

The Events Committee

You can now pay for Events and Theatre by BACs.

Please note this is **ONLY** for Events and Theatre. Pick up a gold-coloured card giving full details of the account, from the Events table at the Wednesday meetings.

Monday 10 July

Join our **Blue Badge** guide **Jane** for a **guided tour of the Royal William Yard**. £5pp to be paid to Janet on the day. Sadly, we have to restrict this to the first 25 on the list, so **Janet will email those who are able to go on the 10th July**. We will meet outside Royal William Yard by the bus stops ready to leave at 11.30.

Contact Janet 07870 230 138 janle.hunt47@gmail.com

Wednesday 12 July

Another of John Noblet's famous Town Trails! Meet outside the Town Hall between 6pm and 6.30pm to stagger the set-off times, and follow the clues. Pay £2 pp on the day. This will be followed by an optional meal at Robertson's. It is important to sign up for this activity and indicate if you want to go to Robertsons as there are limited numbers in the restaurant.

Will you please pay a £5 deposit at the next meeting if you have already booked a Robertson's meal

Contact Chris 613884 chriswebbtav@gmail.com

Wednesday 23 August

Picnic in the Park More details to follow from The Committee.

Wednesday 20 September

A full day coach trip. Keep the date and sign up at the August meeting.

Contact Janet 613088 janle.hunt47@gmail.com

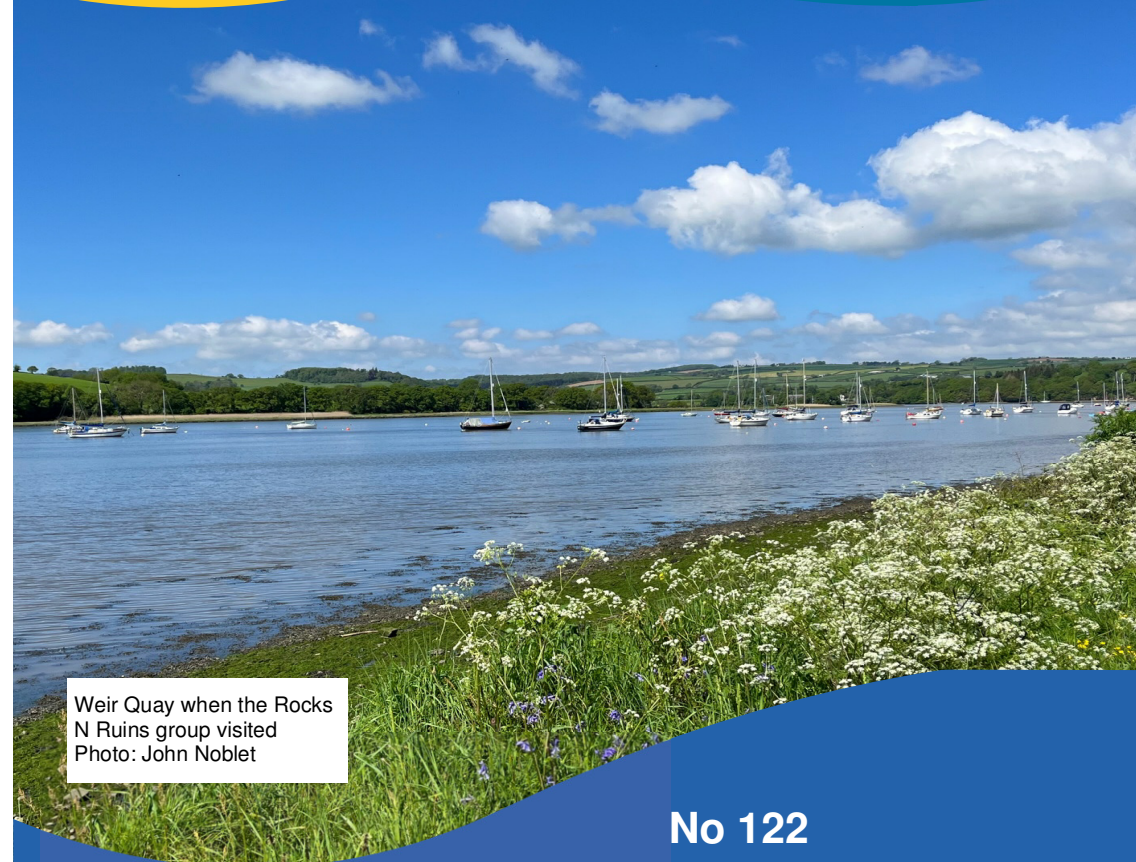
And Finally.....



Thanks to Margaret Garton for this one.

Tavy District u3a

THE NEWSLETTER



Weir Quay when the Rocks N Ruins group visited
Photo: John Noblet

u3a

No 122

July 2023

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	Angela Pitt
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 618517

web@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

Newsletter Editor: John Noblet

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th August 2023

Send contributions to johnnoblet@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

Flossie's Teddy Bear



Jennie and Chris miss seeing Flossie each month on their u3a Dartmoor walks.

With Bruin and Little Ted for company Felicity has, however, been creating such a beautiful, colourful cottage garden this summer. How effective is the plant display on the left that you may have seen first outside The Kitchen cafe in Tavistock!

Jennie Youngs

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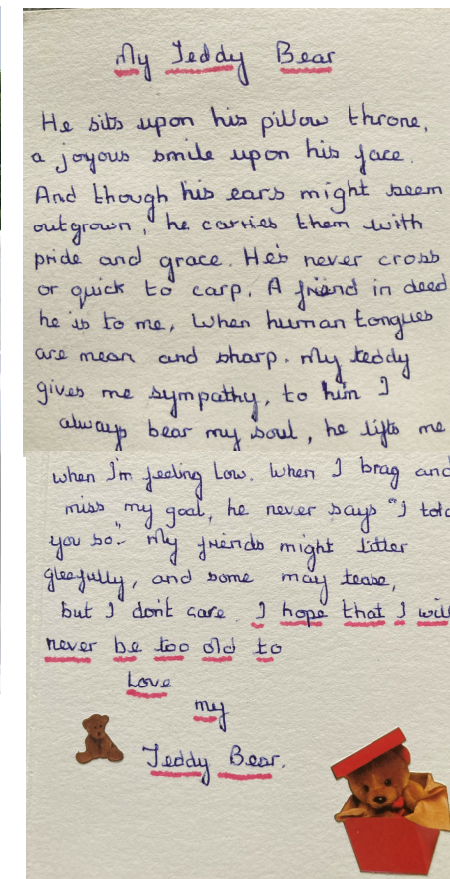
For Sale

Exercise Bike

One lady owner

Hardly used

Seen by John Noblet in a Plympton St Maurice Open Garden



Falmouth Trip

A good time was had by all in glorious sunshine by those who went on the Falmouth trip. Excellently organised (as always, by the Events Committee).



