

Tavy District u3a

THE NEWSLETTER



Join our u3a Day photo challenge. What makes Tavistock special for you? See Page 6.

No 109

May 2021

u3a

Who's Who in Tavy District U3A

Chair	Robin Neave
Business Secretary	Chrissie Wade
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

Events Committee

Norma Woodcock

Chris Webb

Diana Smirles

Janet Hunt

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Newsletter Editor: John Noblet

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th June 2021

Send contributions to johnnoblet@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

FROM THE CHAIR



Hello and welcome to the latest Newsletter from Tavy District u3a (note the use of lower case!)

As your new Chair, I am excited at presiding over our tentative return to 'normal' u3a activities as we ease our way out of lockdown. It is obviously going to be a while before we are in a position to return to monthly meetings in the Town Hall and for all our groups to be up and running. However, the committee are working hard to ensure that we are still able to offer our members monthly meetings via Zoom and some of our groups are now meeting, albeit either via Zoom or in small socially distanced numbers, outside. From 17th May, groups of up to 6 members may meet indoors in well-ventilated places and so we are pleased to offer the Library again as an alternative.

The recent lovely weather over the Easter weekend meant that many of us were able to meet up and socialise with friends, families and neighbours in private gardens. But many of us are, understandably, nervous at mixing with people again – we are sociable beasts but the situation that we have all been living under for the last year has taken its toll.

Nevertheless, brighter days are ahead! We are currently organising an initiative for National u3a Day which I hope as many of you as possible will participate in. There are also tentative plans for our first face-to-face meeting which we would like to be a purely social event for members to meet and catch-up with each other. It would be nice, on our return, if we could offer some new and different groups to add to our existing ones... maybe, with foreign travel looking increasingly complex in the short term, we could look at organising or offering more groups/activities at weekends and in the evenings? The world (or at least Tavistock and the surrounding area) is our oyster!

One of the things that attracted me to the u3a, and still does, is the self-help learning principle. It never fails to impress me the range of activities and groups that we provide for our members. And when I say we, I don't mean the committee, I mean the members. And I'm sure that there is still as yet untapped expertise, experience and enthusiasm out there! So, if you have any ideas or suggestions as to improving what we offer or creating a new activity/group, please come forward and let us know by contacting either myself or the Group Co-Ordinator, Pippa Gardner. You don't have to be an 'expert' in an area, you can learn together – YouTube videos can be a wonderful way to acquire new skills and knowledge!

Please keep checking both your emails and the rebranded Newsletter as we try to keep you as informed and supported as possible going forward. I look forward to meeting up with as many of you as possible in the not-too-distant future and in the meantime, I'll see you on Zoom!

Robin Neave

National News & Updates from the u3a

National u3a Day – Wednesday June 2nd 2021

The main idea behind this National Day is to raise the profile of the u3a movement with a potential to recruit new members. Although it has been difficult with the restrictions in place because of Covid, u3a's up and down the country are organising events from yarn-bombing to town trivia quizzes.

We have decided as a u3a to embark on a **Mental Maps** project which may (or may not – restrictions pending) result in a future exhibition. Details are to be found elsewhere in this Newsletter, but I would encourage everyone to have a go and participate! We will also be having our usual monthly Zoom meeting as it coincides with that.

Slow Ways Project

This is a national initiative intended to create **a network of safe, easy and enjoyable walking routes** that connect towns, cities and villages across Great Britain. It has not yet been officially launched but to find out more about this innovative project, there is a webinar aimed at u3a members on **Monday, May 17th at 2pm**. To book or register and interest, contact u3a Chair Ian McCannan

U3a Click and Save

This is a new scheme that will give u3a members cashback discounts when they spend money with certain retailers and suppliers such as Sainsbury's, Argos and M&S. As soon as the committee has the details, we will let you know how to sign up.

Vegan and Vegetarian Zoom Demos

More and more of us are embracing the power of fruit and veg in our diet whether for health, environmental or animal welfare reasons. Alex Connell of Vegetarian for Life charity will be running Zoom demonstrations on **May 10 and June 21**. To book, go to the Events page on the u3a website.

Spring Learning Programme

There are a large range of activities that have been launched as part of the u3a's Spring Learning Programme. Details can be found at **u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes**. For the budding writers amongst you, there is a **Creative Writing Competition** – deadline early June; if you are not travelling abroad this year why not be inspired by the **Taste of Travel Cooking Challenge** which features a recipe every fortnight from a different country; there is a **weekly Maths Challenge** as well as a **Weekly Quiz**; there are various workshops available and don't forget the regular **u3a Radio Podcast** which is released on the 17th of the month.

So there really is no excuse not to “Learn, Laugh, Live”!

Speaker Programme 2021 Part 3

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.

