clue to the day, time or week as this is Tavistock! What it does do, however, is allow you a while to shelter inside and check out what is available from the u3a organisation. If you would like to see what other u3a's in the "West Country" are doing use the link below to gain access to the South West Regions Web Page, or just search U3A South West!

<https://u3asites.org.uk/south-west/page/58842>

If you are not seeing friends, family and loved ones and they cannot "pop round" for coffee and cake try **Jitsi Meet** ! Put this in a search engine and download the App, it's free!

It's a fully encrypted video conferencing system (don't get too concerned with the description, just try it!) that allows you and friends to drop in and out as you want for morning coffee, afternoon tea, a chat, discuss the news of the day, hold meetings, show how the latest jumper is coming on; whatever you need! Any similar ideas are most welcome and when you have tried it tell us for the next newsletter!

This year, and I feel sure it will continue, our excellent Newsletter (thanks again to John Noblet and all who contribute) will be coming to you via the Beacon System that is the u3a computer operation.

Sometime between Christmas and the New Year it will arrive, as if by magic, to enlighten your day and this gives me the opportunity, personally and on behalf of the Committee, to trust you and yours had a very enjoyable and pleasant Christmas and to wish you a very Happy and Healthy New Year!

Stay safe, stay healthy and we all look forward to seeing you in the New Year when things will start to slowly return to "normal". We hope!

Barry Smith



How to Get Replacement Committee Members

I am sitting here working out whether to head this article as:-

1. AGM next March 2021 or,
2. We need new Committee members.

Both headings have a tendency to lead the reader to the next page.

Should I say goodbye to you now or be overjoyed to find that you are still interested?

During "Normal Times", that's when we meet, socialise, have collective fun, relax and enjoy the monthly meetings and group activities, finding new members for the committee is a relatively "easy" matter though a few arms sometimes need to be twisted in the kindest possible way!

For our next AGM in March, we need to find / elect a new Chair and Secretary.

These positions do not involve vast amounts of work or commitment, the committee works together, gives support to each other and there is always a fountain of knowledge and experience that appears from the previous members that guides us through!

Last March we had approaching 430 members and we are looking for two volunteers to come forward and ensure that Tavy District u3a continues into what will be a new opportunity for providing a wonderful service for our existing and future members!

Every u3a presently has similar issues, all caused by the distance we need to keep during the present conditions and, as a lighter note, I have included a poem from Lynn Moore, the Chair of Brixham u3a, on the same subject.

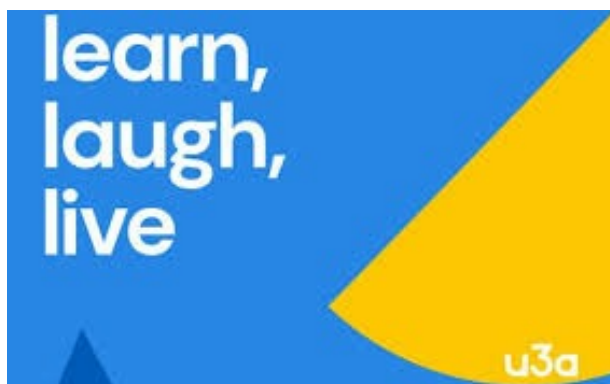
Although smaller than us, the response was excellent and their future was ensured!

Without a replacement Chair and Secretary, we cannot operate and will close down at the AGM!

Over to you, if you would like information, help or to discuss things, or even just say **YES PLEASE** I'm on 01822 611076, barrysmithtavy@gmail.com, or 07702 871671.

Enjoy the poem!

Barry Smith



How To Get Replacement Committee Members

'The time has come,' the Chairman said,
'To talk of many things:
Of trusteeships – and Treasurers
Of committees – and AGM's –
And why the tea is boiling hot –
And whether seats have wings.'

'But wait a bit,' the Members cried,
'Before we have our chat;
For some of us are out all day,
And all of us are busy!'
'We worry!' said the Secretary
There isn't time for that.

'A Treasurer,' the Chairman said,
'Is what we chiefly need:
Chair and Secretary besides.
Time is short indeed –
Now, if you're ready, Members dear,
We need you to take heed. '

'The AGM is looming,' the Chairman said,
'And all of you are nice:
Committee roles are vacant
Need we ask you thrice? –
So volunteer, for end of year,
Or ask for our advice. '

Thanks to Lynn Moore, Brixham u3a

Subscriptions 2021

The year 2020 has been an exceptionally difficult one for all of us; no-one could have predicted back in January 2020 the situation we are all in now at the end of the year. However, there are positive signs that life will return to some form of normal in the near future although, again, nobody knows exactly when that will be.

Tavy District u3a had to halt its monthly meetings in the Town Hall and from mid-March, groups had to stop meeting face-to-face in their venues during the first lockdown. After the lockdown was lifted, the Town Hall remained closed. Some Tavy District u3a groups have been very innovative in meeting using social media and the internet; others have preferred to postpone meetings until times are safer to do so.

