

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.*

Wednesday 20th September

The coach trip to Brixham and Coleton Fishacre now fully booked with quite a large waiting list. If you find you are now unable to go please let Janet know asap.

Payment of £16 is due at the September meeting, or by BACs. A reminder will be sent out to all those who haven't yet paid but are on the list just after the Picnic in the Park.

The Down's coach will leave from outside St Eustatius Church at 9am prompt, and we should return by 6pm.

Contact Janet

Thursday 12th October

Royal Citadel visit. Meet 2pm at the Commando Memorial, Blue Badge Guided Tour £12.50

Each tour is limited to 15 people. There are very strict rules as this is a military establishment, and you have to have photographic identity, a Driving Licence or a Passport are acceptable. Bags will be searched and no phones/cameras/unsealed liquids/large bags/rucksacks are allowed.

The first 15 to sign up and pay will be able to go but there will also be a reserve list.

Contact Janet

Thursday 16th November

Quiz and Cream Tea in the Parish Rooms, start at 2pm. £6 Limited numbers.

Contact Norma

And Finally.....

Thanks again to Margaret Garton

u3a
Tavy District



Tavy District u3a

THE NEWSLETTER



No 123

September 2023

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	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

web@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

Newsletter Editor: John Noblet

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 17th October 2023

(NOTE EARLIER DATE)

Send contributions to johnnoblet@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

Theatre News

As far as 1923 are concerned we have a few theatre trips still to go. There are tickets still to be collected for **BRB's Black Sabbath** ballet and **Jesus Christ Superstar**. We also have the tickets which were booked for **Edward Scissorhands** and **2:22 a Ghost Story**. These will all be available for collection at the September meeting.

The Backstage Tour was very worthwhile (see Jackie's article) as well as being oversubscribed, so I am trying to arrange another one over the next few months with the Theatre Royal's Technical department. Other than this, we are now looking at productions in 2024 and beyond!

You may now sign up to see **The Wizard of Oz** on 28th March next year- this is based on the original MGM musical with some additional material by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Tickets are £24 for the Circle and the payment deadline is December.

We have also booked for **And Then There Were None** on March 14th - which is a new play based on the Agatha Christie novel. Tickets are £34 for the Stalls and the payment deadline is November.

If we didn't know already, it was made clear on our backstage visit why the Theatre Royal is able to host major shows when they go on tour. Consequently, they are looking forward to hosting the much-lauded and multi award-winning musical **Hamilton** for six weeks **in the summer of 2025**.

This is sure to be very popular and will be booked very quickly. Tickets go on sale next Spring and, in spite of it being over a year before the event, we will undoubtedly have to book and pay straight away. I will be asking members who would like to see this to sign a *Provisional Interest* list to give me an idea of how many tickets to book. As soon as I am able to book seats I will confirm the date and the ticket price and ask those on the provisional list to make a firm commitment and pay.

I have been running the u3a theatre group for over a year now and have been mostly 'learning on the job'. One thing that has become clear is that some productions require us to book and pay for tickets far in advance of the show, which was not the case previously. We have missed out on a couple of productions because I did not think that members would be able to commit so many months ahead. We are trying a different approach with Hamilton and, if this works, it may give us a way forward for other shows in the future.

As ever your views would be most welcome.

Carole Thompson



Remember the early deadline for the next Newsletter

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Forthcoming Walks

Thursday 28th September.

Meet at Pixon Lane at 8.30 for a 8.40 car share to Padstow.
This will be a full day out using the Camel Ferry, £3 each way, to Rock.
It will be a circular walk along the beach and coastal path to St Enodoc Church.
Coffee stop in Padstow before we start, bring a packed lunch or pick up a pasty.
Approx 5mls with a few ups and downs.

Contacts:
Chris Webb
Jennie Youngs

Thursday 5th October

Meet at Pixon Lane to leave at 9.40 to car share to Gunnislake Station car park.
A circular walk along the banks of the Tamar and through Gunnislake Clitters Mine.
The walk is 4 -5 mls on quiet lanes and footpaths with a few ups and downs. At the start there is a very steep downhill.
Bring a packed lunch or book an optional lunch at The Rifle Volunteer.