Unfortunately, some u3a members had a different interpretation of "river cruise".



FROM THE CHAIR

Jane's face was ashen. "No, no, no, I am not going up in that!" she protested.



"That" was a six-seater Islander aircraft, okay an eight-seater if you count the pilot and co-pilot's seats. Jane does not enjoy flying, especially taking off and landing. She even closed her eyes when taking off in giant, double-decker A380 airbuses, the largest airliners in the world, on our way to and from Australia a few years ago. This time we were at St Mary's airport on the Isles of Scilly, on our way home from a delightful short break on Bryher, one of the five inhabited islands and our favourite. The flights were in disarray for "technical reasons", never a reassuring explanation. We had already been notified by email and text message prior to leaving our hotel, that our flight had been "retimetabled" to depart an hour later than originally scheduled. When we arrived at the charming little terminal, completely rebuilt with EU funding, we could not see any flights on the departure board that corresponded with the new time we had been given.

However, after only a few minutes a check-in assistant arrived and announced that, if we wished, we could travel on an unscheduled flight that was going to leave in a few minutes, so we needed to decide quickly. The only problems were the size of the aircraft and Jane's aversion to flying. We normally travel to Scilly in a seventeen-seater Twin Otter aircraft, which Jane just about finds acceptable, but a six-seater? I felt this was an opportunity that we couldn't miss and we would get home sooner. I persuaded Jane that we should accept the offer. She very reluctantly agreed but warned me that I would "owe" her!

Check-in, which included us being weighed as well as our luggage, was very quick, after all there were only six of us. We watched the pre-flight video and walked out of the terminal across the apron to our plane. We were allocated the two seats in the second row, immediately behind Ryan, who introduced himself as our "driver" for the short flight.

By good fortune, our seats turned out to be in prime position with panoramic views forward and to both sides through the relatively large windows. The weather was calm and sunny, and the visibility was excellent. The take off and flight were as good as any I have experienced and there was only the slightest bump on landing. We flew at just 1000 feet, offering a spectacular view of the sea and coast beneath us. We arrived at Land's End airport before the original departure time of our booked flight. I think even Jane would reluctantly admit that the flight was enjoyable, but I doubt she will be in a hurry to repeat the experience.

Those of you who regularly read my ramblings will know that I try to link my tales to a message. On this occasion the message is a simple one. Try to grasp every opportunity that is presented to you. You will never know whether it is something you enjoy unless you do, and the opportunity may not present itself again.

Fingers crossed the weather will be good for our u3a Party in the Park in August.

Paul

Speaker Programme

Here are the details of the speakers at the next three monthly meetings.

As you will see, August's meeting is not in the Town Hall and is not on the first Wednesday of the month. Brief details are included below but please look out for a separate e-mail/letter very soon with further details.

You continue to provide me with speaker suggestions on a regular basis, for which many thanks. I am still rather short of possible speakers on science topics, so further suggestions here would be particularly welcome. As I have said before, do not hesitate to suggest yourself

Jane Ward

PROGRAMME JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023

WEDNESDAY 5th JULY 2023 2pm Tavistock Town Hall

The 3 Hares - the Journey of an Iconic Symbol from Chinese Buddhist Caves to Devon Churches

Speaker: Tom Greeves

Many of you will remember that Tom, who describes himself as a "cultural environmentalist" spoke to us last year about Francis Bedford and the Art of Photography

He is the author of several books about Dartmoor and has, with Sue Andrew, written one specifically about the well-known Three Hares (*The Three Hares – A Curiosity Worth Regarding* (Skerryvore, South Molton, 2016)). In this talk, Tom will reveal a remarkable cultural link between ancient China and the Westcountry here in England.

WEDNESDAY 23RD AUGUST 2023 2pm – 4pm The Meadows, Tavistock

Picnic in the Park!

Bring a mug, a sunhat or umbrella and something to sit on. if you are a baker, a cake or buns would also be very welcome.

Tea, coffee and sandwiches will be provided and cold drinks will be available to buy. If you intend to come, you must register in advance by contacting Jane Ward, either by email or by text message **no later than Wednesday 2nd August** or by signing up at Events Table at the 5th July meeting in the Town Hall.

Theatre Update

Our last two visits to the theatre were to see **The Last Exotic Marigold Hotel** and **The Magic Flute**. **The Marigold Hotel** was the play of the film of the book and, though many clearly enjoyed it, I must confess to having been a little disappointed. This was in part because it followed the film very closely and, good as these actors were on the stage, they could not really compete with the performances of Judi Dench, Maggie Smith et al in the film. I was personally upset to see that Paul Nicholas, who I remembered as the cheeky chap from *Just Good Friends* is now an old bloke. The last time I saw him on stage was in the musical *Hair*, I was relieved that this time he was obliged to keep his clothes on!

In contrast, **The Magic Flute**, performed by The Welsh National Opera, did not disappoint. It was lively, funny and accessible- a joyous experience even if, like me, you were not usually a fan of opera. It was a great note on which to effectively end our theatre season. We have no further theatre bookings over the summer months, apart from a backstage tour in July.