We have a number of groups who meet up on the internet via Zoom using licences which Tavy District u3a has financed so that meetings can be longer than the usual free 40 minutes. Some groups are also making use of a room in the library where groups of 6 people can meet within the regulations regarding social distancing – again, this has been financed by Tavy District u3a.

As you can imagine, the financial situation for Tavy District u3a has been completely different to previous years. We still carry expenses which remain constant, such as payments to the Third Age Trust for the Third Age Matters magazine and Third Age subscriptions, the fee for the use of Beacon (the internet tool for managing the administration), copyright licence etc, whereas payments for the Town Hall venue have stopped but in part been replaced by funding Zoom licences and hire of the library room. At the AGM in March (which will presumably be via Zoom) the accounts for 2020 in detail will be laid before the members.

The Trustees have decided to set the subscription level for 2021 at £10.00 for individual membership. We are mindful of the fact that it is likely that some expenses will rise, and that membership levels may change but, although this reduction of a third in the subs rate compared to last year is not a huge saving per member, we are keen to recognise that we have been unable to enjoy the usual u3a activities because of the pandemic and ensuing lockdowns.

Our calculations show that this subscription rate will enable us to function effectively offering Zoom both for monthly and group meetings, and funding the hire of the library room for groups at least until May. Here is an overview of the membership rates:

Individual membership	£10.00
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Joint membership (for two people living at the same address)	£18.00
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Associate membership (for those who pay their main membership to another u3a)	£6.50
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Joint associate membership (for those who pay their main membership to another u3a)	£11.00
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Renewals from July 2021	£ 7.50
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Renewals from October 2021	£3.75
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Subscriptions 2021 *Continued*

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. Please send these, made out to **Tavy District U3A** to the Treasurer:

Angela Pitt
Tavy District u3a Treasurer
34 Westbridge Cottages
Tavistock,
PL19 8DQ

Being a member of Tavy District u3a provides an opportunity to meet new people and old friends, to follow interests and hobbies in groups with other like-minded members, and to start doing something new, such as learning a new language or a musical instrument.

Each month there is a speaker at the monthly meeting offering insights into a wide range of topics, and there is an opportunity for each member to contribute to the life of this u3a.

We do hope that you will be signing up for another year of Tavy District u3a membership. It promises to be an interesting one!

Angela Pitt

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

Coming to a u3a near you soon

“I’m the Secretary - Get Me Out Of Here!”

Please don't be put off by the title – it was merely an attention grabber! I have thoroughly enjoyed being your Business Secretary for the last three years but the u3a Constitution requires that I now stand down and hand over the baton to someone else. Could this be you?

Do you enjoy meeting people?

Do you want to 'give something back' to the u3a?

Do you want to learn new skills?

Do you want to keep your mind active?

Can you use Word and email?

If the answer is 'Yes', then you might be our new Business Secretary.

The u3a runs as a self-help organisation in that, although there is a Head Office which helps with national events, queries, issues, specialist subject advice, and publishes the Third Age Matters magazine, every u3a branch is only as strong, popular and successful as its membership. As you all know, groups only exist because a member was willing and able to set it up and run it (with any help needed being provided by the committee). The social programme only exists because of the dedicated work of the Events committee. The monthly meetings are organised and run by the committee with the help of the catering team. So we, as a u3a, are in effect self-sufficient. The only time that this becomes a problem is when there is no-one willing to step forward and either start a group or join the committee.

I have served on the committee as Business Secretary for nearly 3 years and therefore, have got to stand down. This is not because I want to – I have enjoyed my time as Secretary – but because the Constitution decrees that no trustee shall serve for longer than 3 years (unless they go on to become Chair). This might seem an odd notion as, if someone wants to do a role why shouldn't they continue? But what it means is that there is a constant turnover of new people joining the committee with fresh ideas and energy which is a necessary and positive thing.

The role of Business Secretary is considered one of the key roles (the others being Chair, Vice and Treasurer) without which a u3a cannot exist and which must be filled. However, it is an enjoyable role which would suit many of you and is not particularly onerous.

The committee has meetings every other month after the monthly meeting for which the Business Secretary publishes an agenda, attends, takes and writes up the minutes. The same applies for the AGM in March.

There are other occasional administrative duties such as checking licences, organising leavers' lunches and ordering diaries. Committee members attend the Group Leaders' Luncheon and help out – if they can – with other social events. !

“I’m the Secretary - Get Me Out Of Here!” Cont’d

You don’t even have to come to every monthly meeting! I have missed a committee meeting in the past due to personal circumstances and another committee member stood in for me and took the minutes – we are a friendly bunch and help each other out whenever we can!

So, please take a moment to consider whether you would be willing to take on this role. I am planning to still be a u3a member and will stand behind the new Secretary until they feel confident taking on the role.

And, once I have handed everything over, I will still be available for help and support. Contact me if you would like any more information, my contact details are at the front of the Newsletter.

Your u3a Needs You!

