

BARNSTAPLE u3a

NEWSLETTER

MAY, 2026

Issue 471

www.barnstaple.u3asite.uk

barnstaplethirdagegroup@rocketmail.com



Chairman: Keith Luckhurst
Membership Secretary: Julia Dento

Business Secretary: Philip Hawkins
Groups Co-ordinator: Mary Young

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

Mr John and Mrs Alexandra Lain
Mrs Val Waite
Mr Stephen and Mrs Jan Gladwin
Mr Derek Mott
Mr David Wood

Mr Louis and Mrs Lesley Rolfe
Mrs Sheila Andrews
Ms Pamela Baumforth
Mr Barry Dowding

MAY SPEAKER

On Thursday 7th May our speaker will be Gerry Duffy of the Barnstaple Bridge Trust giving us some history of the charity.

Barnstaple u3a Notice of AGM

Notice is hereby given that the 2026 AGM of Barnstaple u3a, will be held at our coffee morning on **Thursday 7th May at 10:30 am**, at the Roundswell Community Hall. Members wishing to vote at the AGM **must provide evidence of their eligibility to vote by showing their membership card on entry to the hall and are required to sign in with their name, membership number and telephone number.** Apologies for absence should be notified before the day to the Business Secretary, Phil Hawkins

AGENDA

Welcome

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last AGM 2025
3. Any matters arising
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Chairman's Report
6. Review of Constitution dated May 2026 and Formal Vote
7. Election of Committee
8. Any other business
9. Date of next AGM
10. Close meeting

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:

May 7th Andy Jones and Lyn Jones

June 4th Caroline Oldfield, John Vooght

July 2nd Pam Harman and Gill Mulligan

If anyone knows they are free for September, October and November, and feel they can volunteer, we should be most grateful. 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.Meth 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
Coffee morning	Th.7 th May - 10.30am	R'ndswell Comm.Hall	Any Committee Member
Croquet Braunton	Tue. Weekly 2-4pm	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.	Mike Kelly
Hikers	Mon 10.30am	Various	Pauline Markey Karen Wagstaff
How it Works	4 th Fri of month 1.45pm	Fremington Meth.Hall	Dale Hall
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	Resume September	Barnstaple Library	Jackie Brayley Yvonne Partington
Mosaics	Fridays 10am – 12.30pm	Rhod. Ave, Meth 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

NEW GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR

Hi All

I would like to introduce myself to all group leaders, and confirm myself as the new group's co-ordinator for Barnstaple u3a, having taking over from Laurence I am looking forward to the role, and hoping to work very closely with you all in supporting your various activities and goals.

I will be responsible for co-ordinating communications, and ensuring all runs smoothly and efficiently, while creating a friendly and informal environment for every group. My career background is in customer services, where I was responsible to supervising a team of professional personnel, dealing with over 600 retail outlets, and consequently I am familiar with all types of queries.

Feel free to reach out to me with any questions, queries, suggestions or concerns and I will endeavour to help and support you in any way I look forward to meeting you all in the very near future. Mary Young

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.



On the 6 May we will looking at material brought in so we may all learn from the discussion. There will a focus on 'yamadori' (the art of digging up material and then styling it into Bonsai). There has been a request to show how to wire a tree into its pot. Looking forward to meeting you all at The Vine @ 2.00 pm

Nigel Wright, Group Leader

BOOK LOVERS



Last Wednesday in month.

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

Margaret Ryan, Group Leader

CROQUET (BRAUNTON)



Braunton U3A run a croquet group during the summer and invite members from the surrounding U3A's to join the group. The U3A Croquet Group started again 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. Contacts below for more information and to book your place. Come along to meet friendly people for a fun afternoon.

Anne Young, Group Leader



EMBROIDERY

Our group had another lovely afternoon of stitching and chatting. During the session we shared books, websites and workshops that might provide inspiration for 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

The Golden Horn was up to scratch - tasty (very) food and comfortable surroundings - 16 of us turned up - for an enjoyable evening. Next one is May 12th at the Siam in Braunton at 6.30 - a £5 deposit is required this time please.

Future venues: May 12 @ 6.30 Siam Bistro - Braunton £ 5 deposit required please.

June 9. - return trip to the Wayfarer at Instow @ 6.30 - maybe a walk along the prom afterwards - weather permitting! July 14 @ 6.30 - Fulham Chinese - deposits of £ 10 pp required by July 1st please contact the Group Leader if you are interested in joining this group.

Mary Young, Group Leader



GEOLOGY: Next Meeting – Friday 8th May, 1.45 for 2pm

In April we had a Zoom talk from Dr Joe Botting, Palaeontologist researching in mid Wales. In the late 1700'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. A truly fascinating talk.

In May Andy Gordon a retired geologist from Scotland and Somerset will explain the Complex Geology of the Somerset Coalfield and its secret coal deposits including the largest collection of Carboniferous insects in Britain, these are the largest insects ever to fly. Please contact the Group Leader if you are interested in joining this group

David first ran the geology meeting on the **13th August 2012** and is now retiring from this position but will still be around. We would like to thank David for all his years of hard work. Mike Kelly is a longstanding member of the geology group; he has taken over as the new leader and will continue to coordinate this very successful group

Mike Kelly, Group Leader



HIKERS

May: As our walk day falls on Bank Holiday Monday this month there will be no walk. We look forward to seeing you all in June for a beautiful walk around Bampton. New members very welcome.