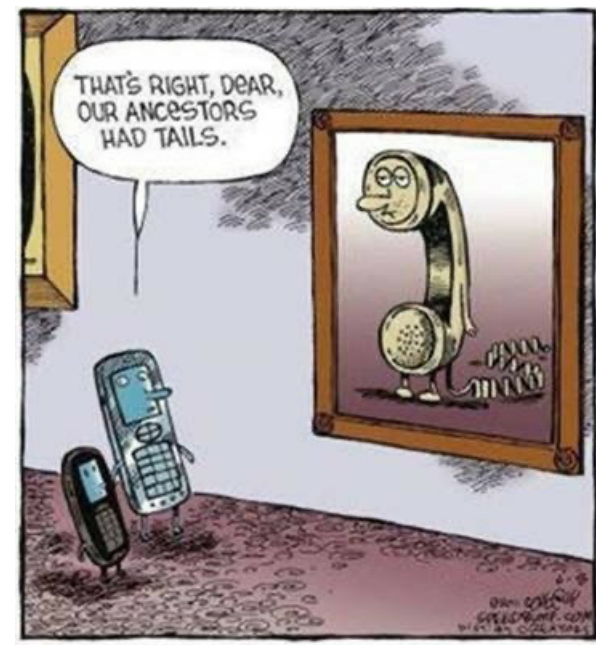
We have booked to see Birmingham Royal Ballet's **Heavy Metal Experience** in October and **Jesus Christ Superstar**, **Edward Scissorhands** (a Matthew Bourne ballet) and **2:22 A Ghost Story** in November. Next year we have already booked to see **The Wizard of Oz** in March.

Carole Thompson

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**Send contributions to
johnnoble@
tavydistrictu3a.org.uk**

u3a
Tavy District



Thanks to Margaret Garton

Garden Visits Group

Please sign up at the meetings or ring Jennie

Sunday 23 July

Bere Ferrers Hidden Village Gardens in aid of St Luke's £5

A diverse selection of gardens to explore, with some surprising hidden gems

Monday 14 August

Wildside £10

A stunning garden developed by Keith Wiley and his late wife over many years. Agapanthus a forte. With an optional lunch after at Drake Manor.



Saturday 2 Sept

Daymer House PL22 6SA for NGS £5

Next to the beach between Rock and Polzeath. 2 acres of wild coastal gardens in the grounds of an Arts and Crafts house. Includes Edwardian formal gardens and rooms. The ground is uneven.

Wednesday 18 October

Lunch at Riverford Field Kitchen 12.30 £32. Enjoy a finale for our lovely garden visits this year! Excellent Riverford home-grown amazing lunch
There will be time to stroll around the fields after lunch, with a map!
Sign up for the meal by Thursday 5 October. Please let us know of any allergies

Recorder Group

Our recorder group will be giving a short recital as part of Tavy Fringe on Saturday 8th July.

They will be performing from 10.30 to 11.00 am in Butchers' Hall.

The programme will include music from a wide range of musical periods – from Renaissance to the present day. You can either sit and listen or simply enjoy the background music while you visit the stalls.

National Trust Visits

No, it's not National Trust, but the group will be visiting Mt Edgcumbe House and Gardens for their next trip on Wednesday 19 July and having a boat ride to boot!

You are welcome to join them



Speaker Programme *Continued*

WEDNESDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER 2023 2pm Tavistock Town Hall

A Cook's Tour: Baking Blind Goes Global.

Speaker: Penny Melville-Brown OBE

One of eight women Commanders and the first woman barrister in the Royal Navy, Penny was medically discharged in 1999 but went on to found her business, Disability Dynamics Ltd, to help other disabled people get back to work. She also undertook a number of senior Governmental public appointments concerning tax and benefits, employment tribunals, learning and skills, policing. In 2017, she won the international Holman prize for blind people and travelled the world cooking with professional chefs and home-cooks (sighted or not) to demonstrate the capabilities of the over one billion disabled people worldwide. After a near-death car accident, she continues her lock-down on-line cooking demonstrations, her blogs, speaking engagements and has written a book. Her talk is a snapshot of her adventures and experiences.

Duplicate Bridge Competition

A Tavy District team won equal first place in this year's Two Moors Network duplicate bridge competition. It was hosted by Launceston u3a on 13 May. Each team consists of two pairs – East/West and North/South.

The way it works is that each of the pairs plays four hands against a pair from every other team. That means that every hand is played twice by the same two teams but once with the team playing the East/West cards and once with the team playing the North/South cards. That means the element of luck is completely eliminated and the combined result fairly represents the skill and judgement of the team.

Results were:

- | | |
|----|---------------|
| 1= | Tavy District |
| 1= | West Dartmoor |
| 3 | Launceston |
| 4 | Tavy District |
| 5 | Launceston |
| 6 | Okehampton |



Congratulations to our winning team, Margaret Garton, Chris Hill, Kate Wright and Peter Wright.

Randall Williams

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Thoughts of Our Visit to Bristol

We all gathered opposite the Bedford Hotel waiting for our coach on a bright, sunny but a crisp morning. The coach arrived and we all got on and seated. Alan, our driver, introduced himself, gave a safety briefing then we set off for Bristol along the A386, A30 and M5 to Bristol Millennium Square.

Our guides were waiting and those of us going on the walking tour were divided into two groups. We set off with our guide, Nick, and walked to the rejuvenated dock area with the old warehouses converted into restaurants but each building retained its original lettering system. The water level in this area was maintained at a constant level with a lock system. Prior to this ships in the dock would rest on the river bottom at low tide. During this time ship's crew members would have tied materials down at low tide, hence the expression "Ship Shape and Bristol Fashion"



We then left the dock area and walked to St Augustine's Abbey but time did not permit us to go into the building. The Abbey was dissolved in 1539. Bristol Cathedral was founded 1542. However, our guide told us that the building was built in two time periods. The eastern end is in the "Decorated Gothic" style built between 12th and 16th centuries. In this area the "Elder Lady" chapel can be found. Then in the 19th century the western end of the cathedral was built in the "Gothic Revival" style. In this area a second chapel can be found. "The Berkeley Chapel"

We then moved on to view some street art created by Banksy entitled "Well Hung Lover" the blue splashes were added to stop any further vandalism to the piece



Moving on from Park Street we went to the Edward Colston Plinth where the statue had been removed by protesters and dumped into the nearby dock. A remaining plaque on the plinth gives information about his life.



Again walking on we came across a film set in action. A member of the group thought it may be an episode of 'Killing Time' so in the future you may see a group of visitors meandering past the scene?

Woodtowners Book Group Continued

In a not-too-distant future, this robot's role is to be the companion of a teenage girl with a health problem. Klara is programmed to fulfil this task in every way. She finally makes a gift of a small but valuable part of her "body" construction in an attempt to save the girl's life. Does she therefore become more than a mere machine? As Klara begins to observe the world around her, she studies the sun in particular because she is solar powered. The close relationship between this robot and her life-giving force remind one of primitive man and his dependence on the sun for warmth and life itself.