Robin Neave

Notice of AGM

Notice is hereby given that the Eighteenth Annual General Meeting of the Tavy District U3A will be held via Zoom on Wednesday, 3rd March 2021 at 2.00 pm.

Any member wishing to submit a formal motion to be tabled at the meeting should do so in writing or e-mail to the secretary, Robin Neave by Monday 15th February 2021

Robin Neave -Secretary

Have You Noticed?

As you might have read in TAM “a new modern image” was unveiled at the national AGM. Ed Link, chairman of the “Communications and External Affairs Committee” said the refreshed look was designed to make an impact “to show we have something exciting for all people no longer in full time employment. That this is a whole new chapter in their lives, not the epilogue”

He went on to say that “We must broaden our base with increased diversity”.

Well, there you have it.

We will be using the new, lower case, logo in all communications in future.

u3a

Speaker Programme 2021 - Part 1

By the time you read this, Christmas will be over and 2021 will be upon us. In normal times, the New Year would coincide with the production of our handy little Speaker Programme card. However these are not normal times and I am sure that you will all appreciate that it is not currently possible to publish a programme for the whole of 2021, since it is still unclear when it is going to be possible to resume face to face meetings.

Below, therefore, is the Speaker Programme Part 1 which will take us up to the AGM in March. All of these talks will be presented via Zoom and our membership secretary, Tony Rose, will send details of the meeting link nearer the time together with a reminder a day or so before.

Wednesday 6th January 2021 2.30pm (Join from 2.00pm)

2020 was the year in which Plymouth and other cities had planned to hold major events to celebrate the sailing of the "MAYFLOWER" from England to America in 1620. Our speaker this month was due to speak to us last May in advance of the many MAYFLOWER 400 events planned for 2020. COVID 19 led to the events and the talk being postponed. Fortunately our speaker has agreed to speak to us this month instead.

***Mayflower 400: Legend and Legacy* - Jo Loosemore**

"An epic journey of survival, imagination and 400 years of America. With objects, images and ideas coming from museums, libraries and archives across the UK, US and The Netherlands, find out how The Box, Plymouth is commemorating the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the *Mayflower*."

Curator of The Box, Jo will reveal the partnerships, changing perceptions of the ship, its passengers and an Atlantic journey made 400 years ago.

Wednesday 3rd February 2021 2.30 pm (Join from 2pm)

Many of you will, like me, remember both the start of Classic FM and, long before that, listening to Radio Caroline. If you do, this month's speaker's name will certainly ring a bell.

Across the Waves - from Radio Caroline to Classic FM – Nick Bailey

Nick will talk about his fifty years in broadcasting, starting as a newsreader with Radio Caroline in the 60s, then Australia for five years, British Forces Radio in Gibraltar and Germany, and many years at Radio Television Hong Kong before returning to the UK in 1992 to be the launch presenter for Classic FM, where he remained for twenty five years. The talk includes a film he took on board Caroline and a BBC film about the opening of Classic FM.

Wednesday 3rd March 2021 2.30pm (Join from 2pm) – TALK PRECEDED BY AGM

One plus of holding our meetings via Zoom is that it is possible to engage speakers from rather further afield than normal and this month's speaker falls into this category.

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 cruise ship audiences, describes his talk as a "portrait of a turbulent society, unrecognisable from the bankrupt and exhausted Britain of 1945. A fascinating journey".

I do hope that as many of you as possible will join these meetings.

Jane Ward (Speaker Secretary)

The Art of Letter Writing?

We have all heard of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, haven't we? Those of us who live in Tavistock are reminded of his name every time we travel on the A386 through Grenofen on the way to Yelverton or Plymouth.

He was voted the "Second Greatest Briton" in a BBC poll a few years ago and in a vote conducted by the BSRIA (an advisory body for the construction industry) 35% of respondents named him as the most influential engineer ever.

But what of the man? Was he a good employer? In the days before telephones, emails and Zoom the only way of communicating other than face to face was by letter. Some of Brunel's correspondence suggest that his people skills were on a par with today's Government Ministerial Codes.

One of the books that I have read during Lockdown 2 is a biography of Brunel by Colin Maggs subtitled "The Life of an Engineering Genius". But here are a couple of letters that he wrote.

The first is to William Glennie to whom he had offered a job as "resident engineer".

"You have entirely misunderstood me. I think I explained that this position of resident engineer was attainable by you – not promised by me. All I can offer you is the post of assistant engineer. What I offer must not be a certain or permanent position. My responsibility is too great to allow my retaining anyone who may appear to me to be inefficient. It is an understood thing that all under me are subject to immediate dismissal at my pleasure. It is for you to decide if you are likely to proceed satisfactorily and whether the chance is sufficient inducement".

And another letter to one of his assistants didn't beat about the bush:

"Plain gentlemanly language seems to have no effect on you. I must try stronger language and stronger methods. You are a cursed, lazy, inattentive, apathetic vagabond and if you continue to neglect my instructions I shall send you about your business. I have frequently told you, amongst other absurd untidy habits that of the making of drawings on the backs of others is inconvenient. By your cursed neglect you have wasted more of my time than your whole life is worth. Let me have no more of this abominable and criminal laziness".