Wednesday 2nd June 2021 2.30 (Join from 2pm) NOTE EXACT TIMING IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

The Alternative History of Ponies on Dartmoor – Joss Hibbs, Powdermills Pottery

The pottery has teamed up with the charity Friends of the Dartmoor Hill Pony to create the Dartmoor Hill Pony Exhibition.

Joss will talk about the history of ponies on Dartmoor from the stone age to the present day, how the hill ponies have evolved to be able to survive there all year round, how they help create a home for wildlife and about the ancient ebb and flow of the 'wild' ponies on the moor's commons.

Joss Hibbs has been resident potter at Powdermills since 1999, having been taught to throw pots on the potter's wheel by Richard Phethean, and having completed two years of study in ceramics at the University of Westminster.

Wednesday 7th July 2021 2.30 (Join from 2pm)

From Registered Nurse to Law Firm Partner – Marjorie Creek, Kitsons LLP

"I have given lots of talks about being a carer for someone with dementia and looking after people with dementia in my day job. I have given webinars with BRACE the Alzheimer's charity and PWC"

Jane Ward

Speaker Secretary

A Personal Map of Tavistock

What? What? What?

Some of you will have heard of the idea of a 'mental map' – it's an attempt to portray something through the eyes of the people concerned.

In our case, we want to show Tavistock and its surrounding area as seen by the people who live in it. So, we're asking everyone to send us pictures of things in the area which mean something to them – NOT what we think tourists might want to see, but something in our habitat with meaning for us as individuals and which represent a piece of Tavistock as we see it. So instead of a photo of Drake's statue, you might send in a picture of a bit of the Tavistock area which makes you smile (the Tavistock sign on the A386? A particular plant in the sensory garden? The billiard-table flatness of the bowling green?) Or of something which makes you frown, and something you'd like to draw attention to!

Here are a couple of my own ideas.

Every spring I watch in suspense as the duck families paddle on the canal through the Meadows, and count the number of ducklings in each group; sadly, these numbers diminish drastically but as the survivors take on adult plumage, I feel as if I have been part of their upbringing. Just call me Aunt Jemima PuddleDuck.

As a dog owner, I admire Tavistock's enlightened attitude towards dogs – offering a small piece of the park, away from people who don't want to be near canines, where dogs can be let off the lead to run in safety, albeit only once they have trained their owners to pick up after them.

Pictures can be any kind of representation: painting, crayons, embroidery, knitting, to name a few, and, of course, photography. You don't have to add a description or reason but if you do, please keep it to a maximum of 50 words.

Who?

This is for everyone who resides in or around Tavistock, and includes Tavy District u3a members! We'll start off with u3a members and if you have others in your family who would like to contribute, lend them your crayons / paints / embroidery stuff / camera. On June 2nd we'll make this more public through the local press. All are welcome!

When?

We are going to publicise this collection on June 2nd 2021 – that is the nationwide u3a Day and an opportunity for u3as across the country to show what u3a is and to demonstrate that we are part of the local community and not only a bunch of wise old wrinklies supping tea.

We'll do this through the local press and through social media. However, before that we ask you to contribute your ideas – your pictures of something memorable for you about the Tavistock area. Please send these to us **as soon as possible** so that on June 2nd we have something to show. And these pictures can be your own, from family members (great project for the children) or, indeed, anyone you know.

A Personal Map of Tavistock *Continued*

We'll close the collection of pictures from the general public on **September 30th 2021**.

Where?

In an ideal world (without social distancing or masks) we would arrange an exhibition in Tavistock for everyone to come and look at and talk about; we hope that later this year we will be able to do this (the venue is still to be set) but we'll be making use of our own Tavy District u3a webpage and we'll be approaching local social media outlets asking them to include our pictures.

Watch this space (and www.tavydistrictu3a.org.uk)!!

How?

Send us your pictures.

Why?

Because we want to contribute to our local community by creating something which will (we hope) reveal how people who live here actually view their living space. And because we want our local community to know what u3a is.

And why not?

Angela Pitt

Ageism Webinars

Push Back Ageism Webinars

As part of u3as work on Pushing Back Ageism we have partnered with researchers from the EuroAgeism consortium. They are researching topics on ageism as it relates to the media, health and technology. The researchers have asked for input, guidance and feedback from u3a members as part of this series of research projects on ageism. Your help and support with this important work. Will be appreciated.

The dates for the events are below. Book your place now. You have to register individually for each event, and you will receive a link 2 days before the event.

26th April Ageism in the Media

12th May Ageism and Technology

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

Discussion Group 2

Once upon a time, before any of us had thought about wearing face masks in public and when people like me sat in coffee shops listening to other people's conversations, one of the Tavy District's u3a Discussion Groups (there are three) met in the living room of one of its members, and we sat on comfy sofas, sipped hot drinks and thought about how we could understand the world. Then a crisis struck the planet and we reeled in shock, horrified and unable to meet up until we strengthened our resolve, got to grips with Zoom and now six of us meet up online once a month to continue our quest.