This walk will be led by Val Blair.
Contacts as above, Chris Webb and Jennie Youngs.

Thursday 26th October

Meet at Pixon Lane to car share, leaving at 9.40 to park at Norsworthy Bridge.
Circular moorland walk, Leather Tor, Crazywell Pool, Tinnars Hut for lunch.
Return on moorland path passing Down Tor Stone Row.
5.5 mls on paths and tracks with some open moorland. Bring a packed lunch.

This walk will be led by Tony James.
Contacts as above, Chris Webb and Jennie Youngs

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next Newsletter is 17th
October 2023**

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johnnoble@
tavydistrictu3a.org.uk**



There are bargains to be had at your local Co-op.
Hurry while stocks last. Seen by John Noble

FROM THE CHAIR

We have every reason to be very proud of our u3a. According to Beacon, our administration database and communication platform, we now have 440 members, which makes us the largest u3a in the Two Moors Network, by far. Our interest groups are thriving, and we have an active programme of theatre visits, events, and holidays. By the time you read this we will have held our third annual Picnic in the Park event, for which more than 100 members have registered. My heartfelt thanks go to everybody who contributes to making Tavy District u3a so successful.



We can be especially proud of our newsletter, which is truly outstanding and is head and shoulders above any others that I have seen. This is largely due to the skill, experience and commitment of our editor, John Noble, but also to everyone who takes the time and trouble to write articles and reports or submits photographs and other content. Please keep up the good work. We cannot have an excellent newsletter without excellent content.

The newsletter is distributed electronically to all members who have notified us of an email address. In the interests of inclusivity, copies are posted free of charge to members who do not use email, and a few members who do use email have chosen to have a printed copy sent to them in return for an annual charge of £12 to cover printing and postage. Some members who pay for their newsletters have expressed unhappiness with these arrangements and informal feedback suggests that others may only glance at the electronic newsletters and would prefer to have a printed copy.

So, the committee has revisited this issue. We wanted to take into consideration the cost of printing; for example, printing 125 copies costs approximately £110 for a 24-page edition, and £140 for a bumper 28-page edition. You can see that if we were to print copies for 440 members six times a year, the cost would be substantial. We are also mindful of the ecological issue of consuming paper only for it to be thrown away. We therefore propose to introduce the following with effect from the September meeting:

1. The newsletter will be circulated electronically to all members on email as at present.
2. Newsletters will continue to be posted free-of-charge to members who do not have email. My thanks go to Caroline Lorenzi who organises this.
3. A limited number of each newsletter will be printed and will be available to be picked up free of charge at the Wednesday speaker meetings. If you value your newsletters and would like to keep them for reference, then you are most welcome to take one. However, please think twice if you are only likely to flip through a copy and then throw it away. In the past newsletters have been found abandoned on chairs in the hall after our meetings. In future your committee will do a sweep through the hall at the end and any newsletters left behind will be returned to the pile to be available the following month. However, as Lidl would say, when they have gone, they have gone.

From the Chair *Continued*

4. On request, newsletters will be posted to members who do have email in return for a charge of £6.00 a year to cover postage. The newsletters themselves will be effectively free. Members who have already paid £12.00 for 2023 will receive their newsletters by post in 2024 without any further charge. Please let our treasurer, Angela Pitt, know if you want to subscribe to postal delivery.

Now I am not a fan of blowing one's own trumpet, but we do have an opportunity to raise Tavy District u3a's profile a little and perhaps recruit some new members.

There is to be a Community Wellbeing event in Butchers Hall between 10am and 2pm on Friday 6th October and on your behalf, I have indicated to the organisers that Tavy District u3a wishes to take part. We hope to have a stand with some eye-catching promotional material and a group of volunteers ready and willing to tell any interested visitors what we do. Some of the committee will be there but any other interested members would be very welcome to come and join us. Even though our membership is quietly increasing, there will always be a need for new, hopefully a little younger, members who might in due course take over running our wonderful association.

Best wishes to you all.

Paul

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NOTE THE EARLIER DATE!