Phew!

John Noblet

It's just a tree

Alive for a hundred and fifty years

From horse and cart to crunching gears

It's just a tree

For birds that nest then fledge to fly

In vapour trails that pattern the sky

It's just a tree

On a down by the moor

An airfield when the world was sore

It's just a tree

That's survived disease

The death of many other trees

It's just a tree

That breathes the world

Alive again with leaves unfurled

It's just a tree

A home, a filter, minds true calm

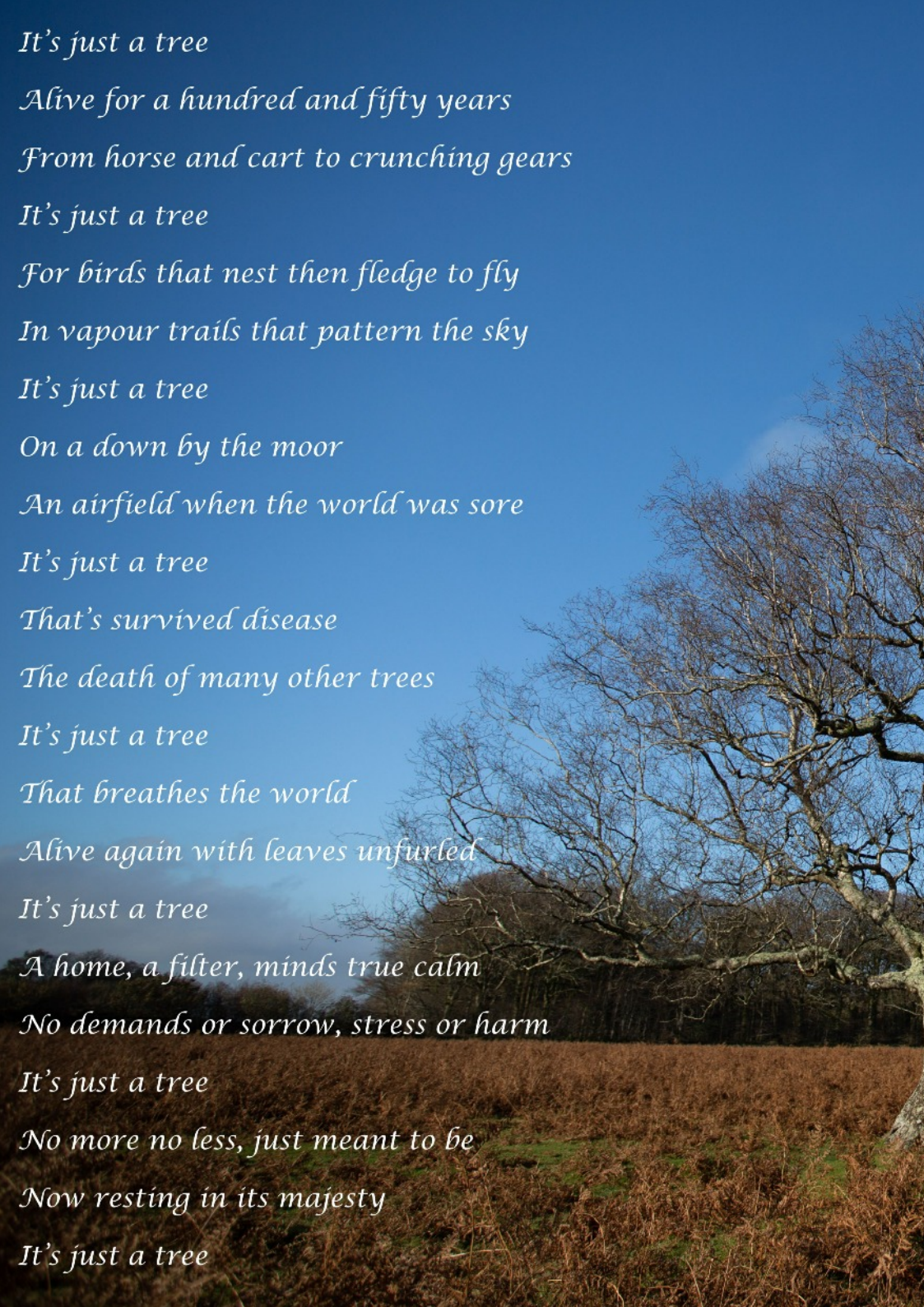
No demands or sorrow, stress or harm

It's just a tree

No more no less, just meant to be

Now resting in its majesty

It's just a tree





Thanks to **Rod Taylor**

Tavistock in Days Gone By

If nothing else, Covid has given us the time to read things that we might not normally have read. This is an extract from the Red Guide to Dartmoor published by Ward Lock in 1920, just 100 years ago. A double room in the Bedford Hotel would have cost you 9/- a night or £4.14s 6d per week.

Were those the days? How much do you recognise today?

