

BARNSTAPLE u3a

NEWSLETTER

MARCH, 2026

Issue 469



www.barnstaple.u3asite.uk

barnstaplethirdagegroup@rocketmail.com

Chairman: *Keith Luckhurst*

Membership Secretary: *Julia Denton*

Business Secretary: *Philip Hawkins*

Groups Co-ordinator: *Laurence Hillel*

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome the following new full Members who have joined us recently:

Mrs Jacque Dart

Mrs Linda Barrington Ms Judith (Judy) Birch

We also welcome the following Affiliate Members:

Mr Colin Cooper

Ms Melanie Norman

Mr Nigel Owen

Mrs Brenda Owen

MARCH SPEAKER

Our Speaker at the coffee morning on Thursday 5th March is Mark Leveridge who is a magician and a member of the Magic Circle. His talk is entitled "A Life in Magic".

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:

March 5th: Lucia Potter & Betty Barker

April 2nd: John Vooght & Mary Young

With many thanks to these members and if you feel you are able to help, we need volunteers for July onwards. Coffee rota co-ordinator is Dee Street. If you feel you can help on other days, please contact Dee or Tom

NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The presenter of T.V.'s successful show, Bargain Hunt, Charles Hanson, is giving us a talk on his experiences in the valuation profession.

Details

Date: Wednesday 15th April
 Venue: Roundswell community hall
 Commencing: 19.45h
 Doors open: 19.00h
 Tea/coffee provided
 Cost £2 per person

Should you wish to attend please contact Sue Thomas

PLEASE NOTE: that this is not a valuation session, merely an interesting talk, so please do not bring along your gold bars or 20 carat diamonds.

Barnstaple u3a Groups List

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 Mar - 10.30am	R'ndswell Comm.Hall	Committee Members
Croquet	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
Table Tennis	Tuesdays 2-3.30pm	Tarka Tennis Centre	Agnes Adams & Gabi Engels-Hearn
Trekkers	3 rd Friday of month, 10.30am	Various	Dale Hall
Wine Group	Last Wed of month, 2pm	Room 3b, Barnstaple Library	David Row



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 Brian

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.

Xen and Ashley are again hosting our monthly Bonsai activities in their lovely restaurant – 'The Vine' at 2:00pm on Wednesday, 4 March

One month to go!!!! The judging of the competition is next month. Thank you to those who have sent in 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 March, deciduous trees will be leafless, but do show their 'winter image' of all the smallest twigs showing the structure.

If folk wish I will quickly run through 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 sheet under the button below that forms the basis of scoring bonsai.

Looking forward to seeing you again.

Nigel Wright, Group Leader



BOOK LOVERS

As usual, members presented a variety of books and genres read during the past month. Books especially enjoyed included '*Eleanor – England's Lost Queen*', by Alice Loxton, which tells the story of the 13th century wife of Edward I, while more modern and controversial history is discussed in

Reparation by Nigel Biggar, which deals with the thorny issue of slavery and whether the guilt felt by many in the U.K is justified.

Maggie O'Farrell's highly topical *Hamnet* was discussed with enthusiasm, as was Sophie Kinsella's *What Does It Feel Like?*, though sadly it proved to be this popular novelist's last book. Also enjoyed were Michael Morpurgo's memoir *Funny Thing Getting Older* and *The Martian* by Andy Weir, a rare foray by a member into science fiction though she didn't like his later book, *Project Hail Mary*, which featured space aliens!

Also, less popular this month was *The Second Sleep* by the normally well-rated Robert Harris who admitted at a recent Appledore Book Festival that this had been his least popular book. Well, even famous writers can't get it right all the time! Gillian Kerr, on behalf of Margaret Ryan.

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

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

In February we went to the Wayfarer inn in Instow which was a very successful evening - the food was well served and presented and the log fire was on which added to the atmosphere - I think we may possibly be going-

back! Maybe a summers evening meal followed a walk on the beach. The next 'do' is March 10th at the Thatched Inn at Abbotsham at 6.30 please let me know if you are coming - no deposits this time!