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u3aweek

French Conversation

The French Conversation group moved back to the Friends Quaker House in February. The building has been renovated boasting a larger meeting room, a new kitchen, a stairlift and toilet facilities. The venue suits us as it is also near the bus station and the Bedford car park. Our group membership remains the same. Whilst four members left us this year for different reasons, four new ones have recently joined us. We continue to discuss various topics that allow everyone to take part. The last one was about superstition. We discussed those of Europe, Japan, Mauritius and Madagascar.

We noticed the universality of some superstitions such as opening an umbrella inside the house, number 13 and Friday 13, and black cats even though the interpretation might differ. The belief in the cross and in salt as protection against evil is also universal. Throwing salt over your left shoulder to protect yourself against bad luck goes back to the ancient Greeks. It was thought that evil spirits hiding behind you, on the left-hand side, would be blinded by the salt. If salt symbolizes preservation and purification, it is also a symbol of the sacred. In Madagascar, the word *fanasina* means both salt and the sacred.

The word *Fady* in Malagasy encapsulates all that is taboo but also sacred. It's a set of unwritten social rules and beliefs handed over by the forefathers or introduced by village chiefs. Each region and each of the nineteen tribes have their own *fadys*. Despite the diversity of the population and the size of the country, everyone respects the main *fadys* particularly when they are believed to be sacred or they concern the ancestors, funerals, places of sacrifice. As an example, it is *fady* to point at tombs. If you inadvertently commit this disrespect towards the ancestors something very bad will happen to you. To avoid such calamity, you should draw three crosses on the guilty forefinger using your other forefinger. If you are a foreigner people may not take it kindly. You will get a good reception if you ask on arrival to a village what their particular *fadys* are.



Fadys can have disastrous consequences for conservation. In the case of lemurs which as we all know are endemic to Madagascar *fadys* can work for or against them.

They will be generally respected by a *fady* if they are thought to be the reincarnation of ancestors. That doesn't mean though that they are completely safe. There are more than 30 lemur species classified as endangered or threatened with extinction. This is mainly the consequence of deforestation.

The Aye-Aye are viewed as sacred in some regions while in others they are considered as the bearer of evil spirits that will bring misfortune and death. Some people think that if an Aye-Aye points its smallest finger at you, then you are marked for death and if it is seen in the vicinity of a village, it's the whole village that is threatened. The inhabitants will abandon the whole village and settle elsewhere or killed the lemur and hang it the entrance of the village hoping a passer-by will carry the bad omen elsewhere with him.

The very fact of the Aye-Aye being out of its normal habitat is seen as unnatural and therefore a bad omen. Some believe that it enters your house at night and digs into your heart with its long forefinger. In fact, the Aye-Aye's unusually long forefinger is used to search for food in tree trunks. As a consequence of this superstition and the gradual destruction of its habitat, the Aye-Aye is now on the list of endangered species.

Maurice Larose

I Was There

The National Service Act of 1948 called for all physically fit males between the ages of 17 and 21 to serve in one of the armed forces for an 18-month period. I know. I was there.

In August 1949 I went, complaining, unwilling and with some slight fear and doubt like every other 18-year-old, to the RAF initial training centre at Padgate, a suburb of Warrington in Lancashire. In the ensuing seven weeks we were transformed from a rabble of unkempt, wary and grumbling youths to a disciplined body in highly polished boots and carefully ironed uniforms, obeying orders without question.

We were divided into 'flights' of about twenty lads, with a corporal in charge. Very quickly you learned that his two stripes meant he was your God and you did what He said, instantly. They came down from their heights occasionally and taught us how to iron our trousers, polish our boots and fold our blankets in a very precise way every morning. Imagine! Twenty 18-year-olds suddenly aware of what their mothers did.

The training centred largely on the parade ground ('square-bashing'). This was not only to get us to march in time and in step, but to instil in us that when an order was given you obeyed instantly, and at the same time we were being gradually welded into a team.

Rather curiously we spent some time stabbing sacks of hay with bayonets while screaming as loudly as possible. Now surely by 1949 there would be no more fighting with bayonets?