Klara is a preprogrammed machine but learns by experience and observation. In our future will other robots make decisions based on impartial observation? The future is coming faster than we anticipated!

My thanks to our members for their hospitality.

Enjoy your reading! Woodtowners have read some great books this year.

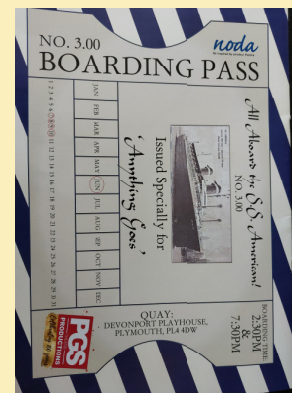
Frances Stephens

Anything Goes for the Weekenders

After the Weekenders coffee morning on June 10th eight members then went to Plymouth. We had a very pleasant lunch at the cafe in Devonport Park before going to the Devonport Playhouse.

This is a delightful little old theatre and there we saw a production of "Anything Goes" with music and lyrics by Cole Porter, always a treat.

It was an amateur production performed by the Plymouth Gilbert and Sullivan group as part of their 100th birthday celebrations. There was nothing amateur about it though.



It is quite a small stage which could be difficult for the cast but with a very clever set and carefully choreographed dancing it was a fabulous, toe tapping show. The singing was great, the music very professional and the whole cast looked as though they were really enjoying themselves. Their costumes were quite eye catching too. The tap dancing was very popular and the applause long and loud. It is full of disguises, confessions, mistaken identities and marriage proposals but of course it all works out in the end.

We came out feeling uplifted and so glad we had gone. There is nothing to beat live theatre and thank you so much to Janet Hunt for arranging it.

Mary Brock

Woodtowners Book Group

It is encouraging to note that two more u3a book groups have been established this year. Reading a variety of novels from Devon Libraries gives Woodtowners an opportunity to meet each month and discuss new and old ideas.

The background settings have all been of interest. Montana during the Prohibition involved smuggling liquor from Canada in small aeroplanes. (Great Circle by Maggie Shipstead). We looked at social issues in England during the Edwardian period and the WW1 years and the public attitude towards wealth in New York in the 1950s and 70s. (Julius by Daphne du Maurier, Money by Martin Amis and The Bell jar by Sylvia Plath).

As a contrast to city dwellers, we have read about rural communities enjoying their lives with few material possessions. (Cider with Rosie by Laurie Lee, set in Gloucestershire, and The Offing by Benjamin Myers set partly in Norfolk and also H is for Hawk by Helen Macdonald, set in Cambridgeshire).

The overturning of one's very existence and the differences in reaction were the themes of two memorable novels. Daphne du Maurier's novel Julius was first published in 1933 at the period of the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany.

The life of her fictional character is described in depth from cradle to grave. Born of an immigrant Jewish father and a mother from a market trading family, the toddler Julius has a comfortable home in a French village in the 1850s. This existence is shattered by his grandfather's murder. His childhood was spent in besieged Paris during the Franco Prussian war, thus forcing him to grow up fast. Later, as a teenage orphan in Algeria, he both studies seriously with the local Rabbi but also embraces all the experiences on offer in the run-down districts of the city.

Once in England, through his ruthless determination to gain "something for nothing" despite years of 'hard graft' and being

despised by those around him, Julius acquires immense wealth. He achieves power by his astute decisions in WW1, by forward planning in every move and by his business ventures, irrespective of those whom he ruins on his way upwards. Yet this success does not bring happiness. He needs to control all the people near to him. They are, in effect, his possessions and this leads to the dramatic conclusion of the novel.

Our second protagonist, Otto Silbermann, appears in a semiautobiographical novel written in the four weeks following Kristallnacht in November 1938. We are taken on a frenzied series of train journeys in The Passenger by Ulrich Boschwitz.

The story is told through the thoughts and actions of the principal character, a business man, quite unused to danger or difficulties. After a sudden concerted effort by the Nazi party to detain Jewish families, Otto strives to escape from being arrested. Journeys to and from Berlin, visits to Aachen, a brief hour in Belgium, opportunities missed in Hamburg and Dresden.....all add to the tension and an atmosphere of desperation. How will he manage after the deprivation of his rights, the end of normality in his family life, the damage to his property, the loss of his prosperous business and finally the theft of a precious briefcase?

The preface to this novel, only recently published, relates the brief life of a gifted author. It is an insight into the past but the message is as relevant today as it was in 1938. How does one escape from oppression or conflict and yet retain one's sense of self-worth?

But we don't only embrace the past in our choice of novel. Klara and the Sun by Kazuo Ishiguro deals with an important topical issue. What is the role of AI in the future? To what extent can a machine replicate human emotions? Is there a point at which a constructed piece of machinery can become imbued with human feelings?

Thoughts of Our Visit to Bristol Continued

Just around the corner from the film set we came across at the remaining Medieval gatehouse of seven which were entrances through the walls that surrounded Bristol back in the day.

Just along the road we came to the facade of the Edward Everard print works, a Grade 2 listed building. The facade is Art Nouveau in style. The figures shown are Gutenberg, the inventor of the printing press, and William Morris, restorer of artistry.

The print works closed in the 1960's and the interior of the building has been redesigned and is now a hotel.



We continued our stroll to the Corn Exchange which now houses the St Nicholas market with food stalls both inside and out.

The clock face has two minute hands, one at 15 minutes and the other 25 minutes to the hour. These times represent London time and Bristol time. But as the expanding railway system required a standard time for timetabling purposes Bristol officially adopted railway time (GMT) in 1852

We were now coming to the end of our stroll around this part of Bristol with only Queen



Square and back to the dock to view the statue of John Cabot who sailed from Bristol and discovered New-Found-Land sailing on the Matthew in 1497.

There is a replica of the Matthew that has been sailed across the Atlantic. Also, the the SS Great Britain could be viewed from a distance



Finally we said goodbye to Bristol as we were driven homeward beneath the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

We would all like to thank Norma and her colleagues for arranging this brilliant trip to Bristol. We saw many things but we are sure there is more to see.

Jan and Michael Martin.

