

Tavy District u3a

THE NEWSLETTER

Autumn Refections at
Burrator

Photo: John Noblet

No 118

November 2022

u3a

Who's Who in Tavy District u3a

Chair	Paul Ward
Secretary	Randall Williams
Treasurer	Angela Pitt
Membership	Tony Rose
Groups Liaison	Sonja Armstrong
Newsletter Distribution	Caroline Lorenzi
Speaker Secretary	Jane Ward
Two Moors Liaison	Tony Rose
Catering	Isobel Davies
Equipment	Graham Foster

Events Committee
Norma Woodcock
Chris Webb
Janet Hunt
Shirley Smith

Remember:

Contact details of all
Group Leaders and
Committee members
can be found in the
password protected
area of the website

Webmaster: Jan Draper
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Newsletter Editor: John Noblet

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th December 2022

Send contributions to johnnoblet@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

The death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the 2nd has brought an end to an era, the second Elizabethan era. Like many members of Tavy District u3a, I had never known another monarch. Princess Elizabeth acceded to the throne in the year before I was born, and Queen Elizabeth was crowned in the month after I first saw the light of day. Seventy years later we were celebrating the platinum jubilee, many of us probably expecting that our queen would follow her mother and live to send herself a 100th birthday telegram.



To the best of my knowledge Queen Elizabeth was the only queen who did not need to be named. Queen Elizabeth was “The Queen” and everyone, at home and abroad, knew who was being referred to.

Princess Elizabeth, on her accession, vowed that whether her life be long or short she would dedicate it to service. Queen Elizabeth more than honoured that vow. Throughout her long reign The Queen was a model of quiet dignity, always present, providing stability and balance in both good and troubled times. Old age did not prevent the Queen from carrying out most of her royal duties even though increasing frailty made life harder for her. Right to the end the Queen was there, serving the country as she had promised. Just a few days before she died, the Queen received Liz Truss at Balmoral and appointed her as the new Prime Minister. Her Majesty has set us all an example. Getting older does not in itself prevent us from making a valuable contribution to society and the community.

The Queen’s death was announced during the afternoon of Thursday the 8th of September. Jane and I were due to go on holiday to Italy, via London, the following morning. This created some difficulties for me in my capacity as Town Mayor. Should we cancel our holiday? In the end, and after discussion with the Town Clerk and the Deputy Mayor, we decided to go. I just had time to write a text for the Council website and a short article for the local newspaper. The event we had planned to attend in London on the Saturday was cancelled following the Queen’s death, so we had some time on our hands. We decided to walk to Buckingham Palace to pay our respects. The Mall was thronged with people who had made the same decision and it took a very long time to walk to the Palace. The mood of the crowd was quiet and respectful but not morbid. Everyone was very patient as we all shuffled slowly along. Although we were unable to get as far as the famous railings, we were near enough to be able to see some of the coming and goings and caught a brief glimpse of the now Princess of Wales and Queen Consort as they were whisked from the Palace grounds in a limousine.

It is said that there are two things in life that are certain, and they are death and taxes. But there is a third, and that is change. Everything changes and although it may be reassuring to cling on to the old and familiar, we must embrace change because it is change that takes us forwards, leading to new experiences and adventures.

God save the King!

Paul Ward

Speaker Programme - Part 6

Below are the details of the next three monthly meetings. I shall also be sending out an email, with hard copies to those not on email, shortly after this newsletter with further details of the arrangements for the meeting on **Wednesday 7th December.**

As always, many thanks to those members who have put forward suggestions for possible speakers since the last newsletter. Next year's programme is now coming together well and I am hoping to circulate the full programme for 2023 in the next newsletter. However, please do continue to send me any suggestions you may have for future speakers – toThe preparation of the 2024 programme starts at the same time as 2023!

Jane Ward

Wednesday 2nd November 2022 - 2pm
Tavistock Town Hall and via Zoom

Francis Bedford, Devon and the Art of Photography 1860s-1870s

Speaker: Tom Greeves MA PhD

Francis Bedford (1815-1894) is considered to have been one of the finest landscape photographers of the Victorian period. Fortunately, he photographed widely in Devon in the 1860s and 1870s, especially in North Devon, Exeter, Torbay and the Dartmoor region.

Tom, who describes himself as a “cultural environmentalist” and is a former Tavistock resident, has been collecting examples of Francis Bedford's work for some thirty years and will present what he considers to be some of his best and most beautifully composed images.

Wednesday 7th December 2022 - 2pm CHRISTMAS MEETING
Tavistock Town Hall

Please note that this meeting will not be broadcast via Zoom

The Corkscrew Murder

A murder mystery quiz presented by
Sue Hooper-Laurie – chair of Culm Valley u3a

“5 years ago David and Elizabeth Clarke bought Valley View Vineyard. 6 months ago David's dead body was found washed up on Exmouth beach, 2 weeks after being reported as a “missing person” by his wife. The autopsy found that he had suffered severe blunt force trauma to his head before ending up in the sea. To date no one has been charged with his murder. Since the death of her husband Elizabeth has struggled to keep the business going and now must consider selling the vineyard. But before she can do anything she is found dead in the vineyard's wine vault.”

Members will work in table groups on a number of clues with the aim of identifying both the murderer and the motive.

There will be prizes for the winning table(s) and festive refreshments.

