

BARNSTAPLE u3a

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY, 2026

Issue 467



www.barnstaple.u3asite.uk

barnstaplethirdagegroup@rocketmail.com

Chairman: *Keith Luckhurst*

Business Secretary: *Philip Hawkins*

Membership Secretary: *Julia Denton*

Groups Co-ordinator: *Laurence Hillel*

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome the following new full Member who has joined us recently.

Mr. David May

o0o -

The Chairman and Committee hope all members had a good Christmas and wish everyone a Happy New Year.

NOTE 1: The next coffee morning at Roundswell will be on **Monday 12th January 2026** (note change of day as the first Thursday of January is a bank holiday and the hall is therefore not available), with the meeting commencing at 10.30am. Our speaker will be the CEO of the North Devon Children's Hospice.

NOTE 2: The entrance door to the Roundswell Hall is equipped with a locking mechanism, which when closed cannot be opened from the outside.

The owners have adopted this arrangement, due to past and present theft and vandalism. They are anxious to eliminate this problem, and have requested us to maintain the hall's security, during our use, when the foyer is vacant. This results in the door having to be closed at 10.30 at our coffee mornings.

A Barnstaple u3a representative will remain in the foyer for a short period of time after 10.30 to allow latecomers to enter. However, it would be appreciated if you would arrive before 10.30. Thank you for your cooperation.

Keith Luckhurst, Chairman

NOTE 3: Please be aware that all outdoor activities and physical activities are undertaken at the participants own risk. While group leaders will undertake risk assessments to ensure all activities are organised safely, it is the responsibility of the participant themselves to ensure their own safety and most importantly, that they are fit enough for the activity undertaken

Guidance may be sought from the group leader if there is any query on this matter.

Keith Luckhurst and Laurence Hillel

NOTE 4: It has been proposed that a new group be set up, involving daily and longer coach trips to various places of interest within the UK.

Before proceeding and taking the matter further, it would be appreciated, if you would notify a committee member if you are interested in joining such a group, that will allow us to establish numbers and determine if the group is viable.

Keith Luckhurst, Chairman

NOTE 5: Coffee rota at Roundswell

Many thanks to those who have volunteered to serve the refreshments at the u3a coffee mornings.

The rota is as follows:

January 12th - Mary Young, John Vooght

February 5th - Chris Wright, Mike Pagram

Coffee rota co-ordinator is Dee Street.

If you feel you can help on other days, please contact Dee or Tom - help would be appreciated.

Barnstaple u3a Contact List – see groups entry for more details

Group	Date and time	Venue	Contact
Art	Tues 10-12am	Rhod. Ave. Methodist Church	Brian Steward
Board Games	Second Mon 2-4pm	Frem. Meth. Hall	Mary Young Sue Thomas
Bonsai	1 st Wed of month – 2pm	Venn Valley Vineyard	Nigel Wright

Book Lovers	Last Wed. in month	Various	Margaret Ryan
Canasta	To be arranged	Ann's house	Ann Brand
Coffee morning	Mon. 12 th Jan - 10.30am	R'ndswell Comm .Hall	Any Committee Member
Croquet Braunton	Recommence May 2026	Bple Croquet Club	Anne Young
Evening Dining	2 nd Tue of month	Various	Mary Young
Geology	2 nd Fri of month 1.45pm	Frem. Meth. Hall.	David Dickinson
Hikers	Mon 10.30am	Various	Pauline Markey Karen Wagstaff
How it Works	4 th Fri of month 1.45pm	Fremington Meth. Hall	David Dickinson
Knit and natter	Second Mon of month	Frem. Meth. Hall	Sue Thomas
Literary Studies	3 rd Tue 2.30pm	Imperial Hotel	Ellie Bray
Local History	2 nd Wed. 2pm	Barnstaple Library	Jackie Brayley Yvonne Partington
Music	1 st & 3 rd Wed. 10.30-12.30	Fremington Methodist Hall	Doug Joslin
Mosaics	Fridays 10am – 12.30pm	Rhod. Ave, Methodist Church	Jo Archer
Poetry	2 nd Sat of month, 2pm.	Various	Margaret Ryan
Practical Gardeners	Last Thurs of month, 10.30am normally	Various	Andy Jones
Ramblers	2 nd Thurs 10.30	Various	Karen Wagstaff
Scrabble	1 st Wed 10am-12.30pm 3 rd Thurs 10am-12.30pm	Pam's house	Pam Harman
Seated Exercise	Mondays 1pm	Tarka Leisure Centre	Maureen Penny
Singing for fun	2 nd Wed 10-12.	Fremington Meth.Hall	Patricia Hayhurst
Skittles	Thurs, fortnightly 4-6pm.	The Fox, Fremington	Elizabeth Howson
Strollers	4 th Thurs. 11am normally	Various	Bob Smith
Table Tennis	Tuesdays 2-3.30pm	Tarka Tennis Centre	Agnes Adams Gabi Engels-Hearn
Trekkers	3 rd Friday of month, 10.30am	Various	Michael Elliott
Wine Group	Last Wed. of month, 2pm	Room 3b, Barnstaple Library	David Rowe