Thoughts of Our Visit to Bristol Continued



Listening intently to our guide outside the Cathedral

Diner's Delight Group

Founded in 2013, this year will be the 10th Anniversary of the Diner's Delight Group. Originally named the Gastronomy Group, there was a rapid change of group name to Diner's Delight resulting from significant interest from potential Astronomers!

The group is self-organising with members undertaking the organisation of eating out events with communication with members undertaken by the coordinators, currently Caroline and Andy Paskins.

The visit to the Dartmoor Inn at Lydford in May was very successful with members enjoying a long and leisurely lunch. The food was excellent, with an imaginative menu and was well presented. Well done to Chris Rose for organising this event.

The next event will be on 20th July and is being organised by Jacqui Foster. This will be lunch at the River Exe Café, a floating restaurant. Further details of this event will be circulated to members in due course.

For the 10th anniversary of the Group later this year, it is hoped to organise a special celebratory event to at an appropriate venue in October

For any new members of the Tavy District u3a who may not be familiar with the area we can provide a list of venues previously visited for your information. So if you fancy organising an event, please get in touch with Caroline or myself for further details.

Andy Paskins

Haiku - Poetry Group

Haiku. A short succinct poem consisting of seventeen syllables over 3 lines, with the syllables in a 5-7-5 pattern. Except it's not always quite that simple, as we discovered when we focused on the haiku form of poetry in a recent meeting.

Firstly, there is the perennial challenge of what is lost in translation and the Japanese form of a syllable is quite different from a European understanding of what this means. So approximately seventeen syllables then! The haiku should be brief and compressed, consisting only of essential words and it should have a seasonal feeling relating to one of the 5 seasons of the year. Yes, 5 seasons, because apparently in Japan, New Year is considered as a season in itself. A cutting word is also necessary which should be placed at the end of any of the three lines and has a different impact depending on where it is placed. It can act as a signal to the reader of the need to pause and reflect or, especially if placed at the end of the third line, used to convey the overall mood or emotion.

Although haiku has been recognised as a poetic form as long ago as the 12th century it wasn't actually applied specifically to any particular poems until the 19th century. Haiku originated as a particular type of stanza (i.e 3 lines and seventeen Japanese syllables) within a larger poetic form known as a renga. The renga was apparently composed over several hours by a group with a leader who had the final decision about acceptable tone and content, giving us an interesting glimpse into what passed for entertainment in centuries gone by.

Well, perhaps we're not so different now after all. We couldn't resist attempting to write our own haiku. The discipline of three lines and seventeen English syllables helped us keep a focus on what we were trying to convey. One ex- teacher in the group has found it a very useful tool with primary school classes who might otherwise have felt they could not possibly write poetry. Some of us attempted to distil poetry that we already knew and loved

into haiku form. The examples that follow include some published haiku and some of our own work.

this one eye sightless
but on that side also
I polish my glasses

the late year lies in the north
all is healed all health
I wander weep for wonder

fragrant clematis morning
pure sweetest birdsong
restore breathe the day to come

no escaping it -
I must step on fallen leaves
to take this path

We are a small friendly group with a range of interests, skills and backgrounds. What we have in common are enquiring minds and a desire to discover what poetry is all about. We welcome new members and have one or two vacancies at present.

Joan Dennis



The National Trust assume that dogs can read!

Gardeners Group

There were eight of our members at our June meeting hosted by Nikki in her lovely garden next to Kelly College.

Our tour of her garden started in the small front gravel garden with a lush border full of Mediterranean herbs, including rosemary, thyme, sage and oregano. Also a reclaimed galvanised bath full of strawberry plants just beginning to ripen.

We then explored her main garden with a patio housing two reclaimed butler sinks full of lettuce leaves carefully protected from slugs by strips of copper tape around the sink walls.



Another great idea was two reclaimed water tanks being used to grow healthy broad beans. The path led us through a mixture of perennial plants and small trees, including cherry, rowan, crab apple. At the far end there were potatoes growing in sacks and healthy tomatoes in hanging baskets.

Nikki and her husband have replanted almost all of the garden since moving in a few years ago with a good knowledge of plants and vegetables. Keen to attract wildlife too, they have a small pond and bird boxes. It is a great example of how much you can grow in a medium sized garden. We discussed how we can attract more wildlife to our gardens over tea.

Many thanks to Nikki for her hospitality and the delicious chocolate brownies.

We look forward to seeing more lovely members' gardens as each one is unique and gives us inspiration for new ideas.

Jill Turner

Forthcoming Walks

Thursday 20th July

Meet at Pixon Lane at 8.30 to leave at 8.40 to car share to Bude. We shall park at Helebridge to do a coastal walk to Bude, a few ups and downs as it is the coastal path. We shall return along the canal to our starting point. About 6 mls.

Coffee before we start our walk at the Weir Cafe and bring a packed lunch to eat in Bude overlooking the sea. Plenty of opportunities for other refreshments along the canal before our walk back.

Chris Webb
Jennie Youngs

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A Really Great Walk

A really great walk can be judged not just by its beautiful scenery, but also by the variety and number of points of interest it contains, and this compact 4 mile circular walk around Calstock certainly has something for everyone.

Starting from the Calstock car park, we walked upstream on the Tamar Valley Discovery Trail and over the new footbridge constructed for the Calstock Wetlands. Being close to high tide the water was flowing fast through the breach in the river bank, and from the bridge you can really appreciate the effect that tidal flooding has on the landscape. This small area of flood defence scheme protects Calstock village but also benefits the wildlife, to date there have been sightings of over 60 different bird species alone.

Leaving the flood plain behind, we climbed up the hill through spring woodlands, with their fresh new canopy of leaves and carpets of Ransoms, to the remains of the Okeltor mine workings. Part of the prolific mining history of the Tamar Valley, the Okeltor mine operated from the 1840's – 1880's, producing copper, tin, arsenic and some lead. At its peak it employed around 200 workers, and this quiet woodland of today would have been quite a different sight in its productive heyday. Emerging from the woods, we crossed the railway line with perfect timing to see the 11.20 train from Gunnislake waiting at the level crossing. We gave the driver a wave and he gave us a friendly double toot on his whistle in return!