Pauline Markey and Karen Wagstaff Group Leaders



HOW IT WORKS Next meeting: Friday 22nd May 2026 at 1.45 for 2.00pm. In April Helen Chugg and Mike Kelly talked on clay and pottery made in North Devon produced by Alex Lauder, this was a thriving industry during the 19th Century. They also had a table set up with many samples, leaflets and books for everyone to enjoy

In May Peter Looe will talk about the life and work of a Russian Scientist Leon Theremin who invented the most successful listening device as well as spy equipment that was housed in the American Embassy in Moscow. He also invented a musical instrument which he used to give Concerts to audiences worldwide. Come along and hear Peter play this instrument and as well as hearing about this man's exploits.

David started this group on the 22nd April 1922 and is now retiring and handing over to Dale as Group Leader. The group has grown tremendously since inception, and we are very grateful to David for all his hard work. He will not be group leader but will still be around, and Dale will be co-ordinating this successful Group.

Dale Hall, 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 19th May 2.30pm, Tue 16th June 2.30pm: Imperial Hotel

Our last book, *The Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter*, was enjoyed by everyone! Attached to an historical event, the author, Hazel Gaynor, weaves an interesting tale around the short life of Grace Darling. This book is another written with a dual timeline, a format not to everyone's taste, but we all agreed that it was a good story, linking the true events of 1838, when the S.S. Forfarshire was lost off the Farne Islands on the Northumberland coast, to the imagined life of a young woman in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1938. The link is tenuous, but woven into actual events, it still makes for a good read. Grace Darling was widely written about at the time of her famous rescue, but her portrayal as the classic Victorian heroine was all that was known. The author, after much research, found the possible threads of a story that she cleverly wove into an agreeable tale intermingled with authentic historical facts. We enjoyed the author's writing style, and her descriptive narratives brought the events of that night and the sometimes-wild seascape vividly to life

"Where is human nature so weak as in the bookstore?" (Henry Ward Beecher)

Ellie Bray Group Leader

LOCAL HISTORY



Local History meetings will resume in September. We are always pleased to receive suggestions for topics and speakers and we will then do the research and hopefully include it in the next session. Please contact either of us by phone or at the monthly coffee morning. 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 phone our Group Leader, Jo.

Jo Archer, Group Leader



POETRY

Our theme was American Poets. Emily Dickinson from the Midwest (1830-1886) led a very isolated life: I'm Nobody! Who are you? I Felt a Funeral, in my brain, Because I could not stop for death. Her poem "Hope is the thing with feathers" provides a surprisingly more optimistic view in response to Emily Bronte's downbeat poem "Hope was but a timid friend" Also, some well-known poems from Robert

Frost (1874-1963) *The Road Not Taken*.

T S Elliot (1885-1965), *The Love song of AJ Prufrock*.

Sylvia Plath's charming and well observed experience of motherhood in *Her First week*. Also, some witty poems: Ogden Nash (1802-1971) *You and Me* and PB Shelley, Dorothy Parker (1893-1967) *A Very Short Song*.

Next month our theme is Colour and Julie has kindly agreed to host. 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 April 16th 13 members of the Practical Gardening Group visited Dr John Marston's Upper Gorwell House garden overlooking the River Taw estuary in Barnstaple. After retirement as a local GP and with little previous experience of gardening, he started in 1977 to develop a four-acre garden, full of exotic and unusual plants which thrived in the maritime microclimate. He planted all the trees himself, including magnolias, horse chestnuts and cedars, and during our tour could remember the date he planted them and from where he obtained them! He almost seemed to greet each tree or mature shrub as an old friend he had nurtured into adulthood. It was just a memorable afternoon.

PS there are NGS Open Days on: 17 May, 21 June, 19 July & 13 September. Contact Andy for further information

David Green, Andy Jones, Group Leaders



RAMBLERS

Thursday 14th May

We are planning a spectacular 4.5m walk from Withypool to Landacre which has outstanding views. We do hope you will join us. New members are very welcome ~ please let us know if you are interested so that we can make sure we send you full details of the walk.

Karen Wagstaf, f Pauline Markey Group Leaders



SCRABBLE

May date - Wed 6th 10-12 30pm & Thurs 16th 10-12 30pm

Only one date for May as above. 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 13th May, 2026.**

Yet another excellent turnout for our meeting on 8 April, despite its proximity to Easter & several members being absent from illness. John Hobbs took us through some of our "top 20" most popular songs and sang a couple of them for us too. I look forward to seeing you again on 13 May, and thank you all for your support.

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 28th May 11am.

Meet at Crow Point car park at end of Toll Road (£2.50 toll). Walk to beach entrance near old boardwalk. Walk along sands to old pill box (1 mile). Walk back along sands to Crow Point light (1.3 miles). Walk round light house and along sands back to car park (2.6 miles). Approx 90 mins. Lunch at Williams Arms (or St Johns, Ashford if preferred).

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. Contact Agnes or Gabi.

Gabi or Agnes Group Leaders



TREKKERS

Friday MAY 15: Dartmoor Awayday

Route: 6.5-mile walk visiting Haytor's twin peaks, the nearby granite quarries and the tramway of 17,000 shaped granite rails – a world-unique feature! Another highlight is Hound Tor with its nearby medieval village. Picnic lunch at Hound Tor. There's no café en route, but the Moorland Hotel (Agatha Christie used to go there) is welcoming afterwards. Wonderful views to the coast and in all directions.

Grade: easy/moderate. Total ascent 1,250ft/381m via two main climbs, but mostly easy on gently undulating open moorland.

Rendezvous: meet at the walkers' carpark at **10.45 for 11.00 departure**. Approach Haytor on the B