"Tavistock has almost the air of a cathedral city. It is dominated by its ancient parish church and the remains of the more ancient Abbey, and there is a decorous quiet in the streets and a harmony in its buildings that are in the highest degree restful.

It is one of those towns which have benefitted from the careful management of great territorial owners. Modern Tavistock has grown slowly but thanks to the wisdom of successive Dukes of Bedford and those who have administered their property, the growth has not marred this ancient ecclesiastical centre.

For centuries the fortunes of Tavistock were bound up with those of the ducal house of Bedford, but since 1912 the relations of the two have entirely changed. In 1910 the Duke decided to sell his extensive properties in the town and gave the council the first option of buying those portions which were of a public nature.

The result of the arbitrator's award was that the town should pay nearly £31,000 for the Town Hall, markets, waterworks, pleasure grounds etc and the citizens took on themselves the civic responsibilities hitherto borne chiefly by the Dukes of Bedford.

The railway, the increasing popularity of the Moor as a health resort, and its own beautiful surroundings have kept Tavistock well to the fore.

It is an attractive place in many ways, both in its old and new portions, and a delightful and convenient headquarters. Its history dates back to Saxon times but is mostly uneventful. Being so near the birthplace of Sir Francis Drake, it has links with national history, irrespective of the Abbey.

As the birthplace of William Browne, the author of Britannia's Pastorals, to whom is sometimes attributed the immortal epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke.

Pym, one of the protagonists of the Great Rebellion, represented the borough in Parliament for some time, as did Lord William Russell, beheaded in Charles II's reign.

The decline of mining was coincident with the increase in popularity of the town as a pleasant and healthy place of residence, and the hillsides are covered with modern villas. Its modern buildings are well placed, and the new thoroughfares spacious and well planned.

At the Dissolution the value of the Benedictine Abbey was put at £902 5s. 7d., and with the exception of the Priory at Plympton it was the richest monastic establishment in Devonshire. It has, however, a greater claim to regard than that of wealth, for within its walls was set up one of the earliest printing presses in the provinces.

The first printer in Devon was Dan Thomas Rychard, a Tavistock monk, and among the issues from his press was a translation of *Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiae*, printed in 1524. Sad havoc has been wrought among the beautiful and stately buildings which the Abbey once comprised.

Like most other monasteries, it was demolished to furnish building material for the surrounding neighbourhood. Where the Chapter House stood is now the *Bedford Hotel*, and in the churchyard opposite is a fragment of the old Early English arcade.

Mentioned in the Saxon Chronicle as Tavingstoke (some say a contraction of *Tau-vechan-stoke*, the Tavy being originally known as the *Tau-vechan*, "the little river").

Tavistock in Days Gone By *(Continued)*

This is in contradistinction to the Tamar, the *Tau-mawr*, "the great river").

The first event of note was the erection of the Abbey, with which the history of the town was for generations identified. The monastery was founded in 961 by Ordgar, Earl of Devon (father of the beautiful Elfrida, the queen of Edgar, whose history and crimes are well known), and completed by his son and successor.

In 997 it was plundered and burnt by the Danes, and rebuilt, on a scale which "eclipsed every religious house in Devonshire, in the extent, convenience, and magnificence of its buildings", at the cost of the families residing in the neighbourhood. For five centuries its abbots "ruled the roost", and in 1458 one of them was mitred. But about a century later-

*"Bluff Harry broke into the spence,
And turned the cowl's adrift".*

For a long period Tavistock enjoyed the distinction of being one of the four Stannary towns. It was also a seat of the woollen industry, but "Tavistock kersey" has long ceased to be an article of commerce.

The town first sent representatives to Parliament in the twenty-third year of the reign of Edward I. It was a stronghold of the Royalists during the Civil War.

The town enjoys the advantage of two railway systems. The Great Western branch line from Plymouth to Launceston passes through on the south; while on the other side is the station of the London and South Western Railway, with direct communication with London and Plymouth. The fast trains do the journey to or from Waterloo in about 5 hours.

The South Western station is high on the hillside overlooking the town. As visitors alight from the train they obtain a sweeping view in the distance of some of Dartmoor's most famous tors; while immediately beneath are the grey slate roofs of Tavistock, dominated by the battlemented tower of the Parish Church.

But the most picturesque entrance to the town is from the older station of the rival company, on the other side of the Tavy. Leaving this station, we reach a road which runs by the side of the mossy and ivy-grown railway embankment, and over the picturesque Abbey or Guile Bridge. The Tavy pours over the weir, one mass of foam; and then brawls along, forming pretty cascades as it tumbles over the boulders in its course".

John Noblet

Epitaph on the Countess Dowager of Pembroke

UNDERNEATH this sable herse
Lies the subject of all verse:
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother:
Death, ere thou hast slain another
Fair and learn'd and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.



Wine Appreciation Group 2

The first Wine Appreciation Group proved to be very popular, so the inaugural meeting of Wine Appreciation Group 2 took place in September 2019. We met at the home of the group leaders, Sheila and Bob Naybourn, to discuss the way forward for this new venture.