Quiet lanes edged with spring flower hedgerows (including a couple of Early Purple Orchids), we pass a steam powered river boat (the "Isambard") on our way up to the 14th century Calstock Parish Church of St Andrew's. It was worth spending some time at this site as its long history revealed several treats, including a 1st century Roman fort, and many interesting gravestones. There are several Commonwealth war graves here, but

the majority in the old graveyard are 19th C. The inscriptions of which give testament to Calstock's industrial past and the emigration of many miners around the world. There are two memorials to three men who drowned on the Titanic in 1912 while emigrating to Canada to find work. Tragically two of the men were brothers.



Downhill from this point onwards, we meandered our way back to Calstock on lanes and footpaths with spectacular views over the Tamar river; to Gunnislake one way and Cotehele the other. A typical spring day, we had a tea break in the pouring rain and a lunch stop in dazzling sunshine, and we rewarded ourselves with coffee and cake back at the quay at the end. Our thanks go to our walk leader, Val Blair, for a truly wonderful walk.

Hannah Miatt



Lethytep - a Conservation and Wildlife Haven

Intrigued by this interesting name, the u3a Garden Visits Group were lucky enough to have a guided tour visit to this glorious estate of 56 acres managed by Philip and Faith Hamby.

As we left the cars we were confronted by a breathtaking vista of glorious meadows sweeping down the hill to lakes and woodland. The fields, woods and lake are carefully managed for conservation and we were given a very informative walk through meadows, woods and around the beautiful lakes.

The permanent wildflower meadows are mown to give two cuts of hay a year which are provided to the Duchy, and afterwards the fields are grazed by sheep, moved on every two or three days in the traditional management to prevent the development of parasites.

The fields are thronged with wild flowers – especially yellow rattle which helps to keep the meadow grass from dominating. Interestingly, the flora in each of the extensive fields is dictated by the soil and aspect – one field was dominated by yellow hawkbit, while another was white with oxeye daisies. Both had many other varieties which were helpfully identified for us by Philip – eyebright, knapweed, lesser trefoil or shamrock, and lovely purple orchids in abundance. Mowing is confined to pathways for Philip's guided tour, and the traditional cut for hay twice in the summer.



At the foot of the hill the route moved into the woodland alongside a stream, and Philip explained that dormice abounded in this area, and as they were too shy to cross the paths for fear of predators, branches were bent across the way to make an M5 motorway for dormice, and nest boxes were provided.

We emerged from the woodland across a bridge to a vista of calm lakes, with many waterlilies. Photographers are welcome here, and we watched one catching pictures of the many dragonflies and damselflies, and hides are provided in various locations. Twitchers are also frequently welcomed as the lakes provide havens for rare visitors, including herons, geese, owls, buzzards, and a rare squacco heron. Otters have also been homed.



All the wildlife is caught on camera by Philip and we were able to admire and buy copies of his photographs. He is able to photograph a sparrow hawk from the kitchen window of the house they built, visiting his exquisite flower garden.

After our long walk in the sunshine we were grateful for some shade and a delicious tea provided by Faith before our journey home after a delightful afternoon. Thanks also to Janet, Jennie and Shirley for arranging the visit.

Rosy Griffith

Lovely Lincoln - Another Wonderful u3a Holiday

Visits to stately mansions like Burleigh House contrasting with some more intimate National Trust properties, like Gunby Hall with beautiful walled gardens filled with spring flowers, highlighted our visit to Lincoln.

Also visits to towns like Boston, Stamford, Royal Leamington Spa added to the full range of our travels.

Perhaps the stunning location looking onto the Cathedral in Lincoln was the peak.



Our visit to Boston had a few surprises for many of us. This was the home of the Puritans, part of the Pilgrim Fathers, who departed from Plymouth to found Boston in the United States.



The charming Stamford was next, a lovely town with buildings in white limestone, full of history. Our guide told us of the interesting origins of many sayings, like 'money for old rope'.

The old rope coming from the habit of the hangman after a public hanging, cutting the hanging rope into small pieces and selling them off to the locals who had been watching.

The tour was planned as usual by Norma, and we had an excellent driver. Nothing was too much trouble. One of the best things about these holidays is the genuine friendship and kindness. Always ready to lend a hand to someone in trouble and delightful dinner companions. Our hotel this year was excellent with delicious food beautifully presented.

A big thank you to Norma - we look forward to next year's venue being announced.

Bob and Sheila Naybour

Wine Appreciation Group

We recently had the pleasure of exploring the versatile and complex world of Chardonnay in our group meeting. While some of us may have had a preconceived notion about this grape variety, we discovered a wide range of styles and flavours that exceeded our expectations.

Many of you will remember Chardonnay from the 80's and 90's. This usually had an oaked aroma and taste. There are two main styles of Chardonnay: oaked and unoaked. Oaked Chardonnays are aged in oak barrels and offer a fuller-bodied wine with flavours of vanilla and spice, while unoaked Chardonnays are fermented in stainless steel barrels, creating a crisp and bright wine.

We also learned that Chardonnays from cool climates tend to have citrus, green fruit, and vegetable notes, while those from warmer regions are richer and can taste like everything from white peach and melon to tropical fruit and figs.

One of the most revered regions for Chardonnay is Burgundy, where they are labelled by geography rather than grape. The southernmost area in Burgundy, Maconnais, produces light, fruity wines that are not typically aged in oak.

Now, let's talk about the wines we tasted:

Cambala Cap Classique from Aldi 2018, £8.99: This sparkling Chardonnay from the coastal region of Stellenbosch, South Africa, was quite dry and method champagnoise. It had a colourless appearance and was enjoyable with or without food.

Estevez Chardonnay from Aldi, £4.99: This dry Chilean Chardonnay left an acidic aftertaste.

Laroche Chardonnay La Chavaliere 2021, £12: This Chardonnay from a selection of higher altitude cooler places had hints of yellow apple and melon. It was a lovely wine that would pair well with fish and cheese.

Louis Jadot Macon-Aze from Waitrose, £10.99: This dry, crisp, and fresh wine had fruity hints of pear and green apple. It was produced in the highly renowned area of Aze, northwest of Macon in Southern Burgundy and would go well with cold meat and chicken.

Wolf Bass Yellow Label Chardonnay 2022, South Australia, £8 from Tesco: This wine had aromas of rich stone fruits and subtle oak that led into a creamy texture. However, some of us found it less drinkable due to its oak flavour.

