

The Events Committee

Payments for Events

Our preference for payment for any events activity is

1. By credit/debit card on the card machine, to make use of our new technology, at the monthly meetings
2. By BACs, pay **after** you've confirmed that you are signed up on the list for the event. The BACs details for Events are; Tavy District U3A, sort code account number adding your surname and the name of the visit you are paying for. Would you also please email the visit leader to confirm the transaction.
3. Cash/cheque

Coach trip to Bath Thursday 4th July

Depart 8.00am opposite The Bedford Hotel

Arrive in Bath 11.00am

Optional guided walk 11.00 – 1.00pm

Depart Bath 4.15pm

Arrive in Tavistock 7.00pm (approx.)

Cost Coach £28; Walk £10

At the time of going to press, there are 3 places left.

Contact Norma;

Coach Trip to Looe Wednesday 11th September £12

Depart: 9am opposite The Bedford Hotel

Arrive Looe: 10.15a.m.

Depart Looe: 4pm

Arrive Tavistock: 5.15pm

Visit the various attractions in Looe - a boat trip around the bay, local Cornish craft shops, boutiques, the Heritage Centre, have lunch by the harbour or the beach.

Booking essential - July monthly meeting in Town Hall, or Shirley

And Finally

With the Olympics around the corner, thanks to Margaret Garton for this timely pearl of wisdom.

u3a
Tavy District

Most people have heard of Karl Marx, but few know of his sister Onya, an Olympic runner. Her name is still mentioned at the start of every race.



Tavy District u3a

THE NEWSLETTER



Tavy District u3a visited St Michael's Mount on a lovely sunny day. (See story inside)
Photo: John Noblet

No 128

July 2024

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 20th August 2024

Send contributions to johnnoblet@tavydistrictu3a.org.uk

Theatre News

We are just coming to the end of a busy booking cycle for shows at the Theatre Royal in Plymouth. On 8th August 2024 a small group of eleven of us are going to watch **The Devil Wears Prada**, a new musical with music by Elton John, which has been developed and will be premiered at the theatre in Plymouth. On 7th August 2025 a larger group of twenty nine will be going to see **Hamilton**, a musical famously developed and premiered on Broadway - if we are spared! In between these dates we have two plays, three ballets and a comedy musical booked.

There are a number of other productions which we could have booked and which would be worth seeing, for example **War Horse**, **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang** and **Only Fools and Horses** but these would have had to be paid for far in advance at the same time as our other bookings. I recently made an early booking for **Mary Poppins** for the Spring of 2025, but the combination of the ticket price and the fact we had to pay immediately, meant almost nobody was prepared to commit, so I cancelled.

We are fortunate that our 'local' venue offers such an eclectic choice of theatre, ballet and opera. As we can't book everything I tried to choose a range of productions that I hoped would appeal over the next year, though some have proved more popular than others. Please let me know if there is a particular show or type of show that you would particularly like us to book in future.

Carole Thompson 07818 416934

Woodtowners Reading Group *continued*

woodlands, the darkness of the alleyways near the public houses, the hard slog along trackways for carts and horses, the suffering of prison life in York Castle.

The personal view of the Coiners' King David in phonetic script adds variety (and considerable swearing!) to the narrative. Haven't They Grown can be put in the same category as a good detective novel. The reader has to solve the puzzle of an incident in the first chapter. The persistent narrator, Beth, does not rest until she is satisfied she has found a rational solution. To reveal the plot would spoil the enjoyment for other readers! It's a thoroughly modern novel, of an age where AI is gaining prominence and solutions may not always appear predictable and rational.

Sophie Hannah has an interesting style; we learn of developments through Beth's conversations with other people, the exchange of opinions about the very few events are what moves along the plot in stages.

We all enjoyed our chance this time to read an Agatha Christie novel, The Pale Horse, rather than watch one of her films, however excellent they may be!

The author certainly left an incredible legacy, having written so many novels and plays during her lifetime. Box office successes at the theatre and cinema still command huge audiences.

We were divided as to "who done it" by page 40 apparently, when one member of our group guessed correctly, unlike those who "backed another horse" and were taken by surprise on the penultimate page.

Unrestricted reading for our own enjoyment is forbidden in some countries. We should always be grateful for our freedom of choice. So enjoy your next novel too!

Frances Stephens

Woodtowners Reading Group

Our choice of books this year has been as varied as ever. Two were set in far-away places, one in wild and rugged terrain in the past, others depict life in Britain of the 1960s and of the present day.

Lean Fall Stand centres upon the results of an incident in Antarctica leading to the death of a research worker, one of a small team carrying out a geological survey. The atmosphere of an unexpected snow storm and the helplessness of men caught up by harsh elements and a drifting ice floe are powerfully conveyed.

The main character Robert "Doc" suffers a stroke as the storm threatens but is eventually located. He is flown home to Britain where his wife, a full-time research scientist, becomes his principal carer. Her husband has spent long periods on Antarctic surveys and she has brought up their children by herself. The relationship between them both is now on a different basis. His rehabilitation makes the second half of the novel an interesting contrast to the Antarctic setting for the drama.

The Stolen Bicycle was originally published in Mandarin by Wu Ming-Yi, an artist, designer, photographer and literary professor. He is also an environmental activist. (Darryl Sterk should take due credit for his excellent translation into English).

The everyday life of the main character is based on collecting bicycle parts and searching for one special "Lucky" model once owned by his father. In the course of his search, the reader learns of the Japanese invasion of Singapore through the jungles of Malaya. The "Silverwheel Squad" had been trained in jungle warfare and bicycle travel through difficult terrain.

There are interesting descriptions of rural life in Taiwan under Japanese administration and the intensive use of butterfly wings in the production of artistic artefacts for sale. The

loss of many rare breeds was an environmental result of this industry. Another section deals with the treatment of working elephants and also zoo animals in Asia during World War 2.

