

BARNSTAPLE u3a

NEWSLETTER

APRIL, 2026

Issue 470



www.barnstaple.u3asite.uk

barnstaplethirdagegroup@rocketmail.com

Chairman: *Keith Luckhurst*

Business Secretary: *Philip Hawkins*

Membership Secretary: *Julia Denton*

Groups Co-ordinator: *Mary Young*

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

Mrs Patricia Chandler Ms Mary Faulkner Mrs Karen Hasler Mr Richard Attenborough
Mr Graham and Mrs Sue Kingsbury Mrs Beryl Edwards Ms Mary Hales

We also welcome the following Affiliate Members:

Mr David and Mrs Hazel McLellan Mr Tony Lowe

APRIL SPEAKER

Our speaker at the coffee morning on Thursday 2nd April is Lisa Chanter. Her topic will be The Highwaymen of North Devon. She has been to us before when she spoke about Chanter's Bakeries.

Membership Renewal

As our membership year comes to an end on the 31st March a renewal form has been appended at the end of this newsletter. If your details have **NOT** changed and you are paying via a BACS transfer it is not necessary to fill in a renewal form. However, if you are paying in cash, please fill in a form so we can trace your payment. Sue Thomas, our Treasurer, will be at the coffee morning on the 2nd April to assist.

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:

April 2nd: John Vooght and Mary Young

May 7th Andy Jones and Lynne Jones

With many thanks to these members and if you feel you are able to help, we need volunteers for August onwards. The coffee rota co-ordinator is Dee Street.

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:

Wednesday 15th April at the Roundswell community hall, starting at 19.45h. Doors open at 19.00h, Tea/coffee provided, costing £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 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.2nd Apr - 10.30am	R'ndswell Comm.Hall	Committee Members
Croquet Braunton	Recommence 21/4/2026	Bple Croquet Club	Anne Young
Embroidery	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	Dale Hall
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.

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

It's arrived - the competition judging

Yes, next Wednesday, 1 April – 2.00 pm at The Vine we shall be having the judging of the Bonsai competition I set last August – 8 months ago!

This will be a fun and learning session. I will run through the judging sheets explaining the scoring system, and will bring the tree that was used as the example. The prize is a rather nifty Hazel in its own new training pot. Not perfect at all, but plenty of scope left for a decent Bonsai to be engineered.

Even if you do not win, there will be plenty of information and guidance from the whole group about how to take your tree to the next level – and not horizontal with its roots sticking out! Looking forward to seeing you again.

Nigel Wright, Group Leader



BOOK LOVERS

The House of Glass by Hadley Freeman, a journalist, researching her own Jewish family last century to discover the reason Jews are so persecuted throughout the ages.

Love for Lyddia by H E Bates, a semi-autobiographical novel, celebrating the coming-of-age.

The Bookshop Ladies by best-selling Irish author Faith Hogan about three generations of women all betrayed by men (set in modern times).

Enigma by Robert Harris set in 1943 about the task of code breaking in Bletchley Park.

Beating About the Bush by M C Beaton describes the antics of private detective Agatha Raisin in solving a murder at a so-called electric car battery factory and exonerating the pet donkey Wizz-Wazz from murder. Actress Penelope Keith is excellent reading the Agatha Raisin stories on radio.

Henry Cecil-Trainer of Genius, biography by close friend Brough Scott, relates the roller coaster career of the famous and successful horse trainer suffering huge losses of fortune but triumphing finally with his crowning glory, the great horse legend Frankel, and his flawless 14-race career. Sir Cecil died 2013.

Guilty by Definition (2024), an academic mystery by lexicographer Susie Dent (of Countdown fame) based around a senior editor, Martha Thornhill at Clarendon English Dictionary in Oxford, trying to solve her sister's decade old disappearance after receiving cryptic Shakespeare-filled letters that reveal hidden dark secrets.

Life Class (2007) by Booker Prize writer Pat Barker, a historical novel detailing the lives of young Slade School art students in London 1914 and how their lives are irrevocably changed by WW1.

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)

Braunton U3A runs a croquet group during the summer and invite members from the surrounding U3A's to join the group. The U3A Croquet Group will be starting on Tuesday 21st April 2026.

The group meets weekly at Barnstaple Croquet Club, Raleigh Meadow, off St. Georges Road, Barnstaple, EX31 4UX, Tuesdays, weather permitting, during the summer from **2pm to 4pm**.