We were asked to bring along a favourite wine to share and enjoy with other members, and to invite their thoughts or comments about it. For fun, the start of each tasting was “blind”, to see whether we could pin down the grape(s) used in its production, or a country of origin. The consensus of the discussion was that we would meet every month, in members' homes. The host(s) would choose a theme, such as wines from a particular country or those made from a common grape type. They would buy six or seven different wines and prepare some background information. The labels would be revealed to their fellow members after the tastings. We could all try to guess each wine and/or the overall theme. The cost of the wine would be shared – usually about £7-£9 per head. (No prizes offered for correct identification, but it's certainly very satisfying if you get it right!)

After several very enjoyable get-togethers.....well, you know what happened.

Not to be beaten, a trial meeting was arranged via Zoom. It was certainly different, but still good fun and a worthwhile compromise for the time being.

When we do manage to get back to normal meetings, the format will be changing a little. The varying themes will still be a feature, but there will be less emphasis on blind tasting. However, the “appreciation” is definitely guaranteed to continue. There is also a plan to arrange trips to local vineyards.

It's a friendly group that welcomes new members, so get in touch with Bob if you'd like to give it a try.

Chris Rose



**Laughter is the
best medicine.
Or wine.
It might be
wine.**

**Christmas is
now gonna be
mid-January.
Due to Santa having
to quarantine for
14 days when he
arrives in the
country.**

Art Appreciation

- The Mystery of Van Gogh's Ear

The story is that on a dark night in Arles in Provence in December 1888 Vincent Van Gogh cut off his ear and presented it wrapped in newspaper to one of the girls in a nearby brothel. Why did he do this? Did he cut the whole ear off or just a piece of the lobe? Was he mad? Was he infatuated with one of the prostitutes and wanted to show his undying love for her?

Meeting on Zoom our Art Appreciation group were able to follow the story of how a dedicated art lover, Bernadette Murphy, spent 7 years trying to find answers to these questions, eventually tracking down a letter in Berkley USA written by the doctor who treated Van Gogh. Dr Rae's diagram of the cut showed only a small piece of lobe remained.



Bernadette also concluded from her research that the prostitute was in fact a young girl who had been cleaning the brothel. Van Gogh had met her in Paris earlier in the year where she was being treated for rabies having suffered a bite from a rabid dog which left her with a disfigurement. Did Van Gogh want to show compassion for her with his self-sacrifice of an ear so that he too was now disfigured? Or did he cut off his ear after an argument with Gauguin in a fit of rage? The truth will probably never be known. Van Gogh suffered from psychotic episodes and delusions and spent time in several mental hospitals. He suffered from depression and in July 1890 shot himself in the chest, dying two days later.

Van Gogh's work was largely unappreciated during his lifetime as he was considered to be a madman. He became famous after his suicide then being seen as a misunderstood genius.

His paintings from his time in Arles are now amongst the most expensive in the art world, including The Sunflowers, The Irises and The Starry Night.

Liz Heaton



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

The King Who Looked For A Queen

There once came a King, in his ship with red sails,
To look for a Queen who might live in Clovelly.
To his crew he said 'Wait while I walk up this hill
To look for the shop that sells ice creams and jelly.'

His Siamese cat had followed more slowly
But was quick (and polite) to define his mistake,
'That's not the right place!' she cried, whiskers all twitching,
'A Queen for Your Highness will only eat cake.'

The critical cat, whose name was Jane Purring,
Had a map in her handbag of Devon,
She pointed her paw at a hill called Yes Tor,
'Well known for Royal Picnics, they think it's near heaven.'

'If I find a princess I'll make you a Dame,
Just tell me the way,' said the now hopeful King.
The Siamese told him 'Last time there were plenty
Of all shapes and sizes - you did bring the ring?'

'Of course,' the King shouted, now very annoyed,
'Pure gold with blue diamonds. You have your best hat?
But how do we get there? - now quick! you must tell me.'
'There's a bus every hour,' said the royal household cat.

'I was caught in a shower of limpets and eels,
My best hat got ruined,' she went on to say,
'The shop where I bought it now sells only sunbeams,
Which forced me to make one from turnips and hay.'

'Is this the right bus?' the King asked his companion,
'Will it get there today? Look! It's pulled by two sheep!'
'No hurry,' said Jane, with a flick of one ear,
'They're serving fried breakfasts - on Tuesdays they're cheap.'

Two pigs queued behind them, one reading a paper,
The confident cat took the front seats on top.
They picked up a peacock who didn't like flying,
And a frog who explained it was too far to hop.

The load was quite heavy, the sheep were complaining.
The coypu conductor said 'All must get down!'
The cat cried 'Oh bother, there's surely no need,
Two cheetahs are waiting in Tavistock Town.'

'I see no Princesses,' the King shouted loudly,
As they parked near the market some hours before dawn,
'How far to Yes Tor? And which bus do we catch?'
'Let's wait till the morning,' Jane said with a yawn.