The family history of Wu Ming-Yi and his friends is the connecting theme throughout the book. His father disappears with his bicycle the morning after his shop and home in the market were demolished by the authorities. In the search for information many years later we understand a great deal more about the past history of Taiwan.

An incredibly wild and ruthless area is found "nearer to home" in The Gallows Pole by Benjamin Myers. A small part of Yorkshire set between 1767 and 1770 is definitely A MAN'S WORLD. Life is the survival of the fittest; a period when a Mafia-style community exists in order to survive. The Cragg Vale Clippers (or Coiners) attempt to raise themselves above the poverty widespread throughout the hamlets found near the bleak moorland above steep wooded valleys and rushing rivers. Progress is imminent. Wealthy Industrialists are planning factories to produce cloth rather than keeping the cottage industry of weaving fabrics at home. The villagers foresee the end of their way of life.

Some feel the need to take illegal measures to win through. Clipping legal currency to produce more coins is an "underground" activity. When the lawman arrives to end the practice and threatens imprisonment, plots are hatched to deal with any "King's Men" and the results are inevitable.

Myers writes about this period as a novel but has researched numerous factual details and individual family histories through descendants of the Cragg Vale Clippers. The atmosphere and events of the period are most convincing; the bleakness of the moorland bogs, the dangers of the dense

Continued on next page

FROM THE CHAIR

I am writing this in Salisbury where we are on grandparent duty while our son is at work and our daughter-in-law is attending a conference in the USA. Our two young grandsons are of an age where they are easy to look after and are good company, but they have to be ferried to and from school and their many activities. The last time we were "on duty" here for a weekend, one of the boys was running in a "mini marathon" and had golf lessons, both had swimming lessons, and one needed to be collected from a friend's house after a "play date". And of course, they needed to be fed and watered too.

We love all our grandchildren dearly and we will help whenever we can, but we have never committed to providing regular childcare in the way some of our friends have. This is partly because we have so many grandchildren, 11 at the last count, but mainly because we are busy with other commitments. I think our children understand although they may be tempted to think that as we are retired, we must have plenty of spare time to care for grandchildren. How wrong that is.

One of the pleasures of retirement is that, at least in theory, we can fill our days with activities we choose to do rather than those we have to do, and to some extent that is true. Nevertheless, many of us take on time-consuming roles that result in us being nearly as busy in retirement as we were when we were working. Why do we do it? When I retired, I missed being part of an organisation, and in my case having a major role in running it. I missed my patients and colleagues, and I missed being part of something that I valued and considered to be important. It took me several years to adapt. I needed to find something that made me feel that I was still making a meaningful contribution to society.

I joined Tavy District u3a because I wanted to improve my knowledge of the Italian language and there was an Italian group that I thought I could join. Perhaps inevitably the group turned out to be full and none of its loyal members were showing any signs of leaving. The group leader suggested that I set up a new group. I didn't feel I knew enough Italian to be able to lead a group but shortly afterwards I became aware of a u3a group in Port Talbot that had developed a beginners' course and were looking for other u3as to try it out. I travelled to South Wales to join them for one of their sessions and on my return to Tavistock I set up a new group using the Port Talbot course. The group is still running and some of the founder members are still taking part. We no longer use the original course but instead make liberal use of the huge range of language learning resources available on the internet to inspire and challenge us. My role is more that of a facilitator than a leader.

I hadn't intended to serve on the u3a committee. I was content to run my group, attend the monthly speaker meetings and go on a few walks. However, one day I felt a tap on my shoulder and the next thing I knew I had been persuaded to join the committee and take on the role of Chair. Apart from a year off, I have served on the committee continually to the present day. I get great pleasure from working with my conscientious and committed fellow committee members, and I feel proud of what we have achieved over the last few years and particularly how our u3a has bounced back from the Covid pandemic.



The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th August 2024

From the Chair *Continued*

So, retirement is an opportunity to enjoy ourselves, give our families a hand, make new friends, and contribute to society. Membership of Tavy District u3a ticks several of those boxes. However, if you would like to get more from your membership and think you might enjoy playing a part in running our organisation, we are still looking for committee members to succeed some of the existing committee in March 2025. We particularly need a new Secretary and a Vice Chair. Let me know if you would like to know more. And if we don't currently offer a group that meets one of your interests, do consider setting one up. It's not that difficult and you would not be on your own. The group co-ordinator, committee and existing group leaders are here to help.

Enjoy the summer - when it finally arrives - and don't forget to put the u3a Picnic in the Park on the 21st of August in your diaries. More information to follow.

Best wishes to you all.

Paul

Canasta Group

If you are of 'a certain age' you will probably have played Canasta in your youth (which I'm sure was not long ago). It's a great card game, built on making groups of a the same card, across suits (see the [Wikipedia link here](#) which covers a brief history of the game and the rules).

We are really pleased with the success of the group. It started in September 2022, with an intrepid group of 6 and has grown to around 15 people. Our group is really welcoming, so have no anxiety if you fancy coming along. Often, it is those who express worry at the start of the game who win the hand!

We play in Tavistock Library, a warm and welcoming environment. Group members pay £12 per quarter which covers room hire and a range of hot drinks and biscuits (I have noticed some people making a bee-line for the chocolate digestives!); your initial visit is free of charge. Parking is available in the Bedford carpark, or in Kings carpark in Pixon Lane (where it is free to park). We meet on the 1st and 3rd Friday of the month from 2-4pm.

After a first 'beginners' session, you can play with anyone in the group – we have a group philosophy that we all learn together. Our groups vary: the more experienced players may choose to play competitively (often playing in pairs), some groups include beginners who are learning the game, whilst other experienced members prefer to play to chat and play.