The hardest work we did was on the nights before barrack inspections. Everything was polished, especially the coke stoves in the middle of the room. The floor had to shine, which considering twenty pairs of boots hammered it on and off all day, took some doing. Imagine again: twenty 18-year-old lads polishing floors as if their lives depended on it.

There were compensations: a 24hr pass, for instance, with much reduced 'forces' rail ticket fares. There was also overnight guard duty so you had the next morning off, and a turn in the cookhouse so you could choose to have two puddings instead of the mutton stew.

The first occasion we were allowed to make a choice was towards the end of training when we were asked what we wanted to do for the next eighteen months. This was also the moment which I think made the whole conscription affair worthwhile for most of the lads, at least in the RAF. I don't know what it was like in the other two services.

Officers arrived and set out a range of possible activities, such as aircraft engineer, air traffic control assistant, drill instructor, clerical and admin, motor mechanic, radio operator, and others that I can't remember. I was out of all this as I was already working for the Met Office when called up and would continue the same job afterwards, though in uniform.

For some of them the call-up had undoubtedly interfered with their lives, their jobs and their plans. But from what I saw, for the vast majority it suddenly gave them a chance to do something useful which they could carry on into civilian life.

We were not asked for our choice of personal pronouns, we all ate whatever we were given, missing breakfast was a crime, no-one had allergies, 'stress' hadn't yet been discovered, we did not dare to take offence at being told what to do a hundred times a day, and if the next training task was to run two miles, we did, no matter how unfit we were in the first couple of weeks.

You find that last paragraph hard to believe? All true. I was there.

Ivor Williams

Some of this article first appeared on the TCW website.

Speaker Programme *Continued*

Here are the details of the next three monthly meetings, all of which will take place in Tavistock Town Hall at 2pm on the first Wednesday afternoon of each month. Thank you to those who have provided me with speaker suggestions since the last newsletter. Do keep these coming and, as I have said before, do not hesitate to suggest yourself!

Jane Ward

J

PROGRAMME – SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2023

WEDNESDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER 2023 2pm – Tavistock Town Hall

A Cook's Tour: Baking Blind Goes Global.

Speaker: Penny Melville-Brown OBE

One of 8 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.

WEDNESDAY 4TH OCTOBER 2023 2pm – Tavistock Town Hall

Get Up and Stay Up and Live our Best Lives

Speaker: Prof. Vicki Goodwin, Professor of Aging and Rehabilitation, University of Exeter

As we get older should we be starting to take it easy or increasing how active we are? Vicki will discuss what research tells us is beneficial about sitting less and moving more and the types of exercise that could help as we get older. She is a physiotherapist, recognised for her research on ageing and on Parkinson's.

WEDNESDAY 1ST NOVEMBER 2023 2pm – Tavistock Town Hall

Rip off Britain - Stories from a Trading Standards Officer.

Speaker: John Hillier, former head of Trading Standards in the Vale of Glamorgan

The title of this talk is self-explanatory!

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Then and Now

In the last Newsletter (still available to view on the website) there were several photos of the Plymouth waterfront taken from Drake's Island when the Rocks N Ruins group visited in June.

Any Paskins has sent the night time image below taken in 1971. You might like to compare the changing skyline.



Pengelly Caves *Continued*

The considerable amount of mud and rocks taken from the cave during this work was sufficient to build a level causeway to the cave which is still in use today by visitors.

The William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust was formed to look after the site.

Why is it called William Pengelly? In the early 19th century many cave scientists took a very cavalier approach to excavations often removing whatever was found without proper records or cataloguing. William Pengelly was a rare exception. Born in Cornwall he was a self-taught man who rose to great scientific eminence. Today he is thought by many as the forefather of cave research.

Pengelly was meticulous; any object that had been removed was carefully recorded and listed to the extent that it was possible to pinpoint its exact location within the cave and at what depth in a deposit. He was renowned for his careful excavations at Brixham Cave followed in 1865 by Kents Cavern where he worked until 1880. He understood that newly discovered caves could reveal information of great value if systematically excavated rather than simply removing any artefacts found.