Since we re-started, we have tackled a range of topics including:

- ❖ the introduction of both ID cards (general agreement that these could be useful), and Covid passports (some scepticism about how the effective domestic use of these might be achieved)
- ❖ migration (there were calls of 'What did the Romans ever do for us?', thank you, Monty Python); did you know that in the year ending March 2020, 715,000 people moved to the UK and 403,000 left our islands, and amongst the former, 257,000 came here to study*?
- ❖ slavery, both historic - where there is a need for more transparency, particularly in the teaching of history in schools - and modern, which includes children caught up in drug trafficking across county lines, as well as the opaqueness of supply chains
- ❖ happiness (you'll be pleased to hear none of us were against it) – and the influence of the community and social support on an individual's level of happiness and expectations of this

More recently, we asked ourselves what law each of us would like to see introduced. We haven't so far sullied our minds overmuch with the practicalities of introducing these but suggestions include:

- ❖ Making the speed limit 50mph which would reduce carbon emissions by 25%
- ❖ Banning internet pornography, in particular because of the access that those under 18 have to it and the effect that has on their view of the world
- ❖ Decriminalising drugs (Portugal did this in 2001 with noticeable reduction in overdoses, drug-related crime and HIV infection)
- ❖ Abolishing university fees to avoid later debt (also caused by the accommodation costs and the level of interest charged by student loan company)
- ❖ Requiring all MPs making statements in the House of Commons apparently based on statistics to provide the writers of Hansard with the source of their stats within five working days; offenders against this rule would have their statements ignominiously struck out of the record. Serial offenders would face harsher punishment although we didn't stipulate (there was mention of the stocks).

Continued on next page

Discussion Group 2 *Continued*

- ❖ Creating constitutional reform with regard to local and centralised government, hereditary as opposed to elected peers, reducing the voting age to 16, proportional representation. This proved a broad topic (!) and even we could not deal with it in the few minutes allowed for discussion so we'll be continuing with this next time.

Our discussions include both statistical and anecdotal evidence, all of us spend some time thinking and reading about the topic beforehand, and because of that, we are probably well prepared for when we rule the world. Watch this space!

Angela Pitt

* Source: Office of National Statistics <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

Harmony Choir

Hello everyone. The words of a famous song by Vera Lynn comes to mind!

It has been such a dreadful year for most local music groups and quite unbelievable that we still can't sing together as a choir. I have been working hard arranging quite a few really interesting songs for that memorable starting date.

We are still a fairly new choir, but by the beginning of last year, before lockdown, the confidence had increased greatly and I was thrilled with the three and four part harmony. We had already performed to a high standard, in several concerts. There are many different levels of singing experience when people join, but newcomers are warmly welcomed and soon feel part of Harmony.

Once we have the green light and can start again, we shall be ready to go.

Those of you who are already members will know that the rehearsals are on a weekly basis - Wednesday morning - each week. I shall be thrilled to welcome new members who would like to "dip their toes in the water". We work very hard, but we have such fun.

And finally, I must tell you that we are lucky enough to have the most fantastic pianist, namely Mary Mazur Park.

So let's hope it won't be too long before we can meet. Until then, take care,

Chrissie Wade

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

Measuring the Weather

If you think economics is confusing, try meteorology.

How far is it, you ask me, to walk from the Peter Tavy Inn to the Elephant's Nest at Horndon? If I told you it was four and a half korlings, you would mutter under your breath and ask someone else. No-one knows what a 'korling' is.

If we are measuring something, then it has to be in units that we all understand. The metric/Imperial conflict is still going on. Not everyone knows what a forecast 50mm of rain actually means, so the presenter may convert it and suddenly you are aware that 2 inches of rain is quite a lot so you'd better clear that gutter. Officially the amount is always in millimetres, but even the Met Office standard rain-gauge has to have a precise 5 inch rim which must be exactly 12 inches above the ground.

As you walk through the moorland sheep on your way to the 'Elephant', you may like to know that in the early 1800s the manufacture of coarse woollen goods was big business in Devon, mostly exported by way of the East India Company, and to Italy, Spain, Germany and other European countries. And 'several towns on the coast,' it continues in my copy of Pigot's *Counties of England*, 'are materially benefited by trade with Newfoundland.'

Back to work. The temperature situation is getting better; most of us now can feel what tomorrow will be like at 15°C, but even then – because of my age - I will always think of that as 59F. But why do they call these things 'degrees Celsius'? What, you might ask, happened to Centigrade, which was surely a sensible name, meaning 100 units?

For reasons which are not too clear the meteorological fraternity decided to

honour Anders Celsius, an 18th century Swedish astronomer, who came up with the brilliant idea of dividing the temperature between the freezing and boiling points of water into 100 units. But he had 100 as freezing and zero for boiling. I'm not the only one to be puzzled. This was, as it says in one of my weather books, 'a curious reversal of the usual instinctive principle of giving the higher figures to the warmer temperatures.'