The King Who Looked For A Queen continued

They watched as the cheetahs chased after the sheep,
Then the King gave a howl, 'I've a pain in my belly!'
'You ate too much bacon,' said the unfeeling feline,
'Let's return to your boat, on the quay at Clovelly.'

The bus (pulled by cheetahs) was heading for Dartmoor,
So a crow took both back, tied on with red string.
Some ravens came with them all climbing quite high
Through white humpy clouds, and hailstones that sting.

'My thanks to you birds,' said the King, racked with pain.
They landed at lunch-time, Jane clutching her hat.
The royal sailing boat was still moored to the quay.
'I'm glad to get back,' said the Kingdom's top cat.

There were cheers when the King and Jane P came aboard
From the boat's crew of pirates and clowns from a circus.
They sailed from the harbour and out through the Channel,
Across the wide ocean to the island of Quercus.

The King told his friend as they strolled round the Palace,
'We still have a quest, a new Queen we must seek.'
With a twitch of her whiskers and a licking of paws,
The Siamese told him, 'but not till next week.'

Ivor Williams

A Winter Warmer

Sausage and Lentil Casserole (Serves 4)

450 gms lean sausages

1 large onion, chopped

1 garlic clove, crushed

1 large carrot, coarsely grated

175 gms (6oz) Puy lentils (rinsed through)

Fresh thyme

400gms can chopped tomatoes

600 ml (1 pint) hot beef stock

4 tblsp half fat creme fraiche

Salt and pepper.

1. Prick sausages, then dry fry in non-stick pan until lightly coloured.
2. Add onion, cook until soft and golden.
3. Add garlic and carrot, cook for further minute.
4. Stir in lentils, thyme sprigs, chopped tomatoes and stock and bring to boil.
5. Reduce heat to gentle simmer, cook uncovered for 30 mins. Stir occasionally, adding a little water if necessary. Season to taste.
6. Just before serving, add creme fraiche.

It's very tasty and makes a great alternative to turkey!

Shirley Smith



WALKING

At the time of publishing this Newsletter in late December, Covid guidance for West Devon allowed walking groups to meet subject to various restrictions.

As we all know, things may change but at the moment Tavy District u3a are planning walks in January and February subject to:

- No more than 6 persons in any one walk "bubble".
- Meet at the start of the walk as car sharing is not permitted.
- Social distancing must be observed
- The terms of the risk assessment and walking group guidelines (as published on the group page of the website) must be followed.
- Walkers must bring their own sanitiser and face coverings and follow the latest Covid guidance.
- You **MUST** book your place on the walk with the walk leader **BEFORE THE WALK.**

Diana: 612763 or 07472 775817

Chris & Jennie: 854792 or
07802 730549

John: 616481 or 07900 054772

Tony: 617289 or 07513 774876

Tuesday 19th January

Meet at Pixon Lane car park.
Walk to Wilminstone, then Mana Butts and Kilworthy.
Lanes, tracks and old railway.
5 miles.

John

Thursday 28th January

Meet at The Visitor Centre, Postbridge (P&D) at 10.00 am
Circular walk though the forest to Bellever Tor and then back along good tracks.
Gentle gradients up and down, about 4 - 5 miles.

Chris and Jennie

Tuesday 16th February

Meet at parking area opposite old pump house on Princetown road (SX567750).
Walk old tracks to Foggintor, and Swell Tor and King's Tor. 4½ miles.
(Read it in Tavy/Moor Links before you go).

John

Thursday 24th February

Walk TBA
Check the website for details.

Tony



Always keep to the footpath. *Photo John Noblet*

Recorder Group

Like all the groups, the Recorder Group has had its challenges this year, and maybe more than most as blown instruments have been considered a high risk.

During the first lockdown various attempts were made to keep in touch. Playing by Zoom proved impossible with different internet speeds making the necessary precise timing far too challenging. We did manage a few social meetings via Zoom which enabled us to at least see some of the group and catch up. One or two members managed to link by putting their phones on 'speaker' and play together; a few people sent round some choices from our repertoire that meant we could be practising the same things; using the program 'Capella' we were able to have a backing track to some of our pieces which gave a much better feel for the music when playing on your own, particularly if your part wasn't the tune line. Several of the group are also members of the Plymouth Recorder Group and two of their conductors with excellent IT skills were able to make videos available and send music online.

When things eased a little in June, we were able to take advantage of the lovely weather and sitting socially distanced and with a group size up to six, were able to meet in a few gardens. We hope the various neighbours enjoyed the free concert, though sirens and traffic noise did on occasion provide rather a distraction!

With the arrival of Autumn and the fact that u3a made the library room available, small groups were again able to play together, and met fortnightly until the most recent lockdown.

We've very much missed paying together and really hope not too much of 2021 will have passed before we can again meet as a full group.

Celia West



Thanks to Margaret Garton and Pauline Noblet

Can You Help?

Plymouth University Low Vision Optometry Department is looking for volunteers for Zoom interviews.