We went up to the ruined church on the hill (which is directly above the main cave system) and learned more about the infamous Cabell family from nearby Brook Manor. One of

several of the family called Richard was very unpopular and is interred in the elaborate tomb in the churchyard and inspired various legends of evil doings. In fact, it is thought that he might have been the inspiration for Conan Doyle's Baskerville.

Walking back past Baker's Pit, where there is another entrance to the cave system, the group, after donning hard hats, were then able to visit the main quarry area and go into the famous bone cave.



A very informative morning rounded off by some with a visit to nearby Buckfast Abbey to enjoy the sunshine.

John Noblet

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Pengelly Caves

On one of those rare sunny days in August, the Rocks N Ruins group travelled over the moor to Buckfastleigh to visit the Pengelly Caves. In a disused limestone quarry lies one of the historical gems of South Devon.

It's hard to imagine hyenas, elephants, rhinoceros, lions and hippopotamuses wandering around southern Dartmoor but they once did.

Our guides for the day were two very knowledgeable volunteers, Sheila and John, who explained in some detail the geological processes that have resulted in the limestone cave system at Buckfastleigh.

Buckfastleigh caves were formed in the limestone through solution; when rainwater hits the ground and increases in acidity, this in turn seeps down into small cracks and fissures in the limestone. Very slowly, over thousands of years, this acidity begins to eat into the rock creating tunnels and passages. It was through this process the caves were probably formed about 300,000 years ago.

Then, about 100,000 years ago the roof of one cave suddenly collapsed leaving an opening on the surface. Inevitably, some animals accidentally fell through this hole into the cave below and could not escape. Over a period of many years the cave gradually filled up with a mixture of soil, rocks and bones to create a debris pile and when this eventually reached the roof the cave was resealed leaving a historical time capsule.

The discovery of the caves came in the 19th century when quarrymen, extracting stone for building and making lime in the kilns for fertilizer, broke into small chambers and passages. They were either too busy to notice or understand the significance of any old bones they might have come across. It was not until 1938 that the true value of the cave's deposits was established, although nearly being dismissed at first.

A few young men were exploring one of the caves in the quarry when they climbed into a chamber through a difficult tight passage; there they found some very old bones. Taking one with them, they sent it to Torquay Natural History Museum to be examined. Amazingly an expert, A.H. Ogilvie, dismissed the bone as that of a common ox. The then curator, Mr Ed Milton, wrote a letter expressing disappointment, concluding that there were no bones of extinct animals in the Buckfastleigh caves. (This letter is now suitably framed and on display at the Pengelly Caves Centre!).



Undeterred the specimen was sent to the Natural History Museum in London, where it was identified as coming from a wild bison which had roamed this country 100,000 years ago and was now long extinct. The cave later became known as Joint Mitnor after the three men, Joint, Mitchell and Northey who found the cave.

Eventually hundreds of bones were carefully extracted establishing it as the largest deposit of mammal bones from the last interglacial period ever found in a British cave.

Poetry Group 2

Our group has covered a wide range of poets this year. We spent three sessions reading T S Eliot's Four Quartets. His ground breaking poem The Waste Land was published in 1922 so although these Four Quartets came 20 years later it seemed apposite to read this work when there was so much being written and recorded about him. One of our group had the CD of Paul Schofield reading them which turned the three sessions we devoted to them into a much more satisfying experience than just reading them ourselves.

Eliot provided a huge contrast to two much more modern poets whom we read later in the year. **Ocean Vuong** is a young Vietnamese American poet, essayist, and novelist and winner of several prizes including the 2017 T S Eliot Prize for his poetry. His grandmother grew up in the Vietnamese countryside, and his grandfather was a white American Navy soldier, originally from Michigan. His grandparents met during the Vietnam War, married, and had three children, including Vuong's mother. His grandfather had gone back to visit home in the U.S. but was unable to return when Saigon fell to communist forces. His grandmother separated his mother and aunts in orphanages, concerned for their survival. They fled Vietnam after a police officer came to suspect that his mother was of mixed heritage, leaving her prone to discrimination by the regime's labour policies at the time.



