

BARNSTAPLE u3a

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY, 2026

Issue 468



www.barnstaple.u3asite.uk

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 Members who have joined us recently.

Mrs Ann Tee Mrs Carolyn Oldfield Mr. Rodney Snowden

February Speaker

Our Feb speaker will be Jim Causley, a relative of poet, Charles Causley. He will be talking about Sabine Baring-Gould who wrote some of our best-known hymns.

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:

February 5th: Chris Wright

March 5th: Lucia Potter & Yvonne Oram

April 2nd: John Vooght & Mary Young

If anyone is available from July 2nd that would be really helpful. If you could just let Dee or Tom know at the next meeting that would be much appreciated. Coffee rota co-ordinator is Dee Street. If you feel you can help on other days, please contact Dee or Tom. Your help would be appreciated.

A note from your chairman

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. This will allow us to establish numbers and determine if the group is viable.

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	Th. 5 th Feb - 10.30am	R'ndswell Comm. Hall	Any Committee Member
Croquet Braunton	Recommence May 2026	Bple Croquet Club	Anne Young
Embroidery - NEW	Second Mon of month	Frem. Meth. Hall	Christine Robilliard
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	3 rd 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 10am 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.

After a lengthy break in proceedings, we shall be gathering once again at Xen and Ashley's lovely restaurant – 'The Vine' at 2:00pm on Wednesday, 4 February

You may recall in anticipation of the break I set a bonsai competition. Thank you to those who have sent me photos of their handiwork, some of exceptional quality, some less so!

If you would like to bring in your efforts we can all have a look and learn from each tree. Clearly, being February, deciduous trees will be leafless, but do show their 'winter image' of all the smallest twigs showing the structure.

I will teach the way bonsai are judged to RHS standards so that on 'Judging Day', (1st April) when the competition will be finished, we can all judge the competition trees. There is a prize of a Hazel. Please find the attached sheet that forms the basis of scoring bonsai.

Nigel Wright, Group Leader



BOOK LOVERS

Margaret Ellis kindly hosted providing refreshments. Our thanks go to Charles also for bringing along some chocolate biscuits. Among the books chosen were several well researched historical novels.

The Marriage Portrait by Maggie O'Farrell (of Hamnet fame)

Boleyn Trait or by Philippa Gregory

Night Falls on the City by Sarah Gainham (British novelist and journalist)

The Arrangement by Mary Balogh

Dead Waters by Berrick Ford (Cornish contemporary crime thriller- the first in a new series).

A Short History of Nearly Everything (Updated version 2025) by Bill Bryson

Domination: The Fall of the Roman Empire

Rise of Christianity by Professor Alice Roberts

Lustrum by Robert Harris - the second novel in the Cicero trilogy. (Tiro, Cicero's slave and confidential secretary, invented an early shorthand system including etc., NB, symbols for therefore and because which are still used today).

Wait for Me by Santa Montefiore.

Diane has kindly offered to host in February, Valentine's Day.

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,

Ann Brand, Group Leader



CROQUET BRAUNTON)