Gabriel Fahrenheit aimed at doing away with negative temperatures. So he used the coldest he could achieve in his laboratory as zero, then between that and blood heat divided his scale into 96 parts. (This was mathematically sound, as you can divide by 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8.) But that meant the freezing and boiling points of water became two of the oddest values in meteorology: 32 and 212.

Your barometer in the hall (if you still have one) probably measures pressure in inches. Give yourself a bonus mark if it's in millibars. Early barometers were a simple column of mercury over a small bowl of the same stuff; air pressure on the bowl meant the column was always around 28-31 inches high, so pressure was measured in lengths for centuries: millimetres or inches. But the meteorologists again interfered. The unit of pressure, they said, is the bar, but that was too small so they adopted the millibar (1000 bars). That lasted a while but then science decided to have an international system of units so the new unit of pressure is the Newton per square metre, otherwise the pascal. But again this was too small for meteorologists, so it became the Hectopascal (100 Pascals) and lo! this is the same as a millibar.

You want more confusion? Try wind speed - officially measured in knots, and one knot is one nautical mile per hour. There is a more than a trace of metric here; a nautical mile was originally the same as one minute

Measuring the Weather Continued

of latitude, but this is variable depending on how far you are from the equator, so it was firstly defined as 6080 feet but is now 1852 metres exactly. People-friendly forecasts quote wind speeds in miles per hour, and those in coastal areas (and David on Spotlight) even use Beaufort force. Authors of learned articles don't like any taint of Imperialism so use metres per second.

To steady your mind, here's another quote from Pigot's Devonshire. 'Peculiar to the dairies of Devon is that delicious and rich lacreous production, 'clotted' or 'clouted' cream; the consistence of this article is in proportion to the richness of the farmland.' That was 1840 again. Some things never change.

The Tavy District Weatherman

Editor's note: No prizes for guessing who he/she is!

Opera Group

The benefits of being part of a national organisation became apparent recently when the newly appointed subject member for Opera Appreciation u3a, Colin Davison, got in touch.

Colin now enthusiastically produces a monthly circulated newsletter which gives helpful tips ref style on organising a group, updates of upcoming performances, critical reviews on productions (DVD or otherwise), notification of YouTube and streaming programmes, etc - and derived from member input around the country...

All extremely helpful - both for lockdown and hopefully life thereafter. (Looking forward to learning how the Romsey u3a group will manage with a summer season devoted to Wagner....!)

Margaret Garton

Just Dropping By

Some of you who know me well will know of my passion for local ice cream - especially after a walk (or it has been known even during a walk!).

After a very enjoyable walk recently on the moors, I decided I'd nip up to Pork Hill and treat myself to one such delicacy (me and the van man are on first name terms by the way). Concentrating hard on licking the cream on top, I suddenly saw a motorised para glider descending from the sky onto the grass in front of the cars. He packed up his parachute, left it neatly folded beside the motor, walked over and joined the queue for the ice cream van.

After sitting on the grass to eat his ice cream, he then calmly got up, set his parachute and motor ready for take off, and disappeared off up into the sky again. How cool was that! I will never feel guilty about sneaking up to Pork Hill for an ice cream again.

Shirley Smith.





Old Master with Fruit by **Rod Taylor**

Frank Mitchell

The death last year of former Scotland Yard detective Leonard "Nipper" Read revived memories of an extraordinary series of events more than 50 years ago involving the notorious gangsters Ronnie and Reggie Kray and Frank Mitchell, the man dubbed the Mad Axeman by the Press - events which touched the lives of some in the Tavistock area.

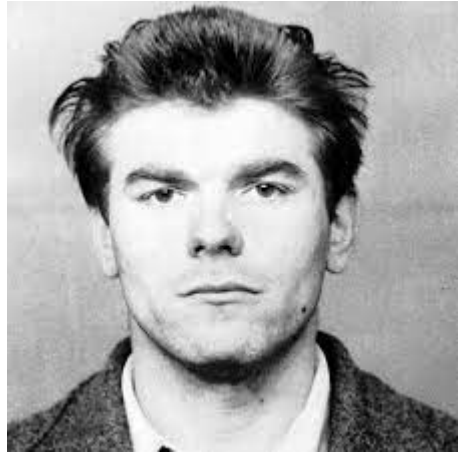
The then Detective Superintendent Read had spent years patiently tracking the Kray twins whose gang had terrorised London's East End before finally bringing them to trial on murder charges in 1969.

But it was Ronnie and Reggie's connection with Mitchell, and their involvement in his mysterious escape from Dartmoor Prison in 1965, which caught the imagination of the public at the time and, along with the escape of Soviet spy George Blake from Wormwood Scrubs in 1966, led to the setting up of the Mountbatten Inquiry into prison security. It was this report that provided much evidence of Mitchell's amazing time inside, and outside, Dartmoor Prison and his illicit visits to local pubs and even a taxi ride to Tavistock.