ART

We meet at the Methodist church hall in Rhododendron Avenue, between 10 am and 12 noon, every Tuesday apart from the third Tuesday of the month. The group is now full, if anyone is interested in joining, they will be put on a waiting list. Please get in touch with the Group Leader.

Brian Steward, Group Leader



BOARD GAMES

Second Monday 2-4pm.

Alongside the Knit and Natter group, we are running a board games afternoon. This is on the second Monday of the month at the Fremington Methodist Church Hall 2.00 to 4.00 p.m. The cost per person will be £3 to cover the cost of refreshments and hall hire. A selection of traditional board games will be provided so why not come along and join in.

Mary Young & Sue Thomas Group Leaders



BONSAI – An introduction.

Our next Bonsai meeting will be at 2.00pm on Wednesday, **4 February 2026**, courtesy of Ashley and Xen at the Vineyard Restaurant between Landkey and Swimbridge villages. If you would like to bring your "work in progress" to meeting we could all jointly provide some "handy household tips" for improvements?

Nigel Wright, Group Leader

BOOK LOVERS

November Booklovers Meeting

Silver Bay by Jojo Moyes -romance novel about a young single mother who finds refuge accompanied by her six-year-old daughter in a small tight-knit seaside community in Australia called Silver Bay. Eventually her demons catch up with her and witness how it impacts the whole community.

Mania by Lionel Shriver - a satirical dystopian novel which imagines a social campaign seeking to eliminate the prejudice against low intelligence. Published 2024. We discussed what the next prejudice might be.

The Land in Winter by Andrew Miller-also published 2024. This novel tells the story of two young married couples living in the British West Country during the big freeze of 1963-one of the coldest winters on record.

Pru and Me: A Love Story by Timothy West (British actor and presenter)-a memoir of his sixty-year-old marriage to actress Prunell Scales recounting their professional and personal highs and lows. They first met while filming a costume drama. They have two sons, Samuel and Joseph; only the former has gone into acting

Cappadocia -travel book from Dale's holiday displaying lots of glossy photographs of this historic region in Central Anatolia, Turkey famous for its unique "fairy chimney" rock formations, ancient cave dwellings including entire cities, and hot air balloon rides as well as underground churches cut from the soft volcanic rock.

The Whispering Trees by Alice Allan-A coming-of-age story about finding your own path, connecting with nature, and respecting our planet. Set in the Devon countryside; at once haunting, witchy and witty.

Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell- a touching and captivating story of the Shakespeare family, focusing on details that remain usually overlooked in William Shakespeare's biographies. Has had rave reviews. Awarded the Women's Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award in 2020.

Last Wednesday in month 2-4pm.

Please contact Margaret for more information if you are interested in this group.

Margaret Ryan, Group Leader



CANASTA

If anyone want to learn canasta please contact Ann Brand, details below.

Ann Brand, Group Leader



CROQUET (BRAUNTON)

Croquet has finished for the season.
We will begin again in May 2026

Anne Young, Group Leader



EVENING DINING GROUP

Second Tuesday

Just a reminder for January - it's Tiffin on the 13th at 6.30 - sorry but deposits of £ 10 per person is required this time

Looking forward to seeing you all in 2026!!

Please contact the Group Leader if you are interested in joining this group

Mary Young, Group Leader



GEOLOGY

Next Meeting – Friday 16th January (one week later than normal) 1.45 for 2pm

In December we had a joint Christmas Celebration including a short talk by Rob Maxted-Jones about Rock Climbing in the Alps, a quiz, a delightful song and excellent snacks and nibbles brought by members. A thoroughly

enjoyable afternoon.

The January meeting will be the very short AGM then a talk by David on the geology and evolution of the Grand Canyon, USA. Its not the deepest or longest canyon in the world but in excess of 6 million visitors view some part of it every year. Why not explore this phenomenon with us and learn how and when it formed. There will be a very, very, short AGM at this meeting to hear your views regarding talks and site visits in 2026.



HIKERS

Monday 5th January

We hope you can join us, as we enter the New Year, for one of our favourite walks from Croyde.