Mary Young, Group Leader



GEOLOGY

Next Meeting – Friday 13th March 1.40 for 2pm

The Speakers in February were some of our own members who introduced scientific equipment used by research centres. These enabled them to establish the history and analysis of rock samples. This equipment has allowed the incredibly accurate identification of elements. Mike Kelly explained Sample Preparation, Peter Looe talked about Material Analysis and Peter Kyle explained Electron Microscopes.

Our speaker in March is Ali Ferris, Earth, Marine and Environmental Interpretation Manager, Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre. Her talk will include the latest fossil finds along the Heritage Coast where recent rock falls have exposed a plethora of new fossils. Please contact the Group Leader if you are interested in joining this group.

David Dickinson, Co-ordinator



HIKERS

March – no walk

Unfortunately, there will be no walk in March, we do apologise and hope to see you in April.

Please note that due to our normal Hiking Day falling on Easter Monday we plan to do our next walk on Monday 13th April. New members are always very welcome.

Pauline Markey 07976 696604 and Karen Wagstaff Group Leaders



HOW IT WORKS

Next meeting: Friday 27th March 2026 at 1.45 for 2.00pm.

In February we had a talk by our own member Michael Elliott on Canals. The Canals signalled the beginning of the industrial revolution before being 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. A most informative and interesting talk.

Rock-pool Revolutions, lessons in life

This month we are delighted to welcome Paula Ferris a local coastal naturalist who has spent the last 20 years observing the North Devon shorelines as well as building up the Coastwise organisation centred in Braunton. Paula has an incredible knowledge of the sea life on and in the ND coastline with some incredible records of plant and marine life that exists on our doorstep, most of it unknown to General Public. Come along and learn about the hidden world on our seashore, incredible lifeforms will be exposed.

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.

Sue Thomas, Group Leader



LITERARY STUDIES GROUP

Tue 17 March 2026 2.30pm,

Tue 21st April 2.30pm: Imperial Hotel

Our last book, *The Guest List* by Lucy Foley, found us in familiar territory: we were completely divided in our opinions and consequently had much to discuss! For those who enjoy crime fiction, this was not what they expected or enjoyed. Similar to Agatha Christie's format, this was a 'closed circle mystery' in which the murderer cannot escape the scene of the crime, and there are few suspects. But this is absolutely where the similarity to Agatha Christie ended. Some were disappointed, feeling that the story did not deliver the action and suspense that they anticipated; they thought the outcome was predictable from the onset. Others enjoyed its clever 'reverse whodunit' construction, found it easy to read, whilst the two or three 'red herrings' kept them guessing until the end.

Another quote for the National Year of Reading: "The only thing you absolutely have to know is the location of the library" (Albert Einstein).

Ellie Bray 01271 371506 Group Leader



LOCAL HISTORY

The Speaker for 11th March is a favourite, Sharon Snell, this time talking about Seafeld House, *Westward Ho!* - also known locally as "The Haunted House".

On the 13th April we will have our end of season meal. The meal will be at The Park Hotel, 12.30 for 1pm. As they don't do a carvery, we have ordered their plated Roast of the Day which will be Beef (vegetarian alternative will be available). The Roast will be £12.50 and a Sweet is £3.50.

Should you not want the Roast you can order from the Menu on the day but we will need to know. You will have to put your names down at the March meeting as they need numbers, also add whether you want the Roast Beef, Veggie or Menu choice.

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

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

Yvonne and Jackie - 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 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 07938

170095



POETRY

Our meeting took place on Valentine's Day so of course we changed our theme to Love poetry.