Mitchell was born of humble origins in London's East End in 1929 and was said to be of sub normal intellect. He had spells in Borstal and prison during the fifties and finally, armed with the axe which made him a household name, he attacked and injured a couple whose car he was trying to steal.

He finally ended up in 1962 in Dartmoor Prison serving a life sentence for his crimes. Mitchell was a man of great strength and was proud of his muscle-bound body. He was once said to have shown off his power by lifting the front end of a car while two prison officers were sitting on it.

In his report to the Mountbatten Inquiry Robert Mark, who was then Chief Constable of Leicester, said there was some foundation for the claims that Mitchell was the prison boss at Dartmoor, terrorising prisoners and officers alike.



Mitchell's reputation led to him being considered a security risk and he was subject to close supervision and yet within four years he had made such a good impression that he was allowed outside the jail, working with the honour party.

Mitchell took advantage of the situation and would slip away from the party to visit the lonely Elephant's Nest public house at Horndon near Mary Tavy and the Peter Tavy Inn.

Amazingly, just a month before his escape, Mitchell phoned up from one of the pubs for a taxi to take him into Tavistock where he bought a budgerigar which he took back to the prison.

This extraordinary series of events came to an end when Mitchell decided to leave the honour party for good. He made his bid for freedom on December 12th, 1965, a typical wet and misty Dartmoor day.

The weather was so bad the prisoners stayed in a hut after lunchtime but at about 3.30pm Mitchell asked if he could go off and feed some ponies about half a mile away. He never returned and when the minibus arrived an hour later to pick up the prisoners the alarm was raised.

Frank Mitchell Continued

Checkpoints were set up but the police soon concluded that Mitchell had got clean away.

In his official biography of the Kray twins, "Profession of Violence", John Pearson says that Ronnie and Reggie decided to get Mitchell out of Dartmoor. He was picked up by two men near Princetown and by the time the police were checking the road from Dartmoor he was eating steak in an East London flat.

There was not to be a fairy tale ending for Mitchell, however, and his fate was revealed when his killer, the ruthless thief Freddie Foreman, confessed in a television documentary "The Krays - Unfinished Business" in 1996 that he and another man had shot him in the back of a van after the erratic Mitchell became too hot to handle.



John Powell

Have You Heard One Yet?

Up on Whitchurch Down, on the morning of Newsletter deadline day, I heard my first one of the year. What did I hear? A cuckoo, of course. Do you remember the rhyme:

The cuckoo comes in April
And sings her song in May
In the middle of June
She changes her tune
And in July she flies away.

It is, of course, the male who sings "cuckoo" while the female sings a bubbling song. But nevertheless it was almost May, the sun was shining and the cuckoo was singing.

There are many songs and poems about cuckoos. Perhaps the oldest is the medieval "Summer is icumen in, Loudly sing cuckoo" while in 1912 Frederick Delius wrote On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring, which is a tone poem based on an old Norwegian folk song called 'In Ola Valley'.

There are many traditions too about what to do when you hear your first cuckoo of the year. One says that when you hear the first cuckoo you should turn any money in your pocket. But who carries cash any more?

John Noblet

Cyber Security

Following on from the presentation on scamming etc in the Zoom presentation a few weeks ago, here are the links and information that were promised. If nothing else, you are urged to revisit your passwords and make them more secure!

The National Cyber Security Centre: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/>

Great advice on all aspects of cyber security from the NCSC for businesses and individuals

Take Five to Stop Fraud: <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/>

Advice on financial and banking fraud

Cyber Aware: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberaware/home>

Top tips on passwords, turning on 2FA, back-ups and the importance of updating your devices

Another useful tool discussed is to input your email address into the 'Have I Been Pwned' website and the site will advise if your address has been involved in a data breach: <https://haveibeenpwned.com/>

- Very useful to check this if you are receiving a lot of spam email in your account. If you find that your account has been compromised, change your password immediately.

Reporting fraud and Cyber Crime to Action Fraud:

Telephone number 0300 1232040: www.actionfraud.police.uk

Suspicious emails – forward to the National Cyber Security Centre

(NCSC): report@phishing.gov.uk Forward suspicious texts (SMS) to OFCOM: 7726

If you would like advice on securing your router, the City of London Police have provided a short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfRzLspjJfY>

Laura Cowie

Cyber Protect Officer Devon and Cornwall Police

And here is what one of our own members has to say:

Thanks very much for the extra Zoom meeting recently with the Devon Constabulary about on-line scamming and fraud.

A few days later I received a very convincing text supposedly from my bank about a possible fraudulent payment from my account. Alarm bells rang so I took my time and didn't follow the instructions in the message to click on the link.

I reported it instead and a 'Mr C Jones' will not be getting £240 from me!