Vuong in 2014

Anthony Joseph



Two-year-old Vuong and his family eventually arrived in a refugee camp in the Philippines before achieving asylum and migrating to the United States. His father abandoned the family after this. Vuong was reunited with his paternal grandfather later in life. Vuong, who suspects dyslexia runs in his family, was the first in his family to learn to read, at the age of eleven. His challenging poetry reflects this highly disturbed childhood.

Anthony Joseph, born over 20 years earlier in 1966 is a British/Trinidadian poet, novelist, musician and academic. In 2023, he was awarded the T S Eliot Prize for his book *Sonnets for Albert*. These profoundly moving poems speak to the complex experience of growing up with an absent father. He was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad, where he was raised by his grandparents. He began writing as a young child and cites his main influences as calypso, surrealism, jazz, the spiritual Baptist church that his grandparents attended, and the rhythms of Caribbean speech. He has lived in the United Kingdom since 1989. We found listening to him actually reading his poetry, in his rich Caribbean voice, transformed it for us.

We spent two sessions listening to poetry set to music, ranging from Simon and Garfunkel to Strauss' Four Last Songs and rounded off the year with poetry by Simon Armitage, the Poet Laureate. I fear there was no-one who was much taken with his work which led to an interesting discussion!

Liz Johnson

Visit to the Royal William Yard

On July 11th a group of us met near the main gate to the Royal William Yard for a Blue Badge tour of the yard.

Plymouth has been involved in victualling the English Fleet since the 13th century. The first victualling yard was built on Lambhay Hill in the 1690's. Most provisions were made all around Plymouth area so eventually it was decided to bring all the victualling provisions together in area which was close to Devonport Dockyard and had a deep berth.

Work began in 1824 under the architect John Rennie. It took 3 years for the ground works to be completed. 370,000 tons of limestone was excavated from the area to provide the raw materials for extending the site into the sea and limestone for the construction. It is astonishing to see how deep the excavations are when you compare it to the height of the surrounding land. Construction lasted between 1827 and the mid-1830's.

The buildings were beautifully constructed using locally excavated limestone. Most buildings were faced in Cornish granite and the most important facades and the 13 foot Statue of William the 4th were constructed of very expensive Portland Limestone. Rennie wanted to ensure a good working environment for everyone, so even the rear of the buildings were well constructed. He used his own companies to make the girders, the metal frames for the windows and the ornate lighting sconces on the buildings.



When construction was completed all victualling activities took place on site. The Slaughter House was by the main gate, allowing direct access to the live animals. The Mills and Bakery provided a granary, mills for grinding the flour and a bake house where bread and hard tack biscuits were cooked. The Cooperage provided facilities for up to 100 coopers. Beer, spirits and vinegar were stored in Clarence and there was even a Brewhouse.

However, it was never fully used because improvements meant large quantities of water could be stored on board. Melville is an imposing building used for the yard's administration centre and for storage. The Gatehouse is the only land entrance to the yard and there are three access points from the sea.

Sadly, the yard was only fully utilised on two occasions, the Boer and Crimean wars. The abolition of the beer ration in 1831 and the introduction of canning techniques further sealed its fate. However, it continued as storage for the Royal Navy until 1992.

It was a tremendous visit to the Royal William Yard. Jane our Blue Badge guide was a fount of knowledge, she even showed us a fossilised brachiopod on one of the buildings but I couldn't possibly tell you where!



Steph Steer

Garden Visits Group



Rosemoor is such a fabulous garden to visit at this time of year!

Views of designer Jo Thompson's (Chelsea Gold Medal winner) Cool Garden and sitting on Val Turner and the late Brian Selwood's bench.

Janet Hunt

u3a
Tavy District

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Weekenders Bridging The Tamar



**There is something
About a bridge,
Two sides
Joining, linking
A pathway of thought
Which flows
With movement
And hope -
Changing lives
Broadening views
Connection -**

**A handshake across
The Tamar**

Janet Hunt



The National Trust Visits Group went to Mt Edgcumbe for a guided tour but in true u3a fashion started the day with coffee.
Photos : John Noblet

Petanque Group

Calling anyone who would like to join a fun group who spend a lot of their time admiring a good shot or more often wondering what happened with a bad one.