Unlike other groups, I'm unable to tell you about the wonderful places that we've visited, books we have read or music we have heard. I can however tell you about the smiles as we play, the flexing of our brain muscles and the excitement as you are finally able to 'pick up the pack' or win the game with a concealed hand. I can promise you an addictive, but friendly game with the opportunity to make new friends.

Jacqui Foster

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th August 2024

Forthcoming Walks

Thursday 11th July

Meet at Pixon Lane at 9.30 for leaving at 9.40 to car share to Weir Quay. The walk will be by the River Tamar then up an old green lane with views across the river. About 4 - 5 mls, fairly easy walking. Lunch will be at the BoatYard Cafe, bring coffee and a snack. This walk will be led by Val Blair.

Thursday 29th August

Meet at Pixon Lane at 9 a.m. for a prompt start to car share to Bude. This will be an all day event with spectacular views on the coastal path and a return on the canal tow path. About 5 - 6 mls with some ups and downs on the coast path. Refreshments in the cafe on arrival, bring a packed lunch and more treats in Bude.

Contacts for all walks,

Chris Webb 01822 613884 or 07840 718419

Jennie Youngs 01822 854792 or 07802 730549

Rocks N Ruins

The Rocks N Ruins group went to Ditsworthy on a sunny day to learn more about pillow mounds, vermin traps and all things to do with the old industry of rabbit warrening.

Here are some of them outside the Warren House (which famously featured in the film "War Horse").

John Noblet



Photo by Chris Blumer

Membership Survey - the AI Way

Last month, the results of a Membership Survey were summarised in the Newsletter.

This month, I thought that bit might be interesting to get the AI viewpoint.

So, in answer to the observation “Why I like being a member of Tavy District u3a” here is the answer from Chat GPT.

Not far off the mark, is it?

John Noblet

Being a member of the Tavy District University of the Third Age (U3A) can be a rewarding and enriching experience for many reasons. Here are some reasons why you might enjoy being a part of this community:

1. **Lifelong Learning:** U3A offers a wide range of courses and activities that allow members to continue learning and exploring new subjects. This intellectual stimulation is both satisfying and beneficial for mental health.
2. **Social Connections:** Joining U3A provides opportunities to meet new people and make friends with similar interests. The sense of community and belonging can be very fulfilling.
3. **Diverse Activities:** U3A groups often have a variety of activities, including arts and crafts, languages, history, science, technology, and physical activities. This diversity ensures that there is something for everyone.
4. **Staying Active:** Many U3A activities involve physical exercise, such as walking groups, dancing, or sports, which help members stay physically active and healthy.
5. **Volunteering Opportunities:** Being a part of U3A often includes opportunities to contribute by leading a group, organizing events, or helping with the administration. Volunteering can be a great way to give back to the community.
6. **Personal Growth:** Participating in U3A can help boost confidence and self-esteem as members engage in new activities and achieve personal goals.
7. **Affordable Learning:** U3A is typically a cost-effective way to learn and engage in activities, making it accessible for many retirees and older adults.

A Cornish Odyssey

The National Trust Visits group marked the occasion of the 80th anniversary of D Day by visiting Pendennis Castle at Falmouth.

Built in the reign of Henry VIII the castle has seen huge changes over five centuries. There were special events marking the anniversary including talks on the role that the castle and Falmouth town played during the Second World War and in particular the events leading up to the embarkation of troops to Normandy all those years ago. Another aspect was the role of women in the D Day preparations.

A lovely sunny day added to the occasion as did the music from a 1940s band.

On the following day the 20 members of Tavy District u3a visited St Michael's Mount. This is an iconic landmark in Mounts Bay and whilst everybody must know of it comparatively few of our members had been there previously.

The visit was timed to coincide with the ability to walk across the tidal causeway. It was a steep climb up rocky steps to the “castle” perched on the top but it was certainly worth the effort.

The gardens exceeded expectations with the riot of colour looking out towards the Lizard and the Lands End peninsula.

A great couple of days. A few then went on to the Royal Cornwall Show on the Saturday.

John Noblet



Firing WWII guns at Pendennis Castle

St Michael's Mount harbour and the gardens.

Photos: John Noblet

MAKE A DATE OF IT



Don't forget

Wednesday 21st August

Picnic in the Park

Monthly Meetings

Below are the details of the next three monthly meetings – or, more precisely, two monthly meetings and our summer event.

Before turning to these, I thought I should let you all know that our May speaker Anthony Showell was delighted with the sum collected for Ukrainian Action at our meeting on 1st May - £212.50 – to which he added his fee.

Going further back, to April, we were told by Rebecca Smith all about the maintenance work carried out worldwide by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. I thought I would include two photos taken on two recent visits to France which I think illustrate perfectly the care provided by the CWGC to the graves of commonwealth servicemen.

Jane Ward



Ile de Batz, Brittany



Roscoff, Brittany

Photos by Paul Ward

PROGRAMME - JULY – SEPTEMBER 2024

WEDNESDAY 3RD JULY 2024 2pm – Tavistock Town Hall

A Schoolgirl's War

Speaker: Mary Smith, English teacher and education consultant

Mary spent her career in teaching English to teenagers and adults, and in school leadership. Her involvement in the subject of her talk came about because, while she was headteacher of a large secondary school, two fascinating discoveries were made there which provided a vivid and highly unusual insight into school life in World War 2.

The first was an extensive set of tunnels used as underground classrooms, and the other was the discovery of a fascinating and exquisite set of paintings of wartime schooling.

Tadpoles Steal the Show

It was a glorious sunny day when 20 Tavy District u3a members of the National Trust Visits group headed into Cornwall to Lanhydrock.

