

BARNSTAPLE u3a

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER, 2025

Issue 466



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 Members who have joined us recently.

Mrs. Gillian Mulligan

Mrs. Patricia Wendy Smith

We also welcome the following new Affiliate Members

Mrs. Jill Lowe

We are looking forward to welcoming you at the Barnstaple Hotel for our Christmas Lunch on Thursday 4th December, 12.15pm for 1pm. There will be a raffle plus entertainment. **Any queries Contact Sue on 01271 323460**

AS THE CHRISTMAS LUNCH IS ON Thursday, 4 December there will obviously **NOT** be a coffee morning at Roundswell Hall on that date. The next coffee morning at Roundswell will be on **Monday, 12 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.

Roundswell Hall Entrance **Remember next coffee morning is on Monday 12th January.**

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

Coffee rota at Roundswell - Reminder

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.

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 New	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. 12th Jan - 10.30am	R'ndswell Comm. Hall	Committee Members
Croquet Braunton	Recommence May 2026	Bple Croquet Club	Anne Young
Christmas Lunch	Thurs. 4 th December	Barnstaple Hotel	Sue Thomas
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, 10.30 am	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-
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 **New**

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.

In August I had surgery on my duff hip where some arthritis has truly made itself felt! That means due to the long and careful recovery required I shall not be able to do our u3a Bonsai group for a few months. December and January dates will not be available as we are going away. So, in practical terms, if all things go well, we should be able to meet on 4

February 2026! Clearly, I shall keep you all posted of events. I apologise for this interruption but I have come up with an alternative. A competition!!!

A documented (i.e. just with photos of the start), Bonsai that you have created from scratch. This could be from dug up material (yamadori) – please ask the owner - or bought starter material that you have styled. There will be a prize for the tree that is considered to be the best at the showing on the rather apt Wednesday, 1 April. We will learn the rules for showing trees, so everyone can make their own suggestions. You therefore have about 8 months to produce a Bonsai from scratch – simples.

Nigel Wright, Group Leader



BOOK LOVERS - The following is our October report:

Amsterdam by Ian McEwan

Two old friends and former lovers of the same woman, Molly Lane, meet at her funeral. The plot unfolds into a political scandal and tests their pact to end their lives should they become terminally ill.

Archangel by Robert Harris

A gripping thriller concerning the secrets of Russia's past.

Snow Country by Sebastian Faulkes

Set in Austria 1914-1933. Book did not seem to flow and was hard to follow.

The Art of Uncertainty

How To Navigate Chance, Ignorance, Risk and Luck by David Spiegelhalter.

A clever and data driven guide by a renowned statistician

Love Songs and Lies by Libby Purves -fiction.

Three young women who meet as undergraduates at Oxford University share a house with an enigmatic upper class postgraduate male, Max. Sally, the main character becomes infatuated with Max, believing love to be the answer no matter what but finally wakes up to reality.

Talkeetna: The Series (set in Alaska) detective series by L J Breedlove (former journalist).

She draws on her experiences from work. Mystery/Thriller. Very atmospheric with keenly observed life and culture in Alaska.

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



CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Our Christmas Lunch will be held on **Thursday 4th December** at the Barnstaple Hotel, 12.15 for 1.00 p.m.



CROQUET (BRAUNTON)

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

Anne Young, Group Leader



EVENING DINING GROUP

Second Tuesday

Our last outing was to Lush in Boutport St Barnstaple - what a night!! Weather was as about as bad as it could be but we ploughed through the rain to the restaurant - the ambiance was excellent - the staff were more than helpful and the food well all I can say is - it was Lush!! (Sorry - but it was!!) I feel a return visit coming on - thank you to everyone who came and made the evening enjoyable.

Next venue is the Imperial Hotel on December 9th at 6.30 for the Christmas festive menu - however if you haven't booked with me yet, please confirm asap - I will also need a £10 deposit per person (contact details below) - looking forward to seeing you all there.