Speaker Programme *Continued*

- ***More details will follow shortly; however please note that numbers will be limited and a waiting list will operate if the number of members wishing to attend exceeds the (generous) limit.***
- ***Please feel free to email Jane Ward – advance of receipt of those details to reserve a place. Those without email will be provided with a telephone number to ring instead.***
- ***In order to allow sufficient time for the final arrangements to be made, the DEADLINE FOR REPLYING IS TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2022***

Wednesday 4th January 2023 - 2pm
Tavistock Town Hall and via Zoom

Adventures Behind the Lens - Hot Rocks and High Places.

Speaker: Alex Leger

Alex grew up in Devon and, after a number of different employment and training encounters, he joined the BBC in 1973 as a very junior management consultant. In 1975 he joined the Blue Peter programme, when the presenters were John Noakes, Peter Purves and Lesley Judd.

In his talk, Alex will describe pivotal events in broadcasting and memorable encounters with an erupting volcano, gorillas in Uganda and a life-threatening storm at sea plus, amongst other things, probably the funniest moment in Blue Peter history.

Alex is the author of two books, the first of which is an account of life behind the camera during his 36 years on Blue Peter

Coffee Mornings

Jackie Garland and I have decided to try resurrecting the u3a monthly coffee mornings that took place before Covid struck.

These are entirely informal. You just turn up, pay for your drink and stay as long (or short) as you like.

The first will be held upstairs at Taylors at 10.30am on 17 November.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Elizabeth Rutledge



Theatre News

The November Meeting will be the last opportunity to book and pay for **Strictly Ballroom** which is on Thursday 2nd February, Tickets £32.

Others shows at the Theatre Royal available to book are:

The Mousetrap, Thursday 23rd March - Tickets £34, payment deadline December meeting.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, Thursday 20th April- Tickets £26, payment deadline December meeting.

The Magic Flute, Saturday 27th May, -Tickets £38, payment deadline February meeting.

Marigold Hotel opened recently in London to excellent reviews and has a stellar cast who, I am hoping, will still be with the tour when it reaches Plymouth.

Carole Thompson

Fisherman's Friends - A Proper Job!

Tavy District u3a's first post-pandemic theatre visit was to see Fisherman's Friends, the musical, at the Theatre Royal on Thursday 8th September.

My personal expectations were low, as I didn't think I was a fan of the sea shanty, but this lively musical had the whole audience and me, entranced. It is a well-known story about a group of Cornish fishermen from Port Isaac who come together to sing the traditional working songs they'd sung for generations and who eventually find themselves performing on the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury.

In the musical they are discovered by a 'fish out of water' music producer from London who gets them a record deal and finds love along the way. The rest, as they say, is history.

The acting was good, the only actress I recognised was Susan Penhaligon, (remember 'Bouquet of Barbed Wire'?). The music, however, was the star of the show, performed and accompanied by the highly talented ensemble cast, who really made a proper job of it.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon and I believe we all left the theatre feeling uplifted. I read that the Friends had sung for the Queen at her Diamond Jubilee. It was poignant to find out later that Her Majesty had passed away while we were watching the show.

Carole Thompson



Snail's Progress

It's 26 years since we bought our first motorhome, in Italy of all places. We took a coach tour to the Lignes to take delivery of our new motorhome and imported it into the UK. We were so nervous to drive it.

This was not our first experience of a motorhome as we had hired an RV in Canada's BC for 3 months. Travelling through the forests and mountains was wonderful; even with wildlife pinching our dinner and our first introduction to the joys of pit toilets! Probably the best holiday. We soon discovered that working as a team together we are explorers and not tourists so minor difficulties did not faze us.

Since then, all the usual (and some not so usual) EU countries have been visited. We love the Aires in France and Germany etc. giving the best free/low cost overnight parking and services in villages, special spots/riverbanks/coastal areas/mountains with too many to mention here.

Australia was easy for 3 months in a hired converted Ford van. Small but did the job from Sydney through Tasmania to the South coast. A 3-day train trip across the Nullarbor desert to the biggest gold mine in the world then Fremantle and cruise back via India, Africa, etc.

In contrast the West coast of USA was done in a less conventional way. A trip "on spec" to Phoenix. Why Arizona? Cars don't rust in the desert! "Autotrader" provided a cheap 4 ton Dodge RV. doing 9.3 MPG. With 30-year-old engineering, so plenty of things to go wrong. We were lucky and toured 3 months each for 3 years the west coast, entered Canada and Mexico, cruised Alaska, and finally

drove via Mississippi to Florida to sell the van.

Special interests in First Nation peoples, culture, art, civil war, gold prospecting, pioneers, wildlife, early architecture, history, river cultures, new cities, and magnificent lands, keep us going. After all that's the point, isn't it? Bike rides, impromptu parties, invites to local homes, and campfire chats with fellow campers across the world make for the best part of this Snail's Progress.

Technology change demands equipment updates. Now it's solar generation, computer use, off grid communication, satellite TV, streaming, combi boilers, gas consumption, even electric bikes and air-con. What ever happened to the simple life? It's easier now with just the usual new hurdle to overcome. But that's what keeps us young.

Of course, Brexit and Covid have dampened travel for us all. Fuel and port restrictions and the changing economy exacerbate the problems for the moment, but things seem to be getting easier. Our newer "camper" now does the job in the EU and UK.

Can you believe it? We have discovered that our own UK is much more beautiful than all the other places in the world! We are not alone within the u3a to enjoy motorhoming/caravanning and if you are interested in joining a new group then please contact us so that we can get together and share our experiences/information and discover new opportunities.