The thunderstorms that were forecasted failed to materialise until we were almost home. Weren't we the lucky ones! And what would you think was the highlight of the visit?

Was it the Long Gallery ceiling? Said to be a magnificent example of 17th century craftsmanship and the jewel in Lanhydrock's crown. For the first time in its 400 year history, this spectacular historic ceiling is undergoing full conservation. It is almost 120 ft long and we were able to climb a purpose built scaffold to see the full length of the gallery ceiling and the conservators at work.

It could have been a visit to the kitchen, brimming with Victorian technology, the cutting edge when it was refurbished in the late 19C.

Or of course it could've been the fantastic formal gardens full of shrubs in flower.

Or even possibly the walk through the woodland garden and along the River Fowey.

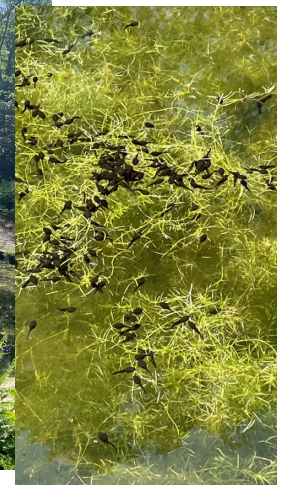
But no, the highlight was the family's swimming pool. (In Victorian times anybody who was anybody just HAD to have an outdoor swimming pool!!)

Although rather sad as a swimming pool it was an absolute haven for – tadpoles. Nobody was able to offer a guess as to the number of tadpoles, but it was literally teeming with them in their thousands.

So it was that the humble tadpole exceeded expectations, even of the cream teas consumed by some of those afterwards.

A sunny and very satisfying day was completed by the deluge that awaited us in Tavistock. How fortunate were we?

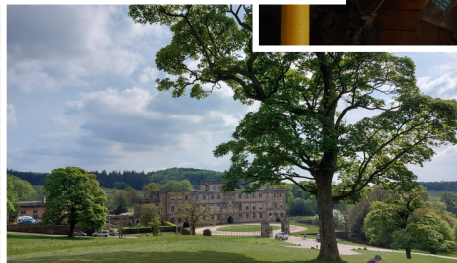
John Noblet



Hannah's Holiday Highlights



All photos by Hannah Miatt



Monthly Meetings Continued

WEDNESDAY 21st AUGUST 2024 – PICNIC IN THE PARK 2pm – 4pm

The caterers are booked and the space in The Meadows is reserved!

Full details will be circulated separately in early July and will, as before, include an RSVP with a deadline. Numbers are limited.

WEDNESDAY 4th SEPTEMBER 2024 2pm – Tavistock Town Hall

La Belle Epoque - The Golden Age of Portrait Painting

Speaker: Colin Pethick, Fine Art painter and Art Tutor

Colin will talk about “the golden age of portrait painting”. His talk and slides will cover major artists and their approaches, from the early 1900s up to the Great War and the huge change in subsequent art, particularly portraiture.

Editor's Note:

A fine example of the work of the CWGC much closer to home is Horson cemetery at Torpoint where there are 74 burials, 64 of whom were killed in an air raid on HMS Raleigh in April 1941.



A “Thank You”

The u3a Jazz Appreciation group would like to thank Mary Piper for so ably leading us for the last fifteen years.

She has found interesting and informative material for us to enjoy and enhance our love of Jazz. Listening to and watching music with friends on the first Monday morning of the month is a very pleasant way of spending time.

We are carrying on and hope to share the running of the group.

Thank you again Mary and enjoy your 'retirement'.

Mary Brock (on behalf of the Jazz Appreciation group).

Classical Music Appreciation 2023 - 2024

As always we have had a very varied year. July saw us listening to the music of Scriabin and in August we moved on to the more familiar music of Borodin. Many of you will know "Stranger in Paradise", from "Kismet", a show which took most of its themes from Borodin's music.

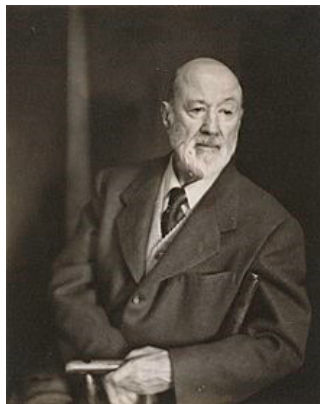
Throughout July and August the proms were in full swing so September and October saw us sharing our favourite extracts from the season with the group, via iPlayer.



Pieces chosen ranged from Isate Kanneh-Mason (sister to the well known Sheku) playing the fiendishly difficult 3rd piano concerto by Prokofiev to Felix Kleiser playing Mozart's Horn concerto with his feet. (He was born without arms).

In November we played the music of Charles Ives whose music is intimately related to American culture and experience, especially that of New England. You may think that's what you know about him but we learnt in this session that he liked to experiment with tone clusters, microtonal intervals (*smaller than a semitone*), and elements of chance in music (in one bassoon part he directs the player to play whatever he wants beyond a specific point) ... and it makes a very strange sound indeed!

After a quiz in December we returned in the New Year and listened to different pieces of piano music since its development from the 15th century keyboard.



Charles Ives

In February we focused on Karl Jenkins. This year sees him celebrating his 80th birthday. Many choirs across the country have included his composition "The Armed Man" in their repertoire this year, including Mount Kelly who gave an excellent performance of it this April.

To the surprise of many in our group, Jenkins started out as a jazz and jazz-rock musician, playing baritone and soprano saxophones, keyboards and oboe, an unusual instrument in a jazz context. He joined jazz composer Graham Collier's group and later co-founded the jazz-rock group Nucleus, which won first prize at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1970. Then In 1972, Jenkins joined the Canterbury progressive rock band Soft Machine, playing saxophone, oboe and flute along with keyboard instruments. The group played venues including The Proms, Carnegie Hall, and the Newport Jazz Festival.