Venue for January 13th will be Tiffin - at 6.30pm.
Happy Christmas!!!

Mary Young, Group Leader



GEOLOGY

Next Meeting – Friday 12th December, 1-45 for 2-00pm. Joint Christmas Party with How it Works. Please bring a small plate of snacks to share.

In November we had two group members talking about their experiences in the Alps, Agnes Adams who born there, and Robert Down who discussed the geology and the formation of the rocks. These were fact filled talks with superb illustrations and photos, breathtaking views of the highest mountains and glaciers in Europe. Fortunately, the heating in the hall kept us warm with the hot drinks and biscuits. Both speakers Agnes and Robert were clear and concise, a delightful afternoon.

The next meeting will be the Christmas Celebration including a short talk by Rob Maxted-Jones about Rock Climbing in the Alps.

The January meeting will be the very short AGM then a talk by David on the geology and evolution of the Grand Canyon, USA.

The date of this meeting is **FRIDAY 16th JANUARY (one week later than normal)** 1-45 for 2-00pm

David Dickinson, Coordinator



HIKERS

Monday 1st December

We are hoping to follow a 5.5m circular route from Bampton via fields and Green Lanes towards the little hamlet of Morebath.

Please let us know if you would like to come along and we will send you further information as soon as it available. New members very welcome.

Group Leaders: Pauline Markey & Karen Wagstaff



HOW IT WORKS

Next meeting: Friday 12th December, at 1.45 for 2.00pm. Joint Christmas Party with Geology. Please bring a small plate of snacks to share.

In November we had a stimulating talk by our own member Marjorie Keefe on "LIGHTNING". We may love it or hate it but it is one of the Earth's most spectacular sights we can experience. We received the facts as well as some dangerous mythology regarding these weather occurrences followed by member's experiences of being struck by lightning. We all knew something about the subject but now we know a great deal more. We are fortunate in having some amazing members in this group, U3A at its best.

David Dickinson, Group Leader



KNIT AND NATTER

Second Monday at 2pm-4pm New Venue

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 – Imperial Hotel 2.30pm

Our last book was *The Stranger* by American crime writer Harlan Coben. Although crime fiction is popular with some of our members, only one had actually read any of his other books, although he has written rather a lot! Set in America, against a backdrop of American lacrosse, we agreed that it was an easy, well-paced read, well-structured with short chapters. However, some felt that it lacked even a remotely believable storyline with two-dimensional characters and a preposterous ending. This was perhaps more of a psychological thriller than a true crime story, and, as such, it did have a degree of suspense, which caused us to question our own vulnerability regarding the internet! So, a book that divided us into those who like the crime genre and those who do not – those who enjoyed it and those who did not. If anyone likes crime fiction and may not have read anything by Harlan Coben, then give it a try and see what you think - some of us would recommend it, and others would 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.

There will be no meeting in December.

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.

Group Leaders: Yvonne Partington & Jackie Brayley



MOSAICS

We meet at the Methodist Church Hall in Rhododendron Avenue on Friday Mornings from 10.00 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 phone 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

November report

Our theme was Irish Poets. W. B. Yeats, poet and playwright, born in Dublin (1865-1939) to a well to do family, was chosen. Maude Gonne, the love of Yeats' life, inspired much of his poetry including *He Wishes for The Cloths of Heaven* which has been set to music by classical and folk artists which we enjoyed hearing. Other poems by Yeats included *The Cat and The Moon*, *Down by The Salley Gardens* and *When You Are Old*. Another favourite was Seamus Heaney, poet and translator of literature from many other languages (1939-2013) born in Belfast to a minority Catholic farming family. His grandfather was a peat-digger, as explored in *Digging*. Other poems by him included *Blackberry Picking* and *A Kite for Michael and Christopher*. Though he lived through the Irish troubles, Heaney refused to take sides preferring to see the larger picture and eventually moving to Southern Ireland. He is revered by both Protestants and Catholics because his themes were universal drawing on Nature and his love of the land. He elected to be buried in an Irish bog. Other poets included Patrick Kavanagh, Eavan Boland and Spike Milligan. Our thanks to Gillian for kindly providing the yummy cakes and biscuits.