Laura and Roger Plumb

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Painting & Drawing Group



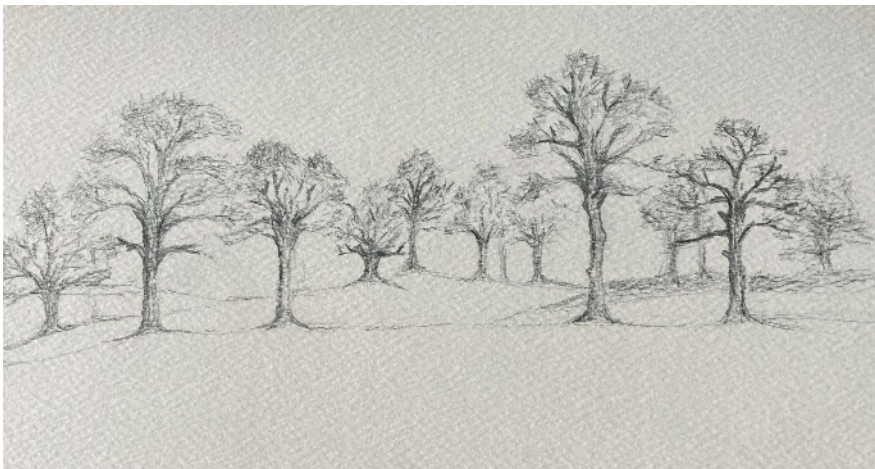
We formed a new art group, "Painting and Drawing", at the beginning of this year. We meet in Tavistock Library on 2nd and 4th Tuesday mornings between 10 am and 12 midday. We currently have a vacancy for one person.

We are a small enthusiastic, supportive group with a variety of experience. We use a variety of different media, choose a selection of different topics but the benefit is painting and drawing together. In addition to our regular group meetings we plan to periodically invite a local artist to demonstrate and to visit local exhibitions or events.

You don't have to be an experienced artist, we welcome beginners, improvers and those with vast experience. If you would like to come along please contact me.

A selection of some of our recent paintings are on this page and on the next page.

Jane Perona-Wright



Painting & Drawing Group Continued



More recent works from the group:



A damp squib...?

I met 'Weekenders' Janet, Susie and Ann in Yelverton for onward transmission to a vantage point near Shaugh Prior to view the Plymouth Firework Competition held annually in Plymouth Sound.

Thankfully, Janet's car was quite roomy as picnic bags containing red wine, tinned gin and tonics, raspberries, snacks etc took up a fair bit of space. Parking up as the dark fell, we started to enjoy our picnics but couldn't quite see the fireworks - blaming trees that seemed to be in the way.

So we returned to the Cadover road and parked up again alongside other hopeful watchers...

No, it wasn't the trees that were the problem. Disappointingly it was a very, very heavy low cloud base which entirely obliterated any view of the displays.

Did we eventually get to see the fireworks? Yes, sure, via YouTube on Janet's smartphone in the comfort of her car.....with the picnic bags....

Margaret Garton



Rocks N Ruins

In October the Rocks 'N' Ruins group stayed close to home. Tavistock was our location, looking at and reviewing the works of Edwin Lutyens. Included were Littlecourt at the top of Down Road and the Pimple on Whitchurch Down. This was followed by a talk and visit to the locations of town based toll houses and afterwards a visit to the museum.

The group elected two alternative start points, the energetic amongst us met at the top of Down Road, whilst the less energetic met 45 minutes later in Kings car park in Pixon Lane.

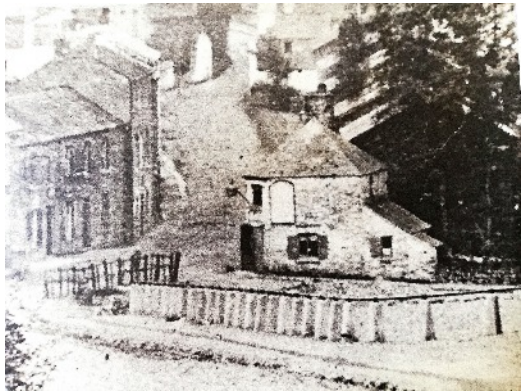
Chris Rose presented an illustrated brief biography of Sir Edwin Lutyens followed by an overview of Littlecourt. This house was one of the first in Down Road, built by the Duke of Bedford for his Land Agent. The rules that were applied for houses in Down Road was that plots should be of at least one acre. Chris went on to describe the history of the house, including the disastrous fire that beset it in the 1940's.

From Littlecourt we walked up to the Pimple, one of the most notable buildings in Tavistock, and Chris outlined its use to serve Littlecourt and subsequent houses as a reservoir capable of holding over 100,000 gallons of water. The presentation ended with a rare image of the inside of the reservoir taken in 2017 when it was empty.

The group then moved to Kings, where, having negotiated a broken down car that was stranded in the entrance to the car park, Tony Rose gave an overview of the history of Toll Roads and Toll Houses in Tavistock. During this the group were told a number of unexpected facts such as the journey time from Exeter to London in 1673 took 8 days and that horse drawn carriages on longer journeys needed to change horses at regular intervals (stages) and thus longer journeys were by Stage(d) coach.

After this the group moved on to the West Bridge end of Pixon Lane to view the West Bridge Toll House. Many of the group remembered the property being in a serious state of dilapidation before it was restored as you see it today.