We thought it might be nice to get together for lunch afterwards, for those who are interested, to celebrate the beginning of another New Year.

If you would like to come along please let me know so that I can ensure you receive further information.

New members very welcome.

Group Leaders: Pauline Markey & Karen Wagstaff



HOW IT WORKS

5

KNIT AND NATTER

Second Monday at 2pm-4pm

The venue for this group has been moved to Fremington Methodist Church Hall to provide extra space and new members are welcome. The group meets on the second Monday of the month 2.00 to 4.00 p.m. The cost will be £3 per person to cover the cost of the hall hire and refreshments, and there is plenty of parking. If you would like to join, please contact Sue Thomas.

Sue Thomas, Group Leader



LITERARY STUDIES GROUP

Tue 20th January 2026,

Tue 17th February 2026, Imperial Hotel 2.30pm

Our last book was Dawnlands by Phillipa Gregory - her third book in the Fairmile series. Here again, we were divided, but only slightly, between those who enjoyed the read, those who "didn't mind" and those who enjoyed it. This third book continues to follow the story of a family, brought up in poverty in the marshlands of the south coast, from one end of the British Empire to another. Therein lies our criticism - we felt the author included too many strands to the story, which made it drag and feel excessively long. In true Phillipa Gregory style, it was well researched and was an easy read with nice short chapters - ideal for bedtime reading! Although based on historical fact, some of it gruesome, as depicted in her description of the defeat of the Duke of Monmouth at the Battle of Sedgemoor, and subsequent Bloody Assizes, we felt that there were not enough historical figures for the author to build around, so she appeared to go off on too many tangents.

These included the plight of Native Americans, slavery in Barbados, and skulduggery in the Catholic court of King James II. We were disappointed with the ending, where the characters and the storyline just dropped off the last page in a mediocre finale. However, we discussed whether this was an author's ploy to open up the possibility of more follow-on books, and indeed, there were one or two characters that sparked our interest, and we wanted to know more. But ... do we truly want to read another book in this series? - perhaps not.

Ellie Bray - Group Leader



LOCAL HISTORY

We meet in Room 2A on the second floor of the Barnstaple Library and start at 2pm. As before, please ring either Yvonne or Jackie to book a place.

The Speaker at the meeting on the 14th January will be Lucy Scarrott talking about Medieval and Tudor Barnstaple.

Please can we gently remind everyone to wear their lanyards with their emergency phone numbers please

We look forward to seeing you again and welcoming new members.

Yvonne Partington & Jackie Brayley - Group Leaders



MOSAICS

We meet at the Methodist Church Hall in Rhododendron Avenue on Friday Mornings from 10 to 12.30 (apart from the last Friday in the month).

If you would like to join the group or have a try at Mosaics please contact our new Group Leader, Jo.

Jo Archer, Group Leader



MUSIC

We meet on the first and third Wednesday of the month 10.30am – 12.30pm. at Fremington Methodist Hall. Please contact the group leader for more details.

Doug Joslin, Group Leader



POETRY

Christmas report

We had a mix of traditional, humorous and some less well-known poems enjoying a cosy atmosphere drinking warm mulled wine and sharing traditional nibbles.

Crabby Christmas

A Poem for Every Day of Christmas:

Motorway Music

At Christmas little children

Needles (concrete poem- shaped like a Xmas tree shedding its needles) Brian Bilston

Creator's Tenant - Frank Yendell

Pam Ayres

Pam Ayres

Alli Esiri

Wendy Cope

farmer (related to one of our members)

A Visit from St. Nicholas

Talking Turkeys

The Poet Hosts His Annual office Christmas Party

The Third Wise Man

Innocent Song

Love came down At Christmas

The Magi

Clement Clarke-Moore

Benjamin Zephaniah

Simon Armitage (Poet Laureate)

Berwick Coates

Charles Causley

Christina Rossetti

W B Yeates

Thanks to everyone for making this session such fun. HAPPY CHRISTMAS to all our members and every good wish for the coming year.

Next year, January 10th, our subject will be New Beginnings. The venue to be decided. Our meetings are held on the second Saturday of the month at 2pm.

For more information, please contact Margaret

Margaret Ryan, Group Leader



PRACTICAL GARDENERS

The Practical Gardeners Group met on November 26th to review the 2025 programme and to discuss suggestions for 2026.

All agreed that the twin aims of increasing our membership and diversifying the range of visits and activities had been successfully achieved. The visits to the Gardeners' Delight Nursery, the Quince Honey Farm, a NGS garden in Yelland and "Dahlia Paradise" in Lake were particularly enjoyable and well attended.