Many will be familiar with his music for adverts and I urge you to track down, via YouTube, his advert for Levi's jeans "Russian" series. He also composed a classical theme used by De Beers diamond merchants for their television advertising campaign and Jenkins later included this as the title track in a compilation called *Diamond Music*, and eventually created *Palladio*, using it as the theme of the first movement.

Do you Struggle with Technology? *Continued*

Learning New Skills with LearnDevon

[LearnDevon](#) (Alexander Centre, Tavistock) is another excellent resource for older adults looking to improve their digital skills. They offer a variety of courses, including a short course on office products and email. Many of these courses are free, making them accessible to everyone.

Learners on the courses have access to an online version of Microsoft 'Office 365 for Business' which can be accessed by a web browser. This can be a great way to learn new skills at your own pace.

[Tavistock Library](#) have much more information about the Learn Devon services, as well as computers that you can practice on if you do not have your own device yet.

Conclusion

While living without a smart phone/laptop can pose challenges, resources like AbilityNet or Learn Devon provide valuable support and learning opportunities. By using these resources you can not only overcome technical problems but also acquire new skills, stay connected, and enjoy the benefits of the digital world. Remember, it's never too late to learn.

Graham Foster

Scrabble Group

A new Scrabble group has been set up by four members who expressed an interest in playing the word game on a regular basis.

We've had two meetings so far - in May and June - initially at members' homes. The players meet up on the first Tuesday afternoon of each month, from 2-4pm. However, if more people are interested in joining the group, we'll need to find a suitable venue.

The meetings are relaxed and informal, and aim to enable players to gain experience, learn from each other, and get lots of practice.

If anyone is interested in joining our Scrabble group please contact Penny Garrod.



Do you Struggle with Technology?

Some people in the u3a struggle with the latest technology, and live their lives without smartphones and minimal interaction with the internet. After having a career in IT and support, I believe that these people are missing out, and so I provide free personal IT support. I volunteer through a national organization called [AbilityNet](#) which specialises in providing free technology support for disabled or older people.

If you want to know more about me, then the Tavistock Times were kind enough to do a short article on me in the January 22nd 2024 edition of the paper. You can read it online [here](#). You will also have seen me managing the project and sound system at our monthly u3a meetings in the Town Hall.

Problems using your Smartphone or the Internet?

In today's digital age, smartphones have become an integral part of most people's daily lives. They offer a multitude of functionalities, from communication and information access to navigation, hassle free parking, online shopping/banking and health management. However, not everyone, particularly the older generation, has embraced this technology. This article explores the challenges faced by people living without a smartphone and how organisations like AbilityNet and LearnDevon can help bridge this digital divide.

The Smartphone Gap

Living without a smartphone can pose several challenges for older adults. Firstly, they may feel isolated from their family and friends who use digital platforms for communication. Secondly, they might miss out on the convenience (and savings!) of online services such as banking, shopping, and accessing health services. Lastly, the lack of digital skills can lead to a sense of disempowerment and frustration.

Bridging the Gap with AbilityNet

[AbilityNet](#) is a UK based charity that provides free IT support to older or disabled people. Their friendly technology volunteers can help with a range of IT challenges, from setting up new equipment (laptops, phones, printers, TVs), fixing technical issues, to showing how to stay connected with family and use online services.

AbilityNet's support is just a phone call away. You can reach them at 0300180 0028 during UK office hours. The volunteers are disclosure-checked and can assist with all sorts of IT challenges. We come and resolve your technical problems *in the comfort of your own home for free*.

This service can be particularly beneficial for older adults who may not have family or friends nearby to help with technical issues. As I am the only volunteer in the Tavistock area, your request will probably be routed to me. I may not have an immediate fix for you, but I will have the support of the AbilityNet network of professionals and volunteers to fall back on.

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th August 2024

Classical Music Appreciation 2023 - 2024 Cont'd

Other arrangements have included advertisements for the Renault Clio.



As a composer, his breakthrough came with the crossover project *Adiemus*. Jenkins has conducted the *Adiemus* project in Japan,

Germany, Spain, Finland, the Netherlands, and Belgium, as well as London's Royal Albert Hall and Battersea Power Station. The *Adiemus: Songs of Sanctuary* (1995) album topped the classical album charts.

In March we enjoyed the music of Manuel de Falla (most well known is the music for his opera "The Three Cornered Hat") and in April we moved on to Bruckner. As our leader was in France in May we took the opportunity to bring along some of our favourite pieces and were very struck by the wide range of choices ... which sums up the whole year!

Liz Johnson

Looking Back

Roger Plumb offers this to jog a few memories. He says he was clearing out old emails and came across this written to his brother

Sent: 25 March 2020 08:59
To: 'Richard '
Subject: isolation-COVID

Hi Richard,

Are you going out?

We are isolated as 'elderly and vulnerable'. So I'm going straight out to buy a Zimmer frame and dribble in the nearest café for the wrinklies at the volunteer drop in centre! As our hands tremble and our knees give way we will wait in for the food parcel and softly request our medication be delivered to the door.

What a pain in the arse this all is. We were jogging on quite well without a lot of Chinese killing themselves and now we are not allowed to do what we were probably not going to do anyway. The sense of loss is unimaginable. We can't go boozing to all hours at pubs, rave in an over-noisy outrageously flashing nightclubs, or visit overpriced restaurants to eat undercooked meat and drink cheap acidic wine, looking happy. Life has deteriorated to the extent that I now have to stay in and have excellent food with my lovely wife. The hardship of it.

Mind you the job list has not diminished one bit.

Ever positive, L has pointed out that it is a cost saving by not spending on spectacular holidays and cruises. Cancel everything and suffer the Mediterranean sunshine in the garden.