Voyager Estate Chardonnay 2021, approximately £35 (difficult to buy outside Australia): This organic wine from Margaret River, Australia, had an initial burst of citrus complemented by fine toasty oak. It was another good wine similar to the French wine.

Burra Brook Chardonnay 2022 from Marks and Spencer, £8.99: This lightly oaked Chardonnay had flavours of spiced apricot and juicy white peach. It was a dry wine that paired well with chicken and salad.

After a vote, our preferred wine for drinkability was the Cambala Cap Classique from Aldi 2018, followed closely by Laroche Chardonnay La Chavaliere 2021 and Louis Jadot Macon-Aze from Waitrose. The majority of the ladies preferred the sparkling Chardonnay, closely followed by the two French wines.

Our next meeting will involve exploring the delicious and unique New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc.

Eleanor Shutie

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**Send contributions to
johnnoble@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk**

Drake's Island - Take 1

I have lived in Devon since my early twenties and I have always been fascinated by Drake's Island. It is situated in a rather romantic and picturesque spot and the tales surrounding it of underground tunnels and smuggling has always suggested a rather interesting history and so it has, albeit not quite the one I was imagining.

A short ferry ride from the Barbican landing stage and we arrived at Drake's Island. It's not in a very good state of repair with lots of scaffolding, a wreck of a boat-shed and two or three buildings that housed troops and staff.



It has a chequered history in the defence of our shores but, according to the tour guide, although various guns were fired in different centuries no one actually hit anything. Still the tour guide led us through its history from Henry VIII, the English Civil War, Charles II's state prison, World War One and Two. Let's face it, that's pretty impressive.



A new line of nine gun emplacements to take the newly developed breech-loading guns were built between 1898 and 1901. The breech-loading guns defended Devonport during World War One and the early part of World War Two. In 1943 two new gun emplacements were built to upgrade the defences. There are still remnants of some of the guns on the highest part of the island and we were led through some of the tunnels and casements where the armaments were kept.



After all its military usage was over the island was used as an adventure centre from 1963 to 1989 until it closed. Since then the Island has changed hands a few times and is currently owned by a local Devon businessman who has plans to open up access and develop the Island for all.

With regard to the myths there was an episode of brandy smuggling which failed due to the troops getting drunk in full view of the Customs and Excise building on the mainland but the tunnels are just that a myth. Or are they?

Jan Draper

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Drake's Island - Take 2

On one of those glorious days that we had way back when, a group of nearly thirty u3a members met at Plymouth Barbican for the short ferry ride across the Sound to Drake's Island. Tavy District u3a Rocks N Ruins group had joined forces with the equivalent Plymouth u3a group for a joint visit to the island. For years it has been tantalisingly close to Plymouth Hoe yet inaccessible, but now open for regular guided tours in the summer months.



We were met on the island's landing stage by the warden, Bob King. To say that he was a mine of information is an understatement.

He introduced the tour with a brief geology lesson, followed by a summary of the history of the occupation of the island. I say summary advisedly because there is indeed a long and varied history due largely to its strategic position.

The island was originally known as St Michael's Island after the chapel that was built on it. The dedication of the chapel (and the island) was changed to St Nicholas and it was not until many centuries later that it became more widely known as Drake's Island. Indeed, current OS maps show both names. Sir Francis Drake is obviously Tavistock's most famous son and arguably England's greatest pirate.

The island began to be fortified in Tudor times but most of what is visible today is Victorian. We were able to walk the batteries,

casements, underground storage tunnels and accommodation buildings in their abandoned state and before the planned redevelopment starts. A few people were able to remember the times when Plymouth City Council leased the island as an adventure centre for young people but apart from that the place is much as the military left it.



Some urban myths were debunked (there is no tunnel to the mainland) and Bob had plenty of anecdotes about the escapades of the men (and some women) who lived there in years gone by. The guns fired in action only twice in over 400 years (and then to no effect).

A trip to the island affords very different views of familiar places looking across the water to the Hoe and Royal William Yard whilst in the distance the Tamar bridges and Kit Hill could be glimpsed.

An extremely interesting couple of hours and to be recommended.

John Noblet



Our Visit to Delamore

On May 15th a merry band of u3a garden/art lovers set off for Delamore near Cornwood. For the whole of May, the owners open up part of their house and garden to stage an art and sculpture exhibition to raise money for a charity. This year it was the Plymouth and Cornwall Cancer Fund. Coffee was the first port of call then out into the grounds to view the sculptures.

Then it was time for lunch before going into the house to view the paintings and smaller indoor sculptures. Again there were so many styles and sizes of paintings all beautifully displayed.



The rhododendrons and azaleas were at their very best, magnificent flowers of every hue sparkling in the sun. It was great fun wondering around the grounds and finding sculptures in all sorts of hidden places. Some were very large, for example an elephant, some very small such as a kingfisher. They were made of a variety of materials ranging from marble, bronze, slate, wood, wire and steel. We admired the skill and workmanship but sometimes were quite critical which is the fun part of going as a group.

We all had our favourites and those we would like to take home but we noticed how prices had really gone up so it was mostly wishful thinking.

There was still more we hadn't seen but really that would require another visit. Delamore, as usual, did not disappoint and we came away inspired and happy with what we had seen.

Thanks to Janet and Jennie for organising such an uplifting visit.

Mary Brock

Science Group Gets Off to a Flying Start

I think the next century will be the century of complexity, said Stephen Hawking in 2000. He was right, because our designers and engineers have decided that complexity is progress.

It is now seven years since I bought a car already two years old which came with a 533-page instruction book. I realised that life was going the wrong way when on page one it told me to read the book before driving. It has thirty-five buttons and controls in front of the driver, eighteen of them on the steering wheel, plus indicators, wipers and lights. Many were meant to make driving safer, but have had precisely the opposite effect. British TV had three channels in the early 1980s. Our current six-year-old set came with a forty-four button remote plus another forty-two on the recorder control. Another expert realised that a microwave which only heats a bowl of porridge or your tepid tea was not enough. Why not add a dozen more gadgets so that it can cook your Sunday joint? The result is a 56-page manual and a control called 'Chaos Defrost', which I have never dared to use.

I remember telephones where you dialled the number and that was that. Our current land-line phone came with a seventy-one page handbook. Paying a bill by bank transfer takes me twenty-one clicks-and-enters plus three lots of passwords. Passwords? There's a laugh. Don't write them down, they tell us. Nearly every website wants one and we must never use the same one twice. The result is that I have a couple of hundred, written down, of course.