The Passionate Shepherd to His Love
She Walks in Beauty
How do I Love Thee (Sonnet 43)
The Good Morrow
Three Love poems

Christopher Marlowe
Lord Byron
Elizabeth Barrett Browning
John Donne
Bronte sisters

Plus, some lighter poems:

The Ruined Maid
Joyce the Librarian
A Labour of Love

Thomas Hardy
Richard Stilgoe & Peter Skellern
Roger McGough

Diane also read one of her own poems, Box Hill, which everyone enjoyed.

Our thanks to Julie for kindly hosting and providing refreshments.

Next month the subject is yet to be decided as well as the venue.

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 for further details.

Margaret Ryan, Group Leader



PRACTICAL GARDENERS

Twenty one members of the Practical Gardening Group met on 19 February at Fremington Methodist Church Hall to discuss the coming year's programme set out by joint-leaders Andy Jones and David Green.

There was widespread praise for the scope and variety of the programme which mixed return visits to favourite gardens to visits to new venues and trips further afield - and included our first visiting speaker.

The meeting felt that a journey to the Malvern Spring Festival could well be replaced by the shorter one to the Taunton Flower Show which we enjoyed last year. The afternoon finished with refreshments kindly supplied by several of the members and this complemented a warm and positive start to our practical gardening year. New members are always very welcome.

David Green, Andy Jones, Group Leadership Team



RAMBLERS

We look forward to seeing lots of you on Thursday for our rescheduled Northam Burrows Walk on Thursday 12th March. This will be a 5m walk along Northam Burrows and will be fairly easy going. For those who would like to join for lunch afterwards we will be going to Rock Pool Cafe

in Westward Ho!

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 and Pauline

Karen Wagstaff & Pauline Markey, Group Leaders



SCRABBLE

March dates - Wed 4th 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 March, 2026.

For the third anniversary since the group restarted, we had an excellent turnout (despite some absentees) for our session, and sang several new songs. My thanks to Jane who assisted me in my computer-less state for sourcing, printing and joining together our new sheet music to enable everyone to have a copy. Also, I was grateful to Andy who printed sets of the words (lyrics) for those members who didn't need to see the accompaniment. Sue gave us all support and encouragement from her keyboard, adding to the fun in the group.

After meeting up with Andy, Lyn, and Jane to discuss how best to move ahead, Andy printed a list of all the songs we've covered, to find out which songs members enjoy singing most. Each member was given this list and asked to choose their favourite 15 songs, and the results will help to shape our musical activities for the next few months. While one can't please everyone all the time, we'll stick to our main aim: "Singing for Fun"!

As always, my thanks to you all for your friendship and support. I look forward to seeing you again on 11 March.

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 26th March 11am. NEXT (near ASDA)

Meet in front of NEXT. Park in area close to NEXT (3 hours free).

Walk along river Taw path towards Tarka Trail. At Trail, turn left, walk under main road, and then turn right through pedestrian tunnel under main road. Past railway station on right, Tesco Extra on left to far side of Tesco Extra. Turn left past Tesco Extra to left, along to Costa, over pedestrian crossing, turn left, through pedestrian tunnel under main road again, turn right, over road back to NEXT. Suggest lunch at Costa or Taco Bell or ASDA café. 2.25 miles

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.

Gabi & Agnes Group Leaders



TREKKERS

In taking over responsibility for the Trekkers' programme, I'd like to thank Michael Elliott for the many splendid walks he's convened and/or led as the previous co-ordinator. He will continue to be involved – and is leading the next walk!

Future Newsletters will have full details of that month's walk plus brief announcements of the programme for the following two months' walks. If you would like to join the group, please let me know and I'll add your name to the email list.

MARCH

Friday March 20: Countisbury Common

Leader: Michael Elliott

Route: eastwards along the SWCP and returning inland. Michael will send full details by email in March.