The u3a Petanque group meet at 10 am on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month at the court next to the Sensory Garden in the Meadows

No experience is necessary, the rules are quite simple and no particular athletic skill is required. We play dependant on the weather although we have on occasion had to chase the ducks off the pools on the pitch. All equipment is provided and we only have to count up to 13 so our intellectual abilities are not stretched.

If you would like to give it a try just come down to the Meadows on the 2nd or 4th Monday of the month at 10.00 am and ask for me or Liz Heaton and we'll get you started.

Come and join us for a most enjoyable couple of hours.

Suzanne Spencer



Backstage Tour

At the end of July, a group of 20 from Tavy District u3a had an illuminating 90 minute backstage tour of Plymouth's Theatre Royal. We were escorted by Joe, the Technical Manager, with input from the Head of Sound and Front of House.



We visited the backstage and technical areas of the main Lyric theatre and the recently renovated Drum theatre. Shrek was the production during that week so we saw their set and many of the props as well as costumes.

Joe was an engaging guide who provided in-depth knowledge of what happens behind the scenes. The tour provided an enjoyable and fascinating insight into the work that goes into the precision planning of their different weekly productions.

Jackie Kitcher

Environmental Enthusiasts

We have decided to improve our name and are now the "Environmental Enthusiasts" as that is what we are!

Our first meeting on 19th July was a chatty affair sitting in the garden in the sunshine (well, under the veranda actually). We started off with some research done on the vexed issue of peat. We were all surprised to discover that:

- peat is not a "superfood" for plants -it retains moisture well until it gets dry and then it becomes hydrophobic (repels water) and is thus very poor at re-wetting. Nutrients need be added by the gardener/compost manufacturer plus wetting agents.
- peat was not widely used until the mid 20thC when it was very actively promoted because it was so cheap to produce (peat bog is cheap to buy and harvest) and cheap to transport because it is relatively light.
- the Victorians used a mix of loam, sand and charcoal for compost.
- peatlands in the UK store more carbon than all of Europe's forests and 20 times what our own forests store.
- in a healthy condition, UK peatlands could sequester 3 million tonnes of carbon per year.
- the UK Government has put back the deadline for banning peat in retail compost to 2030
- biodiversity and the water table are also severely damaged by peat extraction

(Information sourced from IUCN UK Peatland Programme managed by the Wildlife Trusts and funded by Esmee Fairbairn Trust)

We also discussed pesticide use in the garden and basically concluded that all pesticides are toxic to a wide range of plants, insects and animals and thus interfere with biodiversity in your garden and should be avoided if you want a healthy garden!

We then progressed to discussing our future programme of meetings. In essence we will aim to have a mix of environmental talks and events and visits that cover a broad range of topics as suggested by the group.

We hope to visit the Calstock Wetlands Project on September 20th (further details will follow). Anyone interested should contact me.

Ginnie Parker



Seen by Pauline Noblet in an Ivybridge garden centre

Daisy Pulls It Off

Six of us from the Weekenders Group went to see this excellently performed production by the Tamaritans Amateur Theatre Group in the Drum, Theatre Royal Plymouth. The casting and acting was superb.

It is a comedic parody of supposed life in girls' boarding schools between the two wars, based on the tales from Angela Brazil and Enid Blyton, amongst others.

Daisy Meredith, the first scholarship girl at Grangewood School for Young Ladies, is from a poor background and has to overcome snobbishness and pranks from her privileged classmates. But she is excellent at everything, singing, writing, sport - even scoring the winning goal in the inter school hockey final...(play up, play up, and play the game...!)

Whilst life is full of hot water bottle fights and midnight feasts, standing up when a teacher enters the room (!), agonising over getting an order mark for ink blots on her essays, forbidden to talk to boys from the local school, plucky Daisy still finds the time to rescue her chums who have fallen down the cliff, discover the secret treasure to save the school from closure, and that the school gardener is not only her long last amnesiac father but the owner of the school. And being aware of her responsibility to King and Country.

Tophole. Jolly hockey sticks. A spiffing afternoon.

Margaret Garton

The Rocks N Ruins Group visited Pengelly Caves at Buckfastleigh. See article elsewhere.

Some went on to Buckfast Abbey afterwards