Discussion included suggestions about visits to repeat, new venues to consider and the possibility of including a guest speaker in the programme. Other initiatives included the possibility of a WhatsApp Group to assist/improve communication and changing the regular meeting date to the Third Thursday of the month.

The joint leaders were warmly thanked for their efforts throughout the year and the extremely positive mood was only enhanced by a delicious light lunch supplied by those present. Contact Andy for further information.

David Green, Andy Jones, Group Leadership Team



RAMBLERS

Thursday 8th January

We look forward to welcoming you on 8th January for a 5m walk along Northam Burrows. This should be fairly easy going to ease us all back in after the Christmas break.

If you would like to come along please let me know so that I can ensure you receive further information. New members very welcome.

Karen Wagstaff & Pauline Markey - Group Leaders



SCRABBLE

Wednesday 7th January 2026 10am to 12.30pm

Thursday 22nd January 2026 10am to 12.30pm

The meetings are held at Pam's home and we now have a waiting list for new members who may be interested in joining. For further information contact Pam
Pam Harman, Group Leader



SEATED EXERCISE

Weekly on Mondays at 1.00pm

The seated exercise sessions have been really good; we exercise to music and those of us who have the breath left sing along and even sometimes find time to laugh with the trainer! Everyone who attends says they really enjoy themselves and with the added benefit of trying to get fitter. The coffee and chat after the session seems to be popular as well. There are some seats left so if you want to come along to the Tarka Leisure Centre at 1.00pm on a Monday let me know – Maureen.

You must bring along your u3a membership card to participate. As places will be limited please contact Maureen so that I can make sure we have enough seats! Thank you.

Maureen Penny, Group Leader



SINGING FOR FUN

Second Wednesday 10-12noon. Next meeting 14th January, 2026. Any queries, please get in touch with the group leader.

Patricia Hayhurst, Group Leader



SKITTLES

Second and fourth Thursday of the month. 4-6pm

The skittles is going along very well, and the group is now full. We meet at The Fox at Fremington, if you are interested, please contact the group leader for information.

Elizabeth Howson, Group Leader



STROLLERS

Thursday 29 January 11am. Roundswell

Meet outside Costa Café in Roundswell Retail Park (close to Dunelm Store).

Walk towards Aldi, down steps, cross road down to path next to stream. Turn left to walk path till end (close to new Roundswell school), turn left up path until you come to Queen ELIZ playing field, then past this to road and turn left. Along road till "Buses Only" road on right. Go up this then next road up and turn left onto Fishleigh Road. Proceed along this till meet Roundswell Retail Park on left. Go down to Costa Café. Suggest lunch either at Costa (I will probably go here) or McDonalds nearby. Distance 1.8 miles.

Bob Smith, Group Leader



TABLE TENNIS

Tuesday afternoon from 2.00 to 3.30pm at the Barnstaple Tarka Centre.
Next session Tuesday 6th January 2026

Our table tennis group continues to be successful. We play every Tuesday afternoon, maybe not trophy standard, but there is excellent play, active and plenty of social interaction.

Tarka Tennis Centre providing us with a third table has enabled more of us to play, so newcomers are welcome.

Contact Agnes or Gabi.

Gabi & Agnes - Group Leader



TREKKERS

The first Trekkers walk of 2026 will be on Friday 16 January, starting from St Anne's Chapel near the Saunton Sands Hotel. We will walk over Saunton Down to Putsborough, round Baggy Point and return via Croyde. Fantastic views from the Downs and the Coast Path. Meet at the chapel, post code EX33 1LG. If coming from Braunton, turn right directly opposite the turning left into the Golf Club. The small car park is just off the main road. As usual bring snacks, lunch and plenty to drink and be ready for any weather. 10:30 departure.

If you would like to be added to the Trekkers email list to receive further information about our walks, please send me a message.

Michael Elliott, Group Coordinator



WINE

The group continues to meet on the last Wednesday of the month in Room 3b of Barnstaple Library at 2pm. We are an open and welcoming group with a wide range of knowledge and interest in wine from beginners to those with in depth knowledge of specialist areas.

If you fancy giving the group a try just to see if it would be of interest to you, please contact me.

David Rowe, Group Leader

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The list of activities on Page 3 of this edition is to help members by showing the venue, day, time and contact numbers.

Please keep communicating by emailing the Editor at:

barnstaplethirdagegroup@rocketmail.com

If you have any group photographs please send them to this address.

Group Leaders: Please note that the next edition will be circulated about the 29th January, please submit any articles before the 23th January if possible.

Lynne Dickinson, Editor

Geology and How it Works – Getting ready for the Christmas party



Members of u3a at the Christmas Party at the Barnstaple Hotel December 2025.