Rendezvous: meet at the Barna Barrow NT Car Park at 10.30 for 10.40 departure

APRIL

Friday April 17: Valley of Rocks

Route: a great walk along the inland ridge above the Valley of Rocks before descending to Lee Bay and back through the valley to Lynton. Picnic lunch at Lee Bay and refreshments afterwards in a Lynton café after. An easy/moderate 7.5 miles with wonderful views. Full details in the next newsletter. Leader: Graham Hayward

MAY

Friday May 15: Dartmoor Away day

Route: An easy/moderate 6.5-mile walk visiting Haytor's twin peaks and granite quarries, the unique 8-mile tramway of shaped granite rails, and Hound Tor with its medieval village. Picnic lunch at Hound Tor, Leader: Dale Hall

New ideas, routes and leaders are always welcome – so please volunteer to lead walks and/or propose routes. All suggestions are gratefully received!

Dale Hall, 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.

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 28 March;
please submit any articles before the 24th March if possible.

Lynne Dickinson, Editor

As a matter of interest

Book any holiday or cruise and mention your u3a to have 10% of the basic holiday cost donated to the Third Age Trust for the benefit of your local u3a.

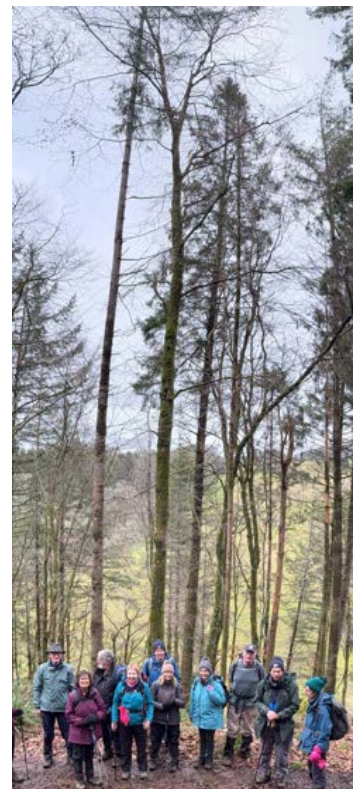
u3a is proud to partner with Riviera Travel, the UK's leading river cruise and tour operator. With over 40 years of expertise, their specialists bring the world's most fascinating destinations to life.

Every aspect of a Riviera Travel holiday is carefully selected, with thoughtfully balanced itineraries that allow you to explore at a relaxed pace.

With a carefully curated selection of holidays, Riviera Travel prioritises quality over quantity, refining each journey to perfection for a truly unforgettable experience.



Hikers at Arlington



Ramblers – February walk around Pilton



Singing for fun

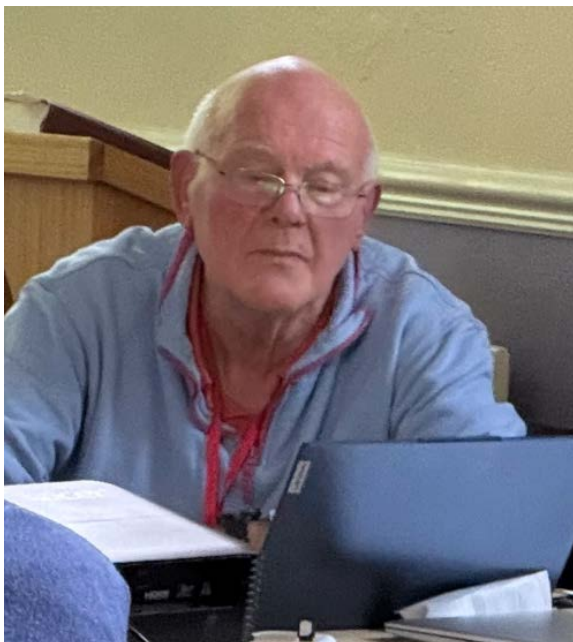


Group Leader Patricia and pianist Sue

Skittles – Christmas Lunch and award winners with their trophies



Geology – listening to Peter Kyle giving his talk:



Peter concentrating on giving his talk