We then moved on to the location of the Ford Street Toll House (now the forecourt of DRB car sales) and Tony outlined how this was one of the most important Toll Houses in the town due to the control of traffic out to New Bridge on the Tamar, also a side gate to cover the link to West Bridge (although at the time of building it there was little traffic on the northern side of the river as Plymouth Road had not been built). Unfortunately, no image of this Toll House was available on the day but this old photograph has since become available.



This image is mid 19th century but the lamp above the front door and the table of charges can be clearly seen. It is thought that the toll keeper in 1841 was John Woodley aged 35, but the heading of that page in the Census is damaged and cannot be read.

The group then walked down to Tavistock Museum where Chris was able to show the full Edwin Lutyens exhibition which will stay on display until the end of October 2022 when the museum closes for the season.

Rocks N Ruins *Continued*

The Toll Houses of Tavistock, which comprised the second part of the walk, will be the subject of a display in the museum when it opens in 2023.

If you have an interest in Local History and want to take it further, the Museum is always in need of new volunteers, whether in the form of stewards (and who doesn't enjoy a cup of tea with like-minded colleagues once a week?), or as collaborators or presenters.

Please contact

Tony Rose



The next meeting of the Rocks N Ruins group will be on Friday 11th November when they will visit Wheal Martyn Clay Museum together with the Geology group.

December will see a festive walk along the Calstock waterfront, the lower Danescombe valley and then Cotehele for tea.

Tavy District u3a Bridge Club

As the nights begin to draw in and colder temperatures beckon, many people's thoughts turn to Bridge, a sociable game that can be played in all weathers. The u3a bridge club has operated since our Tavy District organisation formed twenty years ago and is still going strong.

We meet every **Tuesday afternoon**, come rain or shine, in the **Red and Black Club**, Crowndale Road, and play from **2 till 5pm**.

We pay an annual subscription to cover the hire of the room and the purchase of playing cards, score sheets etc.

All bridge playing u3a members are welcome. You do not need a partner. (Just bring 50p for a cup of tea/coffee!) We follow the Acol bidding system and play Rubber Bridge. We encourage players of a wide range of aptitudes and see ourselves as somewhere where the inexperienced can develop their skills while playing with the more experienced.

Many of our members learnt with the club itself. **Beginners' lessons** for this season are planned for the new year, starting in January, and if you are interested please contact **Chris Webb** via the Tavy District website.

Theatre Visit - Coppelia

The Birmingham Royal Ballet company visited the Theatre Royal in Plymouth with a stunning performance of Coppelia in October.

What a pleasure to hear the familiar strains of Leo Delibes' opening overture filling the packed auditorium and to see the musicians of the Royal Ballet Sinfonia playing below in the orchestra pit. Not a television production, nor a screening at the Wharf, however enjoyable in recent years. This was a live performance at last!

When the curtain opened we were transported into the past. This was a country that we didn't quite recognise but which encapsulated all the childhood fairy tales that we had ever read. We were almost on Russian soil. Set in a leafy glade a village square was dominated by a quaint house with a balcony where the enigmatic Coppelia could sit in the sunshine.

To see professional ballet costumes on stage was astounding. The coordinated colours of the Slavonic style red dresses with green boots, green dresses slashed with red panels shimmered under the stage lights. The bright Cossack outfits matched the energy of the male corps de ballet as they leapt so powerfully and filled the stage with their expert moves in the Mazurka and Czardas. Later at the village festivities, the girls wore costumes of remarkably subtle shades, neither pink nor cream, neither yellow nor pink, neither green nor cream. I was intrigued by the beauty of the harmonious combination of the floating fabrics as the peasant girls performed their Dance of the Hours. The costume designer Peter Farmer deserves high praise for this production.

The story involves inventor Coppelius and his life-like models including a beautiful girl whom he displays to the villagers. In this way she attracts the attention and wins the heart of Franz, a local young

man. His girlfriend Swanilda is consumed with jealousy and with her friends sneak into the old man's workshop to discover the truth. They find all Coppelius' models and their discoveries make for a delightful second Act.

The clockwork characters of a Chinese drummer, two Samurai warriors, a Highland dancer and a Spanish lady perform their antics to the amusement of all the village girls. After chasing them out of his house, Doctor Coppelius tries to bring his favourite model, Coppelia, to life with the help of a book of magic and using the spirit of Franz, who has been given a sleeping draught.

The inventor is amazed at his success when Swanilda takes on the character of the doll Coppelia and jerkily assumes a human form, with great dexterity as a ballerina. But, naturally, Coppelius is broken hearted and then angry when he discovers he has been tricked.

The third Act was confusing until I later read the synopsis. Why had an Old Testament prophet with white flowing hair and robes appeared on the back of a flower decked hay cart bearing an enormous bell? He was in fact Old Father Time presiding over festivities to mark the presentation gift to the village church by the local Duke. Hence the need for a masque, a celebration of harvest, a call to prayer and jollification for the wedding of Swanilda and Franz.

So finally, but most important of all, choreography. I regret that I cannot name the exquisite movements but the members of our u3a Ballet Group can explain them to you later. Only with dancers who have studied for many years can a professional company take productions on tour. It must be a colossal venture.

Our cast in the afternoon was replaced by another entire set of dancers for the evening performance.

Theatre Visit - Coppelia Continued

Our principals were Beatrice Parma and Tzu Chao Chou whose vast range of expressive movements gave vitality to the performance and a sense of beauty in motion.