No experience is necessary and all equipment and coaching is provided wear comfortable clothes and flat shoes, you may need a waterproof coat and a drink. The cost is £4 to join or rejoin the group and £4 for every session you attend.

Come along to meet friendly people for a fun afternoon.

Anne Young, Group Leader



EMBROIDERY

It was lovely to get to know each other at our new embroidery group this month. We spent time stitching and chatting and inspired each other with our work. We meet on the second Monday of every month at Fremington Methodist Church Hall, 2-4pm. New members welcome. If you are interested, please contact Christine.

Christine Robilliard, Group Leader



EVENING DINING GROUP

Second Tuesday

The Thatched Inn at Abbotsham was the venue for March - food was excellent and the staff helpful - our only gripe was the parking - but it didn't spoil the evening!

Future venues:

April 14 @ 6.30 -	Golden Horn, Barnstaple
May 12 @ 6.30	Siam Bistro - Braunton £ 5 deposit required please by the 25th April
June 9. @ 6.30	Wayfarer at Instow - perhaps walk along the prom afterwards - weather permitting!
July 14 @ 6.30	Fulham Chinese - deposits of £ 10 pp required by July 1st please

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

Mary Young, Group Leader



GEOLOGY

Next Meeting – Friday 10th April 1.40 for 2pm

Our speaker in March was **Ali Ferris, Earth, Marine and Environmental Interpretation Manager, Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre**. Her talk was based on the incredibly small fossil finds along the Jurassic coast where recent rock falls have exposed many new fossils. Tracing the evolution and deposition of these

fossils was stimulating.

In April we will have a Zoom talk from Dr Joe Botting for our meeting and will be taken to mid Wales where he is presently researching the early fossil deposits. In the early 1800's the fossils found here started the science of geology, Dr Botting has now uncovered a new area of exploration which questions the previously accepted age of some earlier deposits.

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

David Dickinson, Co-ordinator



HIKERS

Monday 13th April

Our walk this month will be a circular walk of 7.5m beginning in Parkham and following quiet lanes, footpaths and the SWCP as we make our way to Bucks Mills and following the SWCP to Peppercombe. If you would like to join us please let us know so that we can send further details. New members very welcome.

Group Leaders: Pauline Markey & Karen Wagstaff



HOW IT WORKS

Next meeting: Friday 24th April 2026 at 1.45 for 2.00pm.

In February we had a talk by our own members Robert Down and David Dickinson due to the illness of our planned speaker. Robert talked how life forms are identified and catalogued, without a system science would be a jumble, and David talked about Bats, their origin and numbers of species.

In April Helen Chugg and Mike Kelly will talk on clay and pottery made in North Devon produced by Alex Lauder, we will hear how this was a thriving industry during the 19th Century

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

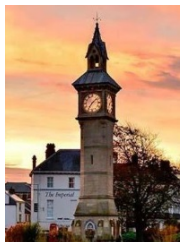
Tue 21st April 2.30pm, Tue 19th May 2.30pm: Imperial Hotel

Karin Slaughter is an American crime writer who has been described as an international bestseller, with over 25 novels to her name. However, that does not mean that we all have to enjoy her books - and this was no exception. False

Witness is one of her 'standalone' novels and is a psychological thriller. We agreed that it was a cleverly written, intense story that introduced us to some complex characters for whom there could be no happy outcome. On the whole, we found it too graphic and disturbing, with the constant use of strong language and vivid descriptions of rape, murder and extreme drug abuse, too harrowing to read. Others, who had perhaps read more of this author's work, liked it and thought it a page-turner, enjoying the suspense of the complex story. Those who had not previously read anything by this author agreed that they would be reluctant to try again, whilst those more familiar with her work agreed that it was not one of her best. One good thing - the cat survived!

"To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life" (W. Somerset Maugham)

Ellie Bray 01271 371506 Group Leader



LOCAL HISTORY

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 as soon as possible 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?

Local History meetings will resume in September.

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 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:

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 this month being Springtime, we enjoyed some lovely and inspiring descriptions in poems by Laurie Lee, Robert Browning, A E Housman, John Clare, Gillian Clarke and the less well-known Scottish poet, Katrina Porteous. We recalled poems from our schooldays such as Home Thoughts from Abroad, April Rise and A Shropshire Lad but were also challenged by views of Spring as seen by Gerard

ManleyHopkins and Philip Larkin.

However, A Song to a Fair Young Lady Going Out of Town in Spring, by John Dryden, turned out not to be about Spring at all, but as the background for a sad young man whose lover has just left him!