Then there's parking. Once upon a time you shoved coins into a slot, took the ticket and went on your way. Two minutes. Now, without a mobile phone, half a dozen of the right apps and plenty of spare time, you have to stay at home.

Instead of making life simpler, technology only manages to complicate things and seems fixed on the idea that complexity is the answer to everything. That's not the way it's supposed to work.

A worried Canadian entrepreneur has pointed out that there's an urgent need to rethink and acknowledge the fact that any growth in capabilities only adds benefits up to a certain point. After that, you hit what he calls the peak of complexity and the returns begin to diminish. The other side of that peak, he says, could mean that we're heading towards a massive societal collapse.

If we are to avoid that collapse (in a really complex system like the NHS for instance) we will need help. But where from? Where else but AI (Artificial Intelligence), or the current most advanced system GPT-4 (Generative Pre-trained Transformer 4).

This new wonder wizard will, they say, transform work and creativity and shape the future of technology. Will it help us deal with our complex world? Maybe. There surely is some worry about it being 'Pre-trained', which must mean it has been fed with vast quantities of existing knowledge.

But that existing knowledge is not performing very well, is it? Our poor old world is in such a state that many people think we will either blow ourselves up or we'll slowly roast till we're forced to go with Elon Musk to Mars.

Artificial Intelligence, said Stephen Hawking, is likely to be either the best or worst thing ever to happen to humanity, so there's huge value in getting it right.

Ivor Williams

Classical Music Appreciation

We continue to cover a wide range of composers and have enjoyed listening to music we're familiar with as well as pieces we've never encountered before. In July Rossini gave us a fabulous range of music, much of which U3A members will know, including the fabulous *Petite Messe Solonelle*, *The Italian Girl in Algiers* and, of course, *The Barber of Seville*.

The Czech composer Smetana and Denmark's Carl Nielsen offered a considerable contrast. **Bedřich Smetana**, born 1824, in what is now the Czech Republic, was the first truly important Bohemian nationalist composer, creating a new musical identity for the Czechs, whereas **Carl Nielsen**, Denmark's foremost composer, was born nearly half a century later and unlike Rossini and Smetana his work was not fully recognised until the 1960s.

At Christmas we were hugely entertained by Victor Borge. (If you're not familiar with him, I heartily recommend the many clips you can find on YouTube). 2023 saw us move on to Mahler and then, by way of contrast, Rimsky Korsakov and Glazunov (unfamiliar to many in the group).

One of our members had been very impressed by a performance she heard on the radio of Clara Schumann's Piano Concerto.

We devoted our April meeting to her work and agreed she was a tremendous composer, very much ahead of her time. She was born in 1819 in Leipzig and was a pianist, composer, and enormously respected and influential piano teacher. She exerted her influence over the course of a 61-year concert career, changing the format and repertoire of the piano recital and composed solo piano pieces, a piano concerto, chamber music, choral pieces, and songs.

She married Robert Schumann against her father's wishes and gave birth to eight children and was thus a victim of the times in which she lived. She herself wrote, "I once believed that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not desire to

compose – there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?" Her husband also expressed concern about the effect on her composing output:

Clara has composed a series of small pieces, which show a musical and tender ingenuity such as she has never attained before. But to have children, and a husband who is always living in the realm of imagination, does not go together with composing. She cannot work at it regularly, and I am often disturbed to think how many profound ideas are lost because she cannot work them out.



A photo of Clara in her later years, published in the New York Times

As we write this we are planning the session for May which will be devoted to the 16th century composer Thomas Tallis ... another contrast!

Elizabeth and Michael Johnson

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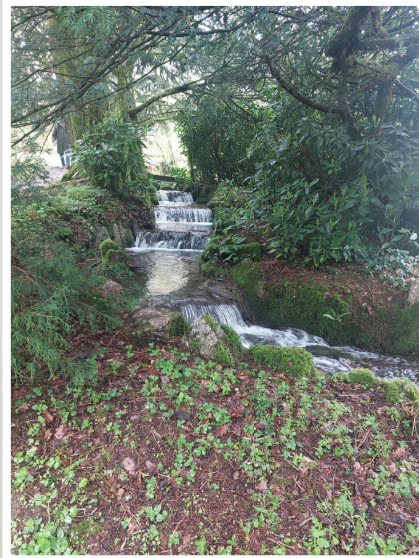
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Garden Visits at Lukesland



There was a special door crafted for Jean Rice in the courtyard large doors at Lukesland!



Photos and words by Jennie Youngs and Janet Hunt

Backgammon Group

We meet every Wednesday at 11am at Tavistock Golf Club, (A change from the original 2pm slot). Past experience is not necessary.

In 2004 archaeologists excavated a Backgammon-like game made of ivory and turquoise that is recorded to be over 5,000 years old. The historical significance of Backgammon is unrivalled.



Backgammon is a game of great skill, but easy to learn. It is the epitome of: "The more you know the more you don't know".

The Tavy District u3a group is recently formed. The founders are Gerald and Rosemary Whitehouse, members of the UK and French Backgammon Federations with many years' experience. They regularly play in tournaments against international players which gives them a great insight into the game.

The aim of the group is to encourage the playing of Backgammon, because IT'S GOOD FOR YOU and exciting because you never know the outcome until the last throw.

We welcome players who would love to learn the game, as well as welcoming others who play regularly online but would like to play face to face from time to time. Others may have played in the past and would like to resurrect their playing, so go along. If you have a Backgammon board do bring it with you.

Go and join in. Contact Gerald

Gerald Whitehouse

Weekenders go to see Pantaloons !

Such an enjoyable evening at the Watermark, Ivybridge on Wednesday 31st May. I had never been to a Pantomime production before and this was their take on Emma, the classic by Jane Austen.

So funny and with only four people on stage the hilarity was increased when a chair by chance broke. Poor Emma landed on the floor unhurt but the story line was adapted to include a broken chair.

Changes of hats, bonnets and coats and even a dress covered many leading characters. The use of spoons added to the cast numbers. Spoons you say, how did that work? Well, to see had to be believed.

Audience participation added to the fun. An extremely enjoyable evening was, I believe, experienced by all.

Teresa Cooper