Sweetly melancholy music accompanied the dancer who represented Prayer with such grace and elegance. A lively dance was performed in perfect unison by the corps de ballet wielding sickles to

represent harvest work, although a white tutu in a cornfield might cause problems!

The principal dancers' pas de deux representing Peace (and Happiness) in the last Act was a fitting climax to a highly memorable performance.

We thank Carole for organising this theatre visit which gave us all such great pleasure.

Frances Stephens

Recorder Recital

On Tuesday 6th December at 11 am, Tavy District u3a Recorder Group is giving an informal recital in St. Eustachius' Church. This will be part of the Christmas Tree Festival.

There will be a broad range of music ranging from Renaissance to 20th century. You can either sit and listen to the recital or stroll round and enjoy the Christmas trees at the same time.

There is no charge but you will be expected to pay the entry fee for the Christmas Tree Festival.



Weekenders enjoying the Tavistock Food Festival

John Noblet wonders what the traffic warden would make of this?



Do You Believe in Fairies?

The Garden Visits' Group were enticed to follow the Fairy Trail adventure around The Garden House in the Buckland Monachorum garden for their September visit.

After a catch-up coffee on the terrace the ten of us were off on the hunt! In the wonderful woodland dappled shade we found a magical sight - a beautiful, willow fairy with glistening wings crafted by a team of craftsfolk from near Totnes, Fairy Trails UK. It was ethereal.



It just got better...we searched and then found this endearing dragon hidden amongst the rhododendron path. It was just so cheerfully cute with such a beautifully crafted emotional face and yes!...he was guarding a gi-normous egg.

After the drought an early Autumn was certainly evident.

We now look forward to next time, to seeing the Autumn acer colours and the fly agaric mushrooms...but first it was back to the restaurant for lunch.

Jennie Youngs

Photos by Jo Randall
and Pauline Noblet



Dartmouth Day Out

After heavy rain on Tuesday, the forecast for Wednesday 14th September was more promising - although still damp and overcast - when nearly fifty members boarded the C.J. Down coach opposite the Bedford Hotel, for departure at 09.00. The first stage of the journey was uneventful and we arrived at the Steamer Quay in Totnes about 10.15.

Whilst the pre-booked river cruise tickets were collected, our driver explained the flexible arrangements for those who had chosen to spend several hours in Totnes, before they proceeded to Dartmouth in the afternoon. The "cruisers", armed with their boarding passes, joined the queue for the boat, and were soon on board; if choosing an outside deck, they were taking in the surrounding scenery. It was not long before the first seal was spotted in the river.

The 'Cardiff Castle' duly cast off at 10.45, and after moving slowly away from the quay began its stately progress downstream. Following the mandatory safety announcement, the commentator swiftly demonstrated the depth of his

knowledge about the river itself, and the wildlife and places of interest to be seen. This was generally informative and witty, although some tall stories were also recounted.

We saw seals hauled out to rest on a pontoon; Sharpham House high up above the river; passed Bow Creek and heard about the famous (but now closed) Tuckenhay paper mill; viewed Stoke Gabriel above another inlet; then on down river past Dittisham and its moored yachts; Agatha Christie's summer residence, the Greenway Estate, including its boathouse; and much more, all before approaching Dartmouth itself.

After passing some Royal Navy basic seamanship training facilities, and the higher ferry, the magnificent buildings of the Britannia Royal Naval College came into view, high on the hillside above the town. As we approached the Town Quay, an enormous cruise liner – moored in the middle of the river – dominated the scene. Our river trip ended with a very smooth docking, in clear sight of Brunel's never-used railway station, now the restaurant 'Platform One', and all the historic buildings



The passengers, including our u3a members, disembarked onto the quayside and into the bustling crowds enjoying the sunshine. In our case we had almost four hours to spend in the town, before rejoining the coach at 16.00 to head back to Tavistock.

There will be individual memories of enjoyable lunches and/or cream teas, exploring the compact streets of the old town area, venturing to Bayards Cove, Royal Avenue Gardens, or Coronation Park, or shopping in the many local and national businesses.

David Rogers

Crownhill Fort Guided Tour

On an unexpectedly sunny morning on 13th October, a u3a group of around 20 gathered outside Crownhill Fort, Plymouth. Here we were met by three enthusiastic and informative Landmark Trust volunteers (the Landmark Trust bought the fort in 1987).



We were led across the bridge (originally a drawbridge) spanning the ditch which entirely surrounds the fort. The ditch is some 25 feet wide and 30 feet deep, with vertical sides. We gathered in the Guard Room just inside the main gate and received a history of the fort.

In 1859, France was the first country to launch a steam ironclad, having already built a navy to rival Britain's. After centuries of rivalry, the two countries were allies, and had just fought together (with the Turks) against the Russians in the Crimean War. But France's proximity and its growing naval power was a direct threat to Britain's security. Steam warships meant that an invasion fleet could cross the channel quickly before it could be intercepted.

In 1859, the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, set up a Royal Commission to review Britain's defences. The Commission considered the defence of the major naval ports to be paramount and allocated a total budget of £10,350,000 (around £1 billion today) for defence works. The largest budget was

allocated to Plymouth, with Portsmouth not far behind, followed by Chatham, Pembroke, Woolwich, Portland, Medway, Dover, Thames and Cork. The ports were to be defended from attack by sea but also from a land attack should troops be landed further up or down the coast.