Hope you are OK and I will be glad to hear from you to know how your period of isolation is doing.

Roger

Be Sure to Take a Stick

Our town has several Pelicans, a scattering of Zebras, no Puffins or Toucans but we have a brace of nameless others. All pedestrian crossings of course. The only safe way to move onto the 'courtesy' variety in the town centre that are not yet included in the Highway Code is to limp meaningfully and show a walking stick before you step out. It is important to wave a thank you if the driver stops because the traffic has right of way and if you're run over it was your fault for not taking a stick.

The Pelicans are the only traffic lights we have so you can understand why the place is always upset by any temporary lights on the main road to the big city. They arrive with much irate comment in the local paper and are taken away with sighs of relief all round – especially from bus and taxi drivers.

During the infuriating periods of these 'temporary' traffic lights the shopkeepers are incensed, the commuters fume and the residents frantically try narrow streets never before used as rat-runs, all because (for instance) gas pipes are being laid for the new houses.

Gas? you may ask. Yes of course. Builders know that given a choice between gas central heating and heat pumps, most buyers will opt for well-tried cheaper (so far) comfort and warmth and are unwilling to pay extra for a dubious improvement simply to help the government's climate change agenda.

There is one curious aspect to this: the gas pipes are of a superior kind, ready for hydrogen. While the government says we must go for heat pumps, the gas companies have their own ideas. I wonder who will win.

On our single road to the city the many problems such as traffic lights, potholes, supermarket delivery vans and HGVs having their tyres changed, must have led to more working from home. This surely is a backward move. There has been some argument in the press that it is a good idea

because people actually like it. Some people actually like the idea of not working at all, but then we couldn't afford the NHS, could we?

Mind, that might happen anyway. If we all could do what we liked then there would be mass exodus from the less enjoyable jobs. Meanwhile someone has to slave at the foundations of our civilised life and let the government have some of their hard-earned money so they can pay their 5.9 million employees.

I would have gone for home working if that choice had been available years ago, but I know that after six months I'd have gone back, missing the social contact and rumour-spreading round the coffee machine but the most important part was the ability to go to anyone and ask for help. My last ten years at work covered the arrival of computers and the baffling software. Remember Lotus 123 anyone? Word Perfect?

On our new estates the world can't really be warming, can it? Laying in gas to new houses and at the same time not putting solar panels on the roof is a sign that life is splitting into irrational segments. You don't have to look very far to find more evidence. Society is riddled with them.

There are five types of pedestrian crossing in the Highway Code and Tavistock has to have something different.

Safe crossing to you all, and be sure to take a stick.

Ivor Williams

The deadline for the next Newsletter is 20th August 2024

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

Toe Rags and Legging It *Continued*

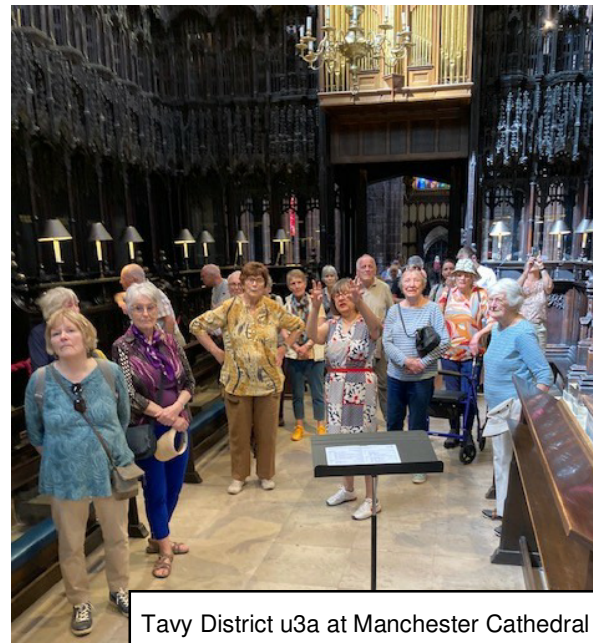
The adjacent Lowry Centre built in 1982 houses his paintings in a splendid setting with his matchstick men and women, smoking factory chimneys and coal blackened buildings. How things have changed in this post industrial age, where outside the city centre nature has replenished the land with greenness.

On Day 4 was a visit to the new RHS Bridgewater gardens. Created during the pandemic but already a place of beauty. This is where the very first canal was built to transport coal from the local mines. And then to Style Mill, a working example of the manufacture of cotton fabric that the North West was famed for. There we saw an example of a philanthropic mill owner who cared for his workers building small cottages with tiny gardens where food crops could be grown. This was not typical of the industry where people started work on the machines at 12 years of age and little children cleaned up the cotton waste and dust. Life expectancy was short.

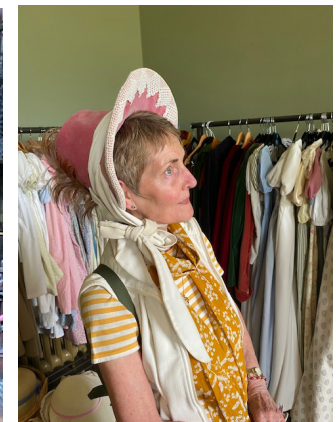
What are the thoughts that we share we wondered, as we leave this post industrial area. For us, pride in the engineers who constructed the lift and waterways, the vast wealth of the owners of industries and the grinding poverty of the workers on whose labour that wealth was created.

On Day 5 our return journey was broken by a three hour visit to Hanbury Hall in Worcestershire, a fine example of Queen Anne architecture. Built on the site of an ancient farm house in 1701 as a summerhouse for a wealthy London family of lawyers who loved it so much that it became their home. It had a homely comfort in many rooms and a dining room that could seat 22 people all perfectly set with Royal Worcester porcelain. Its excellent restaurant provided us with a light lunch and so we cruised back to Tavistock, many having a snooze on the way.