Pam Morris

Genealogy

Having followed the u3a keeping in touch page on Facebook, I was intrigued by a post from Toni Neobard who is the chair of Hawkwell Village u3a. She was offering to host an advanced genealogy course via Zoom over four afternoons. I wasn't too sure after seeing the word "advanced" in the title but I contacted her and was fortunate enough to be one of a hundred people from all over the country who joined in. There were a number from the South West but I think I was the only one from the Tavistock area. So, on Tuesday afternoons I settled down with my coffee and notebook to enjoy what turned out to be fascinating sessions on genealogy.

Week one was all about how to trace family history starting with information you may already have. She showed us the variety of records available on line and how to make the most of each census. There is census information at ten-year intervals from 1841 to 1911 and also the 1939 register so you can follow a family over many years. She explained not only how to actually find information but also just how important it is to record what you do as you go along. Week two was all about practical case studies and breaking down the brick walls that we all get when looking for ancestors. It was clear she was very experienced in this field and has written books on genealogy. She used information from her own family and others to illustrate the difficulties you can come up against and the pitfalls of jumping to the wrong conclusions without sufficient evidence.

The third week was all about dating old family photographs. Throughout the afternoon she showed a series of photographs and ran quick polls where we had to select the decade we thought each was from. To begin with we were largely guessing and getting most wrong. As she pointed out clues to look for in clothing, hairstyles and the way a person or family may have posed we were able to refine our guesses. She explained that if the photograph has the name of a photographer or studio on the back it can often help narrow down the date as you may find adverts in old newspapers or trade directories. By the end we were largely successful and it was fascinating to learn just how much one photograph can reveal.

The last week was all about DNA. The majority had already taken DNA tests with the Ancestry one being by far the most popular. She explained what the tests reveal in layman's language and how to sort through the many cousins suggested. DNA is a complicated area but she showed us some practical ways to reduce the number of suggested matches to a more manageable number and how to decide which people to contact. It was clear from all the questions and feedback at the end of each session that people were enthused by her. Even the most experienced were saying how much they had learned and we all came away with many ideas to follow up on in our own family history research. I was very glad I wasn't put off by the word "advanced" in the title or I would have missed a wonderful series of talks.

Pam Morris

The deadline for the next

Newsletter is 20th June

Please send to

johnnoble@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

**learn,
laugh,
live**

u3a

The Art of Letter Writing 2

In a previous Newsletter, I brought to your notice some extracts from letters written by Isambard Kingdom Brunel under the heading of "The Art of Letter Writing". These had been taken from a biography of the great engineer that I had been reading during lockdown.

When lockdown eased, and we were allowed to go out and about, I was in Princetown and came across extracts from letters written by American prisoners of war captured in the sometimes forgotten War of 1812 and who were being held in Dartmoor prison.

The weather up there may not have changed much, but hopefully the conditions have.

Here are a couple written by Perez Drinkwater. He was lieutenant of the privateer schooner "Lucy" when he was captured by the British Navy brig "Billerikin" in the last days of 1813. He was landed in Plymouth Sound with the rest of his crew and wrote to his brother Elbridge Drinkwater.

Dartmore, Saturday Morning, May 20th, 1814

Dr. Brother -

... We arrived into Plymouth on the 20th of January was put on board the [prison-ship] Brave on the 24th and was landed from her on the 31 and marched to this place in a snow storm. This Prison is situated on one of the highest places in England and it either snows or rains the whole year round and is cold enough to wear a great coat the whole time there is 10,000 of us here now but the French are about going home. . .

This is the first time that I was ever deprived of my Liberty and when I sit and think of it it almost deprives me of my senses for we have nothing else to do but sit and reflect on our pleasant situation which is bad enough God knows for we have but 1 lb and a half of black bread and about 3 ounces of beef and a little beef tea to drink and all that makes us one meal a day the rest of the time we have to fast which is hard times for the days are very long here now I want to get out of here before the war is over so that I can have the pleasure of killing one Englishman and drinking his blood which I think I could do with a good will for I think them the worst of all the human race for there is no crime but what they are guilty of. . . .

... yesterday they called up 500 French men to go away there was one that had been in prison nine years and had worn his blanket out so that he had but half of it to give those rebels and on that account they sent him back and put him on the bottom of the books for exchange, the man took it so hard that he cut his throat and was found dead between the prison doors, and a thousand other such deeds they have been guilty of since we have been confined here in this cursed place and a mongst these rebels for I can call them nothing better and I shall never dye happy till I have had the pleasure of killing one of them which I am determined to do if an opportunity ever offers to me to do it. . . .

... we have plenty of creepers [insects such as bedbugs and lice] here to turn us out in the morning, them and the Englishmen together don't let us have much peace day nor night for they are both enemies to us and likewise to peace and the more they can torment the human race the better they are pleased. . . .