In Plymouth, work was started in 1862/1863 and was completed by 1872. Coastal defences were strengthened and new batteries constructed, for example at Bovisand and Picklecombe.

To protect against a land attack, a line of eleven fortresses were built to the north of Plymouth, stretching from the River Tamar to the River Plym, supported by further works to the west in Cornwall and to the east at Staddon. Crownhill is the largest and best-preserved work of the northern forts.

From the Guard Room, we moved to the parade ground in the centre of the fort from where we could see the ramparts and the buildings built into them.

Heptagonal in shape, the fort was designed to be armed with 32 guns on the ramparts (some in Haxo casemates – gun emplacements with a bomb-proof roof) and 6 mortars in two batteries built into the west and north-west ramparts.



Crownhill Fort Guided Tour Continued

We visited part of the barracks which housed a small museum and then went up on the 'Terreplein' (the broad level fighting platform on the ramparts behind the parapet). Here, on the highest point in Plymouth, we admired the views and were shown one of the 32 pounder guns as well as a Moncrieff 'disappearing' gun.

From there, we entered one of the six tunnel entrances and walked downhill underground for 100 meters or so until we connected with the 'chemin-de-ronde' – the covered walkway with embrasures running along the entire length of the walls. We followed the walkway until we reached stairs that led us down to a two storey double 'caponier'. Each caponier (flanking gallery) contained two guns to provide enfilade fire along the ditch.



Successfully managing not to lose anyone in the maze of tunnels we returned to the parade ground above to witness the firing of a field gun.

Even before Crownhill and the other forts were completed, further advances in artillery meant that they were already obsolete. And the Franco-Prussian war put an end to any threat of French invasion. For these reasons, the fortifications built as a result of the Commission's Report are often referred to as 'Palmerston's Follies'. Of course, the very fact of their construction could have been enough to discourage any invasion.



Crownhill was used as a training venue in the latter part of the 19th century and during WW1, as a recruitment and mobilisation depot for troops destined for the Turkish and African Fronts. Military occupation was maintained during the inter-war years by the Royal Corps of Signals and the 2nd Battalion the Royal Devonshire Regiment.

During WW2, the fort was used to accommodate Allied troops and to prepare and store equipment for the D Day landings in 1944. In the 1950s it became the headquarters for the Plymouth Garrison and in the 1980s for 59 Commando Squadron Royal Engineers. Nearly 650 troops and just under 2,000 tonnes of War material were dispatched from the fort during the Falklands War in 1982.

Finally decommissioned in 1985 it was taken over by the Landmark Trust and considerable restoration undertaken to suit it for small business use, holiday accommodation and intermittent use as a heritage site.

Thanks to the Landmark Trust volunteers, this was a most interesting excursion and warrants a further visit to view the defences in more detail. Indeed, the Trust holds open days for the public on the last Friday of each month.

Chris Bellers

Long Live the King?

Why do we need a King? Why does he want so many castles? Why do we have all these ostentatious ceremonial occasions? This is the twenty-first century, after all, and many of the rituals date back hundreds of years. Is it time to move on?

My answer to that question starts with my grandfather, who was nineteen when Queen Victoria died. At that time there were horse-drawn trams in a few streets of his town. He was thirty before his shop could have a telephone. At thirty-two he saw his friends go to fight the Great War (as it was called then), and many of them did not return.

My father gave him his first ride in a car in 1932. He never had one himself. He would have been around forty-four when he heard his first radio broadcast from the BBC. At fifty-four he lived through the year of the three kings: George V, Edward VIII and George VI (1936).

As a fifty-seven year old, half of his employees went off to fight in the Second World War. Some were killed, two on the Arctic convoys, others wanted better prospects when they returned.

It wasn't until he was sixty-seven that he was able to watch his first TV programme when it arrived in the midlands in 1949. He lived just long enough to see the coronation of our late Queen, Elizabeth II.

They were the major events of his life: a slow crawl away from

nineteenth century drudgery and basic living, towards a more civilised life with electric fire, radio, single-channel TV, and a tiny fridge.

Since then the pace of life has increased exponentially. I have a choice of 500 TV channels and hundreds of radio broadcasts. My phone has long since lost its wires and dial, and I can summon up the world on its miniature screen. My laptop computer can carry out complex tasks in fractions of a second. I can fly to New Zealand in less than a day.

Two personal examples of the way our lives are both more complex and more irritating: my computer software instructions, when they were still in printed form, ran to over one thousand pages. My gadget-laden car, new in 2015, came with a 500-page handbook which on its first page says you must read it before driving.

Refrigerators are now 'intelligent'. New models of everything come out every week. We are urged to update, upgrade, pre-order. Cheques are vanishing, credit cards going the same way. Our phone is taking over running our lives, monitoring our health, checking our bank balance, counting our steps, and holding more data about us than our brain.

That is why we need a King. That is why we keep, for example, the Royal Company of Archers, the sovereign's bodyguard in Scotland, formed in 1676, and the Yeoman Warders of the Tower of London, started by Henry VIII. That is why we need an Earl Marshal, a title that has been in use since 1386, and a

Long Live the King? *Continued*

Lord Great Chamberlain, dating from William the Conqueror's time. The Garter King of Arms proclaimed our new King, in a ceremony going back to 1415. (He is paid £49.07 a year for his trouble.)

That is why we faithfully preserve our ancient buildings such as Holyrood Abbey (1128), St Giles cathedral (1124), Westminster Hall (1097), and Westminster Abbey (1065).