Bob and Sheila Naylor



Tavy District u3a at Manchester Cathedral



Sonja Armstrong and Annette Sweeney in costume at Lyme Park.

Toe Rags and Legging It

Another fantastic u3a holiday organised by Norma Woodcock, the 9th, and the sun shone all the way. This time we travelled in our luxury coach to the North West. The success of these holidays is the result of detailed planning and the friendliness of the participating members of Tavy District u3a.

But back to our journey north, leaving Tavistock early we stopped for a three hour visit to Wightwick Manor near Wolverhampton. This is a black and white building which is one of the few remaining examples of the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement. There are many William Morris wallpapers and fabrics. Also Pre-Raphaelite paintings complete the contents. Wallpapers and fabrics are protected by a low light level suggested by the Prince of Wales, now King Charles.

By early evening we were settled in our hotel in Stretton just south of Warrington, many taking a dip in the pool before dinner.

Our second day was a highlight of the trip — the Anderton Boat Lift. Around 1870 the Industrial area of the River Weaver and the Trent and Mersey Canal were busy carrying coal, cotton, food and pottery from the Wedgwood factory. The major port of Liverpool is 35 miles away. The Trent and Mersey had three long tunnels through hills with no tow paths for the horses. Whilst the wife walked the horse over the hills the man used his legs lying on his back to pull the boat through hence the expression “legging it.” The richer boat owners hired poor locals to do the job. They, having no shoes, wrapped their feet in rags and became known as toe rags. Nonetheless this tunnel job added two weeks to the journey.

The 50 feet high Boat Lift was constructed to carry loaded boats between the canal and the river in 1875, a great example of Victorian ingenuity and was restored in 1982. We sailed along the River Weaver, entered the Boat Lift and into the canal above. We also learned from our excellent boatman that

the wealth of this Nantwich area came from the extraction of salt, a much sought after commodity around the world, and also passing a chemical factory where Polyethylene was discovered. We heard that Hitler demanded that this factory must be not bombed but preserved for his victorious post war heritage. The river banks here were once lined with salt mines now a rich verdant green and a wealth of wild life.

In the afternoon of Day 2 was a visit to Lyme Park, used in the TV production of *Pride and Prejudice*. A magnificent house with its tapestries and paintings. The beautiful costumes gave some the chance to parade around in style whilst others imagined the dripping Darcy emerge from the lake. We heard tales of human bones being found in the Knights bedroom and saw the only remaining pre reformation Catholic missal, the rest being destroyed by Henry VIII.

On Day 3 we visited Manchester, now a vibrant city of skyscrapers, with a proud legacy of beautiful Victorian buildings. The city's wealth was built around coal and cotton in the Industrial Revolution, and of culture and learning with many historical libraries, music centres. It is now a city of high rise apartments, modern trams and sleek restaurants.

The name Manchester was derived from the Roman word for hill. This is now where the Cathedral stands, a proud place with much dark oak carving. Personally I felt that the city had lost the old charm of its historic Shambles area, that I knew as a local youngster.

No visit here could pass by the home of Manchester United so the coach halted and many entered the hallowed ground taking photos of Bobby Charlton's statue. Salford Quay was our next stop, with a cruise up the ship canal which was built in 1880 and had carried sea going ships from Liverpool into the heart of the city, bringing raw materials such as cotton for the local mills and exporting manufactured goods across the world.

Exmouth to Exeter Canal Trip

We joined in with the trip to Exmouth, along with nearly 50 others. Our transport arrived promptly near the Bedford and we were all aboard and ready to leave at 8.30. The coach was very clean and comfortable, the driver pleasant and helpful.

We arrived in Exmouth, right by the quay in time to have a short wander and then join the queue for the departure aboard the Stuart Line “cruise ship”. The captain did a marvellous job on the sail up the river, giving plenty of interesting information about the tide; the wildlife; the stately homes (and any sale prices) and sunken craft!

It was a fine bit of navigation to enter the lock at Turf Lock. There was only just enough tide to make it possible and we had an audience of very interested young people, who wanted to know if we were “having a party”. It certainly felt like it, especially when another group started on coffee and a shot (or two) of brandy. We felt special too as we had our own roadies! A team from Exeter harbour authorities were on hand at each lock and bridge, driving from one to the next, to do the honours.

Also very interesting was the road bridge at Countess Wear. There is a busy dual carriageway, which had to be stopped in both directions (BIG QUEUES). Nearest us was a swing bridge and for the other carriageway a bascule bridge, (a counterbalanced bridge which opened up to close to vertical). The captain gave regular snippets of information about the reasons for the construction of the canal and the dates as it was extended out from Exeter.

We arrived at Exeter quay and were transported up to the city centre and given instructions for the pick up. We had about 2 hours so Carolynne and I decided on a quick trip to Marks, little bit of retail therapy and bought a picnic, which we took to Rougemont Gardens. Very pleasant.

All in all, a great day out.

Some other feedback:-

“What an absolutely glorious day. Good weather at last after so much rain was a joy to sit back and enjoy our “cruise”

“Thank you for all your hard work and for such an enjoyable day today. It all went very smoothly and like clockwork. I even managed my afternoon nap on the coach coming home“

Alan Duncan

Recorder Group

Our recorder group will again be performing at Tavi Fringe on Saturday 13th July. Their slot will be in Butchers' Hall from 9.30 am to 10.00 am. There is a continental style café in Butchers' Hall this year, so you can enjoy a coffee while you listen.

The programme will include a mixture of classical and modern pieces.