I hope that you will write to me every opportunity that afforded you to do for it would be a happy thing for me to hear from you I have wrote several letters to you before and shall still continue to write every opportunity, you must tell Sally to bare her misfortunes with as much fortitude as she can till my return I must conclude with wishing you all well. So God bless you all and be with you for I cannot.

From your sincere friend & Brother.

Perez

The Art of Letter Writing 2 Continued

And another that he wrote to his wife:

ROYAL PRISON, Dartmore Oct. 12th 1814

Dear Sally

It is with regret that I have to inform you of my unhappy situation that is, confined heir in a loathsom prison where I have wourn out almost 9 months of my Days; and god knows how long it will be before I shall get my Liberty again. . . . I cheer my drooping spirits by thinking of the happy Day when we shall have the pleasure of seeing you and my friends. . .

This same place is one of the most retched in this habbited world. . . neither wind nor water tight, it is situated on the top of a high hill and is so high that it either rains, hails or snows almost the year round for further partikulars of my preasant unhappy situation, of my strong house, and my creeping friends which are without number. . . .

. . . my best wishes are that when these few lines come to you they will find you, the little Girl [his daughter] my parents Brothers sisters all in good helth I have wrote you a number of letters since my inprisenment here and I shall still trouble you with them every oppertunity that affords me till I have the pleasure of receiving one from you which I hope will be soon. . .

I am compeled to smugle this out of prison for they will not allow us to write to our friends if they can help it. . . . So I must conclude with telling you that I am not alone for there is almost 5,000 of us heir, and creepers a 1000 to one. . .

Give my Brothers my advice that is to beware of coming to this retched place for no tongue can tell what the sufferings are heir till they have a trial of it. So I must conclude with wishing you all well so God bless you all. This is from your even [ever] derr and beloved Husband.

Perez Drinkwater

Postscript: Perez Drinkwater did write several more letters. He was released in 1815 and returned home to lead a full and active life and died an old man.

John Noblet

Will the road out of Covid take us to
de-maskus ?

Margaret Garton

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



Seen outside an Age UK shop by
John Noblet

Utility Clothing During World War 2

The British government introduced clothes rationing in 1941, the year after food ration books had been issued. The aim was to reduce production and consumption of civilian clothes, including footwear, and to ensure a more equal distribution of clothing.

The scheme worked by allocating each type of clothing item a “points” value depending on how much material and labour went into its manufacture. When buying new clothes, the shopper had to hand over coupons with a points value, as well as money.



Purchase tax was introduced in October 1941 and items were taxed at different rates. Those items that were considered to be necessities were designated as tax-free. The higher taxation rate reduced the production of expensive clothing. The Directorate of Civilian Clothing introduced “Utility” cloths. Raw materials were supplied on a quota system, and manufacturers who agreed to increase production of utility cloth would receive a higher quota.

In 1942, the first Utility clothes went on sale in Britain. They came in a range of garments, styles and quality controlled fabrics. Utility clothing was stamped or labelled with a “CC41” mark, commonly referred to as the “two cheeses” mark :



Until the scheme was introduced, the less well-off had to use the same number of coupons for cheaper garments that might wear out in half the time. Now, the public had a guarantee of quality and value for their money and coupons. It was also popular because Utility clothing was tax-free.



Utility clothing was produced for men, women and children. It covered a range of dresses, coats, jackets, trousers, shirts, socks, underwear, gloves and shoes. Restrictions were introduced to save labour, materials and manufacturing costs. Designs featured simple lines and minimal trimmings. For instance, zip fasteners and elastic waistbands were banned under the austerity regulations. The number of pleats was reduced to save cloth. Men’s double-breasted suits were replaced by single-breasted and there was a ban on trouser turn-ups. Lapels had to be within a certain size and pockets were limited.

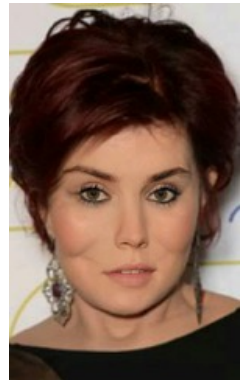
The design of Utility shoes was chunky and solid, with wedges or low heels. Open toed shoes were banned as they were considered impractical and unsafe. Within the Utility footwear there were sometimes bands for quality difference. Ladies’ shoes would feature the Utility mark and either W1, W2 or W3, to indicate a different and increasing price range.

Garments were plain but still looked fashionable, and Utility clothing continued to be made in Britain until 1952.

Chris Rose

Who are These Mixed Up People?

A quiz from Tony Rose



1. Serena Williams
2. Meghan Markle
3. Arnold Schwarzenegger
4. Jodie Whittaker
5. Boris Johnson
6. Donald Trump
7. Nicola Sturgeon
8. Margot Robbie
9. Peter Dinklage
10. Sean Bean
11. Sharon Osbourne
12. Daisy Ridley
13. Greg Rutherford
14. Jessica Ennis-Hill
15. Barack Obama
16. Angelina Jolie-Pitt

COP 26

COP26 is the 26th **C**onference **O**f the **P**arties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be hosted by the UK in partnership with Italy, and is planned to take place in Glasgow from 1-12 November. A conference like this has been held every year from Kyoto 1997 to Madrid 2019. The Kyoto Protocol committed 192 countries 'to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets.'