Next month will be our Xmas meeting so we are going to bring and share. I will be hosting. Our theme will be light-hearted Xmas poems. There is still room for more people to join our friendly informal group.

Our meetings are held on the second Saturday of the month at 2pm.

Margaret Ryan, Group Leader



PRACTICAL GARDENERS

Damp weather and a road closure meant that only a small group of Practical Gardening members managed to get to Rosemoor RHS Garden on October 30th. Nevertheless, there was a surprising amount of colour to enjoy, particularly from the dahlias as we walked round, although a camellia in full bloom close to the entrance was probably the star attraction. The group enjoyed their stroll around the garden and were in even better spirits during a delicious lunch in the restaurant.

The Practical Gardeners Group met on 26 November 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.

David Green, Andy Jones, Group Leadership Team



RAMBLERS

With Christmas fast approaching we have decided there will be no walk this month but we will look forward to seeing you all in January, raring to go after the Christmas festivities.

Happy Christmas to you all
Karen and Pauline

Karen Wagstaff & Pauline Markey Group Leaders



SCRABBLE

There will be no scrabble in December. The New Year meetings will commence on Thursday 22nd January 2026. 10-12.30pm.

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 10th December, 2025.**

November 12: we had the largest turn-out since we restarted in Feb 2023, and everyone worked well together and with our accompanist Sue Trick. We have quite a broad range of songs, plus seasonal ones provided by Sue.

Following my surgery, my thanks to the U3A for your card and beautiful flowers, also to Andy and Lyn who came to the Hospital when I was discharged on 17 November and brought me home.

Last but not least: many thanks to all of you (including Sue Trick and John Hobbs) who come to our singing sessions - you're such a friendly group and it's a privilege to be your 'Group Leader'.

A very Happy Christmas to you all. See you next year!

Any queries, please get in touch. If you are interested in this Group please contact 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

There will be no Strollers walk in December.

Bob Smith, Group Leader



TABLE TENNIS

Tuesday afternoon from 2.00 to 3.30pm at the Barnstaple Tarka Centre.

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.

We will have one more session on 16th December before a Christmas break and then returning in the new year on 6th January.

Gabi & Agnes Group Leader



TREKKERS

The next Trekkers walk will be on Friday 19 December on Torrington Common, led by Peter. Meet at the Bowling Green car park Torrington, post code EX39 8BY, for a 10:30 departure. The car park is on the left as you approach Torrington up the hill from Bideford, opposite the Limers Hill turn to Taddipport. As usual bring snacks, lunch and plenty to drink and be ready for any weather. Option for refreshments at the Puffing Billy after the walk.

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 drop me a line

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 December, please submit any articles before the 23th December if possible.

Lynne Dickinson, Editor

If you are interested in the following message from Paul please contact him direct.

We have had a message from Paul Scarbrough who is the digital skills trainer for North Devon for AbilityNet, a UK charity dedicated to helping older people and disabled individuals improve their digital confidence. We are offering free digital skills training tailored for people aged 55+ and those living with disabilities, funded by BT Group.

Whether it is learning how to use smartphones or tablets, to stay safe online, or to connect with loved ones through video calls, we are here to help either through group sessions or one-to-one training – at no cost. Please feel free to get in touch for more details or to discuss next steps.

Paul Scarbrough, Digital Skills Trainer

Working days – Monday to Thursday

Contact No. 01182 346730

Email: paul.scarbrough@abilitynet.org.uk



Evening Diners at Lush Restaurant



Trekkers on the way to Clovelly





Ramblers Nov. 2025 Landkey



Practical Gardening Group at Rosemoor