Tavy District u3a Holiday May 2024

Just imagine being whisked away to a land steeped in history, strolling through beautiful gardens, marvelling at the architecture old and new and feasting your eyes on the treasures they contain, or drifting on canals in the sunshine to view jaw dropping feats of engineering. All this and more we enjoyed on our Tavy District u3a holiday 2024. Welcome to **The Heritage of Cheshire and the North West, and RHS Bridgewater.**

Top Facts and a Sense of the Place

This year we took in four National Trust properties (Wightwick Manor, Lyme Park, Quarry Bank Mill, and Hanbury Hall), two boat trips (the River Weaver and Anderton Boat Lift, and the Manchester Ship Canal), a guided tour of Manchester city centre and Salford Quays, and the new RHS Gardens at Bridgewater.

Individually they were very interesting, however when visited together over five days, a picture emerged of the industries and art that created this fascinating part of the country. Of the wealth that built the stately homes and factories, and funded the engineering and scientific advances. The hardships of working men, women and children, of decline and regeneration. Of commerce and political heroes, of skill and craftsmanship.

We learnt about the history of salt mining and the cotton industry, 'King Cotton', and the building of the canals that brought in raw materials and carried out the manufactured goods, to the Liverpool docks and the world beyond.

Our hotel at Stretton was west of Manchester on the Cheshire Plain. The landscape here is very flat, formed as part of a tropical sea bed around 200 million years ago, it is crisscrossed by many rivers and canals. The whole area was mined so extensively for the salt deposits that the land and water courses became polluted and denuded of plant and

wildlife. Now, through extensive conservation, you can visit the incredible Anderton Boat Lift which towers above you from the river and is still working, and see swans and herons on the canal banks, replanted with trees and reclaimed by nature.

Or visit the stunning RHS Garden Bridgewater, named after its adjacent canal, the 156 acre site rejuvenates an old dilapidated private estate. The gardens were designed by Tom Stuart Smith, and planting started around three years ago. It now boasts one of the largest walled gardens in the UK and extensive ornamental planting that flows through the more natural parkland landscape.

We spent a day in Manchester, starting with a tour around the city centre with an excellent Blue Badge guide, Denise. She introduced us to some of the iconic Victorian buildings as well as the stories behind the statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Abraham Lincoln, as a way of illustrating the dual faces of a city proud to have international solidarity with, and concern for the plight of workers around the world, but also a strong nose for business and trade. She painted a distinct picture of the character of Mancunians who produced world class libraries and many Nobel prize winners, and yet can still queue in their hundreds, around the block, for a sale on bridesmaids dresses (we saw it with our own eyes, and one of our party even got an invitation to the wedding!).

Manchester is undergoing a rapid redevelopment programme to bring into use its old industrial areas, much evident in the new buildings at Salford Quays. Media City, comprising chiefly of the BBC and ITV studios sits alongside the old docks, and new apartment blocks are springing up with canal side views.

The Manchester Ship Canal bisects the Quays. On one side, the award winning Imperial War Museum North designed by Daniel Libeskind, it focuses on people's

Tavy District u3a Holiday May 2024 continued

experiences of war and the legacy of conflict.

On the other side, the Lowry cultural centre containing a theatre and the LS Lowry Gallery. Both buildings, joined by the Millennium Bridge, are dramatically modern in style and are a real asset to the Manchester scene and people. We visited the Lowry Gallery, it holds many of his most famous paintings and a fascinating exhibition giving insight into the painter's life and influences, in and around Salford.

No tour of the North West would be complete without a cotton mill. The Quarry Bank Mill, opened in 1794, powered by a massive water wheel, takes you on a complete journey from bale to bolt. All the machinery for producing cotton cloth are still in situ and staff there explain the processes and give demonstrations. The mill buildings and engineering are enough to marvel at, but Quarry Bank oozes atmosphere, and they take great pains to give a voice to the many hundreds of workers that were employed here. Most touching was the Apprentice House, where we were told of the harsh and meagre lives of the children, some as young as 9yrs old and mainly orphans removed from workhouses. Employed for their small size and tiny hands, they worked six days a week, crawling between the moving machines to clear cotton fluff and reattach broken yarns. It was dangerous work and miserable living conditions.

Getting there.

We travelled in style and comfort on a coach big enough to accommodate all 31 of us with a double seat each, should you wish one. Driven smoothly by our courteous Welsh driver, Darren. It was door to door service and picked up from our hotel and each destination without a hitch.

Weather and Climate

In going from one renowned wet area of the country to the equally renowned wet city of

Manchester, you could reasonably expect to have rain at some point. However, we had glorious, wall to wall sunshine for the full five days.

Hazards

Apart from a surfeit of National Trust sandwiches, and working out which door was the ladies changing room at the hotel swimming pool, it was a very low risk holiday! It was a full itinerary every day, but all the venues were accessible and we were free with our time there to do as much, or as little, as we pleased.

Highlights

It is difficult to choose when there was so much of interest every day. If you love William Morris designs and William de Morgan pottery, then Wightwick Manor is for you. If you love Colin Firth as Mr D'Arcy, then Lyme Park is a definite must (the BBC used it as Pemberley and shot the famous wet shirt scene there!).

However, for me I would choose the Anderton Boat Lift for the engineering genius and huge scale, Quarry Bank Mill for the social history, and the Lowry Gallery because there is nothing like seeing 'live' paintings.

Thanks

Our thanks go to all who had a hand in the organisation of the holiday, but particularly to Norma, she captained the ship beautifully to ensure we all had a good time. (I also give a nod to Shaun Keaveny's Your Place or Mine).

Would I go again? Yes, there is so much more to explore in the North West, and Manchester is a vibrant city that we only scratched the surface of. Would I do another u3a holiday? Most definitely, it was good fun, very sociable, and excellent value.

Hannah Miatt