We will begin again in May 2026

Anne Young, Group Leader



~~~ EMBROIDERY – NEW ~~~

We have a new monthly Embroidery group starting Monday March 9th, 2.00 pm to 4.00pm, meeting at Fremington Methodist Hall (alongside Knit and Natter). If you are interested, please contact Christine

Christine Robilliard, Group Leader



EVENING DINING GROUP

Second Tuesday

Another superb meal at Tiffin - much needed change from turkey curry, turkey sandwiches turkey soup etc!!!

The next venue is the Wayfarer at Instow on the 10th February at 6.30 pm -I have a copy of the menu - pre ordering is required but no deposits this time!

In March I have booked the Thatched Inn at Abbotsham for 6.30 on the 10th March - again no deposits necessary but they do need numbers - so let me know!!!! I believe the menu is on their website.

Mary Young, Group Leader



GEOLOGY

Next Meeting – Friday 13th February 1.40 for 2pm

The January meeting was a very short AGM then a talk by David on the geology and evolution of the Grand Canyon, USA. It's not the deepest or longest canyon in the world but attracts in excess of 6 million visitors every year. Its geology is a time capsule with regard to the last 2 billion years of Earth's history.

The Speakers this month will be some of our own members introducing scientific equipment used by universities enabling them to establish the history and analysis of rock samples. This equipment has allowed the incredibly accurate dating methods we benefit from today. Mike Kelly will explain Sample Preparation, Peter Looome will talk about Material analysis and Peter Kyle will tell us how an Electron Microscope works.

David Dickinson, Co-ordinator



HIKERS

Monday 2nd February

This month we will be doing a 6/6.5m walk exploring lesser-known paths around the Arlington Estate. Weather permitting, there are some spectacular views. Our route will include some long climbs following bridleways and footpaths. If you plan to come along please let us know so that we can send further details. New members are always very welcome. New members very welcome.

Pauline Markey & Karen Wagstaff, Group Leaders:



HOW IT WORKS

Next meeting: Friday 23rd January 2026 at 1.45 for 2.00pm.

The talk on Lichens from Maxine Putman and John opened up a new world for some of us and I am sure we will take more interest in their occurrence whilst walking outdoors as they are found on stonework, rocks and trees. The talk prompted many questions and highlighted the unique variations of species here in North Devon that have evolved over the last 400 million years.

The February will be a talk by our own member Michael Elliott on Canals. The Canals signalled the beginning of the industrial revolution before it was overtaken by the railway but were still used extensively up to 1945. Since then, lots have fallen into disuse however enthusiasts "thankfully" have spent the post war years rebuilding them.

David Dickinson, Group Leader



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.

Tel: 01271 323460, email: susanthomas1010@yahoo.co.uk ***Sue Thomas, Group Leader***



LITERARY STUDIES GROUP

Tue 17th February 2026 2.30pm & 17 March 2026 2.30pm, Imperial Hotel 2.30pm

We started the year on a positive note because we were united in our enjoyment of our last book, *A Town Called Solace*, by Mary Lawson. This was a gentle book, and although some felt that it was initially lightweight, we soon realised that this was a well-woven story where the tension gradually built, and it became a true page-turner. Well written, with likeable characters and believable scenarios. We particularly appreciated the story being told by the different characters involved, which added depth and understanding. The author drew on her personal knowledge of the location - a remote town in Northern Ontario - which consequently resulted in descriptions that were very real and easy to visualise. It had a satisfactory ending, which, although disturbing, was also one of hope for the future of the characters and their town, called Solace.

Finally, a thought in this, the National Year of Reading: "There is more treasure in books than in all the pirates' loot on Treasure Island" - (Walt Disney)

Ellie Bray - Group Leader



LOCAL HISTORY

The Speaker for our meeting on 11th February is Gudrun Linbrick talking about The Workhouse in Barnstaple.

The Speaker for 12th March is a favourite, Sharon Snell, this time talking about Seafeld House, Westward Ho! Also known locally as "The Haunted House".

On 13th April we will have our end of season meal out with details available nearer the time.

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

Our theme was New Beginnings. Our thanks go to Dale for kindly hosting and sharing his warm mulled wine to celebrate the New Year.

The poems chosen were mostly by well-known poets:

Wendy Cope - For My Sister Emigrating, After the Lunch, New Season

John Betjeman - A Subaltern's Love Song, Hunter Trials

Sylvia Plath - You're, Morning Song

Carol Ann Duffy - New Year.

We were introduced to an unfamiliar poet, John O'Donohue (1956-2008) author, priest and philosopher, born in the west of Ireland and a native Irish speaker. He was best known for popularising Celtic spirituality especially in the USA; he promoted creativity in the workplace among the leaders in the corporate sector in order to integrate "a sense of soul and beauty" into their leadership to foster their imagination about their work colleagues.

John O'Donohue - For A New Beginning.

Next month Julie has kindly offered to host. The subject will be works by the poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth who were very close friends.

We still have room for new members. We are a small friendly group who meet on the second Saturday of the month at each other's houses starting at 2pm and usually ending 4.30 - 5pm. Refreshments are provided halfway. Contact Margaret Ryan.

Margaret Ryan, Group Leader



PRACTICAL GARDENERS

Firstly, we have decided to move the date/day for future meetings to the **THIRD THURSDAY** of each month. Hence our first group meeting will be on **Thursday 19th February**, at Fremington Methodist Church Hall, Fremington, starting at 2pm.

At this meeting we will be discussing our programme of events for 2026, which will then be published on the website and in the March u3a newsletter. New members are always very welcome. Contact Andy for further information

David Green, Andy Jones, Group Leadership Team



RAMBLERS

Thursday 12th February

We look forward to seeing many of you for a circular walk of approximately 4m around Barnstaple and Pilton. We will follow pavements, footpaths and little used lanes towards Bradiford.

If you intend joining this walk, please let us know by contacting Pauline; we plan to have lunch afterwards venue tbc. New members very welcome. Karen and Pauline

Karen Wagstaff & Pauline Markey, Group Leaders



SCRABBLE

Wed 4th Feb 10-12 30 & Thurs 19th 10-12 30

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 11th February, 2026.**

We started 2026 with an excellent turnout. Accompanist Sue had taken a lot of trouble to print the words of several new songs (many new to me, but I should get to know them in due course) while many of the group were

familiar with them already. This year promises to be an exciting time for us.

My thanks as always, go to Sue and all the group members, who gave me a warm welcome after my having to miss last month's session.

Patricia Hayhurst, Group Leader



SKITTLES

Second and fourth Thursday of the month. 4.15pm – 6.15pm

We play every week on a Thursday at The Fox at Fremington. We have a full group at the moment. I have started a waiting list so if anyone would like to put their name on it let me know.

Elizabeth Howson, Group Leader



STROLLERS

Thurs Feb 26 2026 11am. JOHN's GARDEN CENTRE

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

Meet at GC main entrance door (plenty of car parking).

Gain access to TARKA TRAIL by walking out of site exit into field to the right & then walk approx. 100yds to main Tarka trail bearing LEFT up under the road bridge towards PARK SCHOOL area. Carefully cross A377 main Rd over to pathway leading down towards ROCK PARK - -- various pathways around ROCK PARK with nice scenery etc. RETURN after the 40/45 min walk and return same route to GC for refreshments (no need to book). 2.4 miles.

Bob Smith, Group Leader



TABLE TENNIS

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

Our table tennis group continuous 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 new comers are welcome.

Gabi & Agnes Group Leaders



TREKKERS

After an exciting walk in January through a sudden hailstorm with thunder and lightning, the next Trekkers walk of 2026 will be on Friday 20 February, starting from Fremington Quay car park. As usual bring snacks, lunch and plenty to drink and be ready for any weather. 10:30 departure.

More detail later, so if you are interested or you would like to be added to the Trekkers email list to receive further information about our walks, please send me a message.

Also please let me know nearer time if you plan to join us, in case of any last-minute changes. If you would like to be added to the Trekkers email list to receive further information about our walks, please send me a message.



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 beginner 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 **26th February**, please submit any articles before the **23th February** if possible.

Lynne Dickinson, Editor

A selection of photos from the Ramblers and Trekkers Groups