Our country, if it is to survive, must be anachronistic. The world is changing too quickly. We must for ever stay true to a core that is immutable,

unalterable, safely anchored in a thousand years of history.

We need the ceremonies, the castles, the processions, the Foot Guards of the Household Division in their scarlet tunics and bearskin hats, the Golden State Coach, and (sometime early next year) the coronation of King Charles III.

Long live the King.

Ivor Williams

This article was originally published on the TCW website.

Discussion Group 3

At our last meeting we were a tad depleted, with missing members doing things like traveling the world and rescuing boats.

The four of us left to hold the fort tackled the topic of the Evolution of the Monarchy, and, as you can see from the picture, we met in the comfort of one u3a member's kitchen, enjoying the coffee and the shelter from the rain, as well as the shared views and what we'd read about what came before Charles III and what we think his plans might be to slim down the Royal Family (as he's said he hopes to do).

In the previous meeting, we looked at Rewilding, comparing what we'd learned from what we'd read and decided it could be seen as a continuum, including considerations about soil improvement, carbon capture, bio-diversity, reintroduction of species and rewilding one's own garden.

We looked at the role of farming in rewilding, and political decisions about financial support for farming practices, and we discussed developments on Dartmoor.

We enjoy sharing thoughts and what we've researched about the topic, and we even like a bit of occasional controversy.

Angela Pitt



Diner's Delight Group

The Diner's delight Group have been organising eating out events this year, albeit at periodic intervals.

We have eaten at the following venues:

- St Elizabeth House, Plympton St Maurice
- Dunya Turkish Restaurant, Derry's Cross, Plymouth
- The Fig Tree @ 36, Admiralty Street, Stonehouse

Further events have been arranged at these venues:

- The Finnygook Inn, Craffhole, Cornwall (October)
- The Rifle Volunteer, St Ann's Chapel, Gunnislake



And another event is in the pipeline.

It has been our experience that the available places are snapped up very quickly, often within an hour of the invitation to the event being circulated to Group Members.

We would like to encourage our members to organise more events so that more get the opportunity to eat out in good company. It's quite easy and if you are not sure about venues, our co-ordinators, Andy and Caroline have a list of venues from previous events that they can send you.

As many events can be organised as there are members to organise them, which would allow a greater number of members to participate. This can be lunch or dinner as preferred. The more the merrier.

So, if you are interested in organising an event and want help or advice, please contact Andy or Caroline Paskins:

Attention all Group Leaders

A diary date for 2023.

We are resuming the very popular Group Leaders lunches, a thank you to you all from the committee. The date is Friday 3rd February 2023 and it will be at the Parish Rooms,

I will be sending out details of timings etc to you all nearer the time. Please pencil the date in your new u3a diaries,

Sonja Armstrong Group Liaison.

Drizzlecombe Valley Walk

A recent walk took us to Drizzlecombe from the Scout Hut at Nattor.

Edward Meade was a 17th Century warrener and we followed a western track below Gutter Tor parallel to his path from the Scout Hut. We never cease to admire the ingenuity of the amazing gate lock we pass with all its padlocks barring any unauthorised vehicles driving along our track to Ditsworthy Warren Farmhouse.



Hiking along we see the inevitable remains of the tin miners' diggings which vividly contrast with present day excavations being made at Hemerdon on our horizon. Our coffee stop in the adjacent field to Ditsworthy Warren houses the several kennels built into the thickness of the wall. Rabbit warrening has a history spanning 700 years on Dartmoor but was made illegal in Devon after World War II. What a history there is in this area - we saw on the hillside opposite the pillow mounds, oblong buries about twenty yards long made by the warreners piling up mounds of earth and small stones in which the rabbits could burrow. Enough talking about the thatching of the warren house for the War Horse film.

Heading along the moorland track the stream was, as always, tricky to cross and we were soon admiring the amazing Giant's Basin and groups of barrows, stone rows and terminal menhirs. The area is heavy with the atmosphere of a time long past.



Eric Hemery's "High Dartmoor" settles our question - the tallest menhir at the eastern end stands at fourteen feet above the turf.

What a fantastic area of Dartmoor to enjoy our picnic lunch together alongside the glistening tiny River Plym with Plymouth Sound way in the distance.

Time to head back west to the Scout Hut and this time we first walked east towards Higher Hartor and Evil Combe and then headed

north west to join the path from Nun's Cross Farm and the amazing Eylesbarrow Tin Mine...but that's for another day!

During lockdown, when permitted, many of us walked over all areas of Dartmoor. It is really exciting to understand how all the areas jigsaw together. We welcome you to join us on our walks.

Jennie Youngs

Photos: **Janet Hunt**

Plymouth Scenic Harbour Cruise - The Weekenders

It wasn't necessarily the perfect day for a cruise, just a little blowy with threatening rain, but everyone turned up dressed for the weather! As the first ones aboard, we had a full choice of seats, the foolhardy went onto the top deck whilst several chose the sanctity of the cabin.

As Tavonians, we rarely take the opportunity to see Plymouth from the sea but it was fascinating! The informative commentary (not too loud or too incessant) told us about Plymouth Hoe, bringing back many memories of the Events committee's guided walks around to Royal William Yard.

We admired Drake's Island from fairly close quarters and heard about the present owner's (from Tavistock) plans to convert the barracks into a Premier Inn type hotel, so all could afford to night on the island and explore the tunnels and gun ramparts freely during their stay.