Glasgow 2021 will face very difficult problems, and it will be interesting to see how they are managed. The purpose of the Conference is to bring the 190-odd participant nations and states ('the Parties') together 'to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.'

The Paris Agreement (2015) was a **legal-ly binding international treaty on climate change**. It was adopted by 196 Parties at COP21 in Paris in December 2015. Its goal was 'to **limit global warming** to well below 2, **preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius**, compared to pre-industrial levels.'

In spite of Kyoto, Paris, over 20 other annual Conferences and dozens of resolutions since 1997, greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have increased steadily.

Nearly half the global carbon dioxide emissions come from coal. Many African and Asian nations have large areas still without electricity; coal-fired power stations are currently being built there to provide this essential element in a modern economy. Our atmosphere is telling us this is the worst way to generate electricity, but it also produces easy, cheap, quick and reliable power.

Economies in the 21st century are run on electricity – imagine what life would be like without it. Even your gas central

heating would be useless. So is it reasonable, do you think, to ask the populations of those power-hungry countries to wait another twenty or thirty years until sufficient solar, wind or nuclear facilities are available? This is one of the more serious problems that will face the November conference.

There are others. Five of the biggest greenhouse gas-emitting countries produce around 60% of the world total, and about half of that comes from China. President Xi Jinping has so far promised only to reach *peak* emissions by 2030 and to be carbon neutral by 2060. Therefore any attack on the UK's very small (1%) proportion of global emissions between now and 2030 looks like being totally nullified by China's increase.

The UK's current plan aims for 'at least a 68% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) by the end of the decade (i.e. 2030), and to net zero by 2050.' But China's total – by the President's own admission – will continue to climb for another nine years.

Bear in mind that 'carbon neutral' and 'net zero carbon' both mean the same thing. Greenhouse gases can still be emitted, but the implication is that a balance is being achieved by, for instance, planting millions of trees.

The conclusion seems to be that greenhouse gas totals will only be reduced if the four or five major polluters sign up to an *immediate* and *drastic* reduction of their emissions at this Conference. Without that agreement and clear evidence that action has followed, moves by the rest of the world to reduce emissions look like being a pointless drain on their resources.

Please will someone tell me I'm wrong? –

Ivor Williams

Theatre News

As we emerge from lockdown various entertainment venues are gradually opening up, socially distanced, but available.

The Theatre booking team have considered this very carefully and have decided that it is too soon to start group bookings again at the moment. If you want to go to the Theatre you should book your own tickets for the time being.

Here is some information about the venues we regularly go to – just put in the name of the Theatre - What's On in Google and all the details will come up.

The Theatre Royal Plymouth is starting shows from the end of May and has details until 2023. These are socially distanced and the most urgent with limited availability are Strictly Ballroom, Grease and 400: A Historical Comedy.

Hall for Cornwall Truro. The new auditorium is called Cornwall Playhouse and has the premiere of Fisherman's Friends the Musical in October.

Comical Entertainment has a programme starting on 1 July with shows at Launceston Town Hall and The Red House Theatre Plymouth.

Walking

Planned walks for May and June are:

Tuesday 11th May

Meet on roadside at Zoar, Horndon (near old chapel) SX522802 to walk to Wheal Jewell, Hill Bridge and along the leat. 4-5 miles.

Diana

Tuesday 18th May

Meet on roadside near old Moorland Garden Hotel on Roborough Down SX509654 to walk to Coombe, Buckland Abbey and Milton Combe. 5½ miles

John

Thursday 27th May

Meet on roadside outside Warren House Inn SX674809 to see the fields of bluebells. About 5 miles with some ascent.

Chris and Jennie

Tuesday 15th June

Meet Lydford car park SX510847 to walk the Saxon walls and Fernworthy Down. 5 miles

John

Thursday 24th June

Meet on roadside near Oakley Cottage on Plaster Down SX524730 for a circular walk around Pew Tor. About 4 miles.

Tony

All walks start at 10.00am and more details, including a map of the approximate start point and leader's contact details are on the Walkers Group pages of the website.

Remember, ALL WALKS have to be booked in advance with the leader by text or phone.
PS Contact details are on the website, but don't forget the password has just been changed.

And Finally



When Lockdown eased in mid April, the Tavy District u3a Petanque group were ready to go.

The threatened rain did not materialise and even the sun came out in time.

Here you see the socially distanced "group of six". Notice that even the boules were socially distanced!

Photo by John Noblet

**We all know
mirrors don't lie...**

**I'm just grateful
that they don't
laugh.**

**We are not
aging, we are
ripening to
perfection.**