Next month we plan to look at some American poets - ***Gillian Kerr on behalf of Margaret Ryan.***

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.

For more information, please contact Margaret

Margaret Ryan, Group Leader



PRACTICAL GARDENERS

On Thursday March 19th twelve members of the Practical Gardening Group visited Rosemoor RHS Garden. A perfect Spring morning of blue skies and warm sunshine greeted our group and the garden was at its most welcoming. At this time of year there is an opportunity to see the huge variety of daffodils and other bulbs that take pride of place before their companion plants come into full leaf. The morning ended with a light lunch, seated outside in the sunshine. It summed up a really pleasant and positive start to our gardening year.

Our next meeting on April 16th is a visit to Upper Gorwell House, Goodleigh Road, Barnstaple, a 4-acre garden with its own microclimate with many rare & tender plants. New members are most welcome to join us. Contact Andy for further information.

David Green, Andy Jones, Group Leadership Team



RAMBLERS

Thursday 9th April

We look forward to you joining us for a circular walk from Ilfracombe via Chambercombe. A fairly easy walk incorporating the SWCP and footpaths with lovely views of the coast. We plan to have lunch afterwards in Ilfracombe for those who would like to. If you would like to join us please let us know so that we can send further details. New members very welcome.

Karen Wagstaff & Pauline Markey - Group Leaders



SCRABBLE

April dates - Wed 1st 10-12 30pm & Thurs 16th 10-12 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 8th April, 2026.**

With another good turnout, we had a fun session with Sue, singing several new songs as well as old favourites. As Sue can't be with us in April, our replacement accompanist John will be happy to take us through our twenty favourite songs, and sing for us too if the group wants him to perform.

Thank you everyone for being such a delightful group to work with and appreciating the two professional musicians who help us to "sing for fun"!

I look forward to seeing you again on 8 April, and wish you all a very happy Easter.

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 30th April 11am.

ASHFORD GARDEN CENTRE meet main entrance doorway. Parking in their Car Park (plenty). Take care with everyone to walk down to the MAIN ROAD and carefully cross over to gain entrance to the TARKA TRAIL. Walk right towards Braunton and Chivenor (stop where road into Chivenor crosses Tarka Trail) then return to the GC for refreshments – 3 miles there and back.

Bob Smith, Group Leader



TABLE TENNIS

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

Table tennis continues to be played with great enthusiasm. Every Tuesday, we have a large group of 20-25 players. This is great as the Tarka Tennis Centre continues to provide us with three tables to play on. We play Doubles for 1.5 hours and everybody gets quite a few games in. In between social chat is light and friendly. All together good for fitness and good for the mind. New members welcome.

Gabi & Agnes Group Leaders



TREKKERS

Friday APRIL 17: Valley of Rocks

Route: along the inland ridge above the Valley of Rocks before descending to Lee Bay for picnic lunch; then back through the valley to Lynton. Easy/moderate 7.5m with a total ascent 1,580ft / 481m via two main climbs; mainly good surfaces with wonderful views of the coast and South Wales.

Rendezvous: Lynton Town Hall at **10.50 for 11.00 departures**. Drive to Lynton (car share if you can) or take the bus which leaves from Barnstaple Bus Station at 9:50; it stops at Blackmoor Gate at 10:20 and Lynton Town Hall at 10:43. Free with a Pass or £3.00 each way.

For more details contact Graham Hayward

Friday MAY 15: Dartmoor Awayday

Route: 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. Mostly easy 6.5m on open moorland with 1,250ft/381m ascent via two climbs. For more details contact Dale

Friday JUNE 19: Cheriton Ridge and Upland Exmoor

Route: From Hillsford Bridge (Watersmeet) along Cheriton Ridge and Hoar Oak Water, and back via Cheriton and Combe Park Wood. Easy/moderate 8.5m. For more details, contact Mike Kelly

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 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

Please email the Editor 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 **28th April**, please submit any articles before the **24th April**

Lynne Dickinson, Editor

FURTHER NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

I am very short of photographs for this edition.
Group Leaders or group participants – please send me any pictures you have for insertion at the end of the newsletter, of your members enjoying the activities, singing, playing music, keeping fit, knitting, discussions etc. would be very welcome.

Many thanks, Lynne

Ali Ferris, Earth Marine and Environmental Interpretation Manager, Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre, giving her talk to the Geology Group in March



Trekkers enjoying a rest near Countisbury



Practical Gardeners

Visit to Rosemoor