Royal William Yard looked impressive from the sea, and as we headed up the Tamar, we saw the warships and final resting place for the nuclear subs waiting to be decommissioned. There were quick glimpses of the Tamar bridges before we returned down river past Mount Edgcumbe. By this time, it was raining a little, so a few of the brave went down to the comfort of the enclosed cabin!

For some the trip brought back memories of times with sailing boats and moorings and for the rest it was an informative and really enjoyable one hour cruise – to be thoroughly recommended as an activity for visiting friends and relatives.

And, of course, we were starving by the time we disembarked, so fish and chips on the Barbican was a must. They were so delicious!

Janet Hunt

Forthcoming Walks

Thursday November 24th

Meet at Pixon Lane to car share leaving at 9 40.

Park at Burrator Quarry to do a circular walk to finish at the Royal Oak, Meavy, about 5 miles.

If you would like to have lunch at the pub, would you let Jennie know as soon as possible as we shall need to book..

Chris Webb
Jennie Youngs

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th December 2022

Send contributions to johnnoble@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

Fox Tor Mire

There are a few places on Dartmoor where the very name is instantly recognised by walkers with such respect or even fear, as Fox Tot Mire. Various legends abound which add to the overall picture. The stories of Childe the Hunter and Grimpen Mire in The Hound of the Baskervilles are familiar to most people.

There are numerous mires and bogs on Dartmoor but of them all Fox Tor Mire is the most notorious. It has been said that the mires are twenty feet deep and have sucked many a man and beast down into the peaty depths. Whether this is fact or fancy is a matter for debate but it is certain that most sensible people avoid the quaking mass at all costs.

Fox Tor Mire is in a wide valley to the south of Princetown. The remote settlement of Whiteworks is on one side and Fox Tor itself is on the other. The mire is the source of the River Swincombe and several streams feed into it. Around the edge there is evidence of efforts to make a living years ago with the ruins of tin workings at Whiteworks and remains of farms at Fox Tor and Nuns Cross still visible. But in the middle there is nothing, absolutely nothing, and sensible folk avoid it.

It was after a visit to the mires that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle got the inspiration for the Grimpen Mire as the haunt for the infamous hound which was central to his plot in The Hound of the Baskervilles. Indeed some folk actually think of the place as the actual Grimpen Mire.

It is, however, the story of Childe the Hunter that is probably the best known legend associated with the place and which has inspired stories and songs over the years, including one by Seth Lakeman..

Childe the Hunter, who held fairly extensive lands in Plymstock and thus was quite a rich man, was also a very enthusiastic hunter who often hunted alone at all times of the year on Dartmoor. One day Childe was caught in a blizzard.

At first he tried to battle his way through the blinding snow until finally, both he and his horse being almost exhausted, he decided to try to wait out the storm. Eventually when hope had almost vanished Childe, in desperation, slew his horse, disembowelled it and climbed inside seeking the last vestiges of warmth, but to no avail.

Childe was found weeks later frozen to death and his death reported to the monks of Tavistock Abbey.

Now, by the terms of Childe's will, wherever he was buried, to that church would his lands belong. The monks of Tavistock Abbey were well pleased that here was the opportunity for Childe to be buried in Tavistock at the Abbey Church.

There was, however, great rivalry and some ill feeling between Plymstock and Tavistock. Furthermore, the people of Plymstock felt that, as Childe was a Plymstock man, his lands should rightly belong to them. They duly assembled at the bridge over the River Tavy across which the monks of Tavistock would have to pass. They were intent on gaining the body of Childe and thus ensuring that his lands remained the property of Plymstock Priory.

On hearing of the proposed ambush, the monks of Tavistock returned by a different route, erecting a simple bridge over the Tavy to enable them to do so. The people of Plymstock had been deceived by guile and thus the bridge which had been erected became known as Guile Bridge.

It is also said that originally Childe's tomb bore this inscription:

They first that fyndes and brings mee to my grave

The priory of Plimstoke they shall have

As the body of Childe the Hunter is supposed to have been buried in Tavistock it seems probable that Childe's tomb must mark the spot where his body was found.

John Noblet

The Events Committee

By popular demand, the Events Team have arranged a Quiz (their 14th),

This will be nourished with tea and cake, and will be held on Wednesday 16th November starting at 2.00 pm in the Parish Rooms on Plymouth Road.

Teams will be organised on the day and numbers are limited.

The cost is £6 and is payable on the door.

If you would like to join in, please contact Norma

Inter u3a Quiz

On the 20th October, seven teams from the Two Moors Group of u3as met socially, the first time since July 2019, for a quiz and supper evening.

A closely fought contest, over eight rounds of questions, between Launceston's teams "The Ever Hopefuls" and "The Savvy Six", Moor's Edge teams "Moor's Edge Quizzers", Okehampton's team "Oke Owls" and Tavy District's teams "1", "2" and "3" came down to the final picture puzzle round - "Name that dog", with two points separating Tavy Team 1 and the runners up, Tavy Team 3.

Susan Parker, Trustee for the South West, who also participated as a member of the Moor's Edge Quizzers, presented prizes and a trophy to the winners Tavy Team 1 captained by Tony Rose from Tavy District u3a.

During the event a raffle was held, with prizes being contributed by attending members. Also, tea, coffee and biscuits were made available at a small cost.

The total proceeds of £65 were donated to the Devon and Cornwall Food Action charity who strive to eradicate food poverty in Devon and Cornwall.

Malcolm Tulip