Some time ago I offered to help my daughter, Pam Adams, who trains final year optometry students in low vision. The two Zoom sessions took a couple of hours during which the student's task was to discover the nature and level of my difficulty and to offer help in dealing with the problem. It was a most interesting afternoon, the students were very friendly and most grateful for my help. The alternative is that they make believe and interview each other. It is better to have real life volunteers. The department has a large group of students this year and she would very much welcome your help. You don't need to be registered as having low vision, just some level of difficulty.

It is now around 7 years since Pam noticed some distortion in the macular of my right eye, this is scarring a little like the brown spots that we oldies have on our hands. An early sign of Age Related Macular Deterioration is a change in one's vision and possibly noticeable distortion in straight lines. I can see islands on the sky line when looking out to sea where none exist. There are several stages of deterioration in vision, and some can be treated at the REI in Plymouth, early diagnosis by a qualified optician can be helpful, so routine sight tests are important as we get older.

It was because I had this condition, amongst other reasons that we moved to Tavistock from North Wales 4 years ago. What a great place to live and the u3a has been a wonderful intro into life and people here.

Pam, who lives in Whitchurch, has a career long interest in helping people with sight problems. For many years she volunteered to go abroad with Vision Aid Overseas visiting remote villages in Africa and Nepal and setting up eye testing clinics in places that had no provision for the most basic of eye care. I recall her story of the man who jumped for joy when she gave him a pair of reading glasses 'I can do my job again, I can see my work, I can feed my family!' We love Pam to bits and are so proud of her.



Zoom has enabled her to continue to work with the students, passing on to them the future optometrists, her understanding, empathy and friendliness to those of us who so need it.

If you would like to help with this it would be fantastic

Call Dan at the Eye Clinic in Plymouth on 01752 583100 if you would like to volunteer for an hour or more. Mention Pam's low vision Zoom clinic and he can help book a session

You can have any eye condition to help..

Sheila Naybour

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

Barry's Brisket

Another antidote to turkey. Serves 6

Cooking oil for frying.

1.35kg brisket, boned and rolled.

1 400g tin chopped tomatoes.

1 small can Guinness or other stout.

1 tbsp dark brown sugar.

2 heaped tbsp tomato purée.

1 mild or medium-hot chilli, deseeded and chopped.

4 large onions, sliced.

2 garlic cloves, crushed.

Salt and pepper to season.

1. Heat the oven to 130 C/fan Gas mark 1
2. Very lightly grease the bottom of a large frying pan with oil and brown the brisket well all over. Transfer to a lidded casserole. Pour off any fat from the frying pan into a cup and add a dollop of the tinned tomatoes to the pan to loosen any brown stuck-on bits with a wooden spoon - you don't want to waste the flavour. Then add the rest of the tomatoes, the stout, sugar, tomato purée and the chilli. Tip over the meat in the casserole.
3. Rinse out the frying pan, then fry the onions in a couple of tablespoons of cooking oil. Stir frequently until the onions are pale brown. Add the garlic and fry for 2 minutes more, then tip on top of the meat.
4. Make sure the lid fits well (if it doesn't, cover with foil) and cook in the middle of the oven for 4 hours, turning the meat over and stirring the onions and sauce after 2 hours. When the time is up, test with a fork-the meat should be soft and falling into shreds.
5. When done, lift the meat out into a serving dish, spoon off any visible fat from the sauce, check the seasoning and pour over the brisket.

Enjoy!

Susie Neal



Remember?

Photo from Bob Naybour



And Finally

Just Like Frank Feldman

A man walks out to the street and catches a taxi, just as it's going by.

As he gets into the taxi, the cabbie says, "Impeccable timing. You're just like Frank."

Passenger: "Who?"

Cabbie: "Frank Feldman. He's a guy who did everything right all the time. Like my coming along when you needed a cab, things happened like that to Frank Feldman every single time."

Passenger: "There are always a few clouds over everybody."

Cabbie: "Not Frank Feldman. He was a terrific athlete. He could have won the Grand-Slam at tennis. He could golf with the pros. He sang like an opera baritone and danced like a Broadway star and you should have heard him play the piano. He was an amazing guy."

Passenger: "Sounds like he was really something special."

Cabbie: "There's more. He had a memory like a computer. He remembered everybody's birthday. He knew all about wine, which foods to order and which fork to eat them with. He could fix anything. Not like me. I change a fuse, and the whole street blacks out. But Frank Feldman could do everything right."

Passenger: "Wow, what a guy!"

Cabbie: "He always knew the quickest way to go in traffic and avoid traffic jams. Not like me, I always seem to get stuck in them. But Frank, he never made a mistake, and he really knew how to treat a woman and make her feel good. He would never answer her back even if she was in the wrong; and his clothing was always immaculate, shoes highly polished too. He was the perfect man! He never made a mistake. No one could ever measure up to Frank Feldman."

Passenger: "How did you meet him?"

Cabbie: "I never actually met Frank. He died and I married his wife."

Thanks to **Margaret Garton**

Best Wishes to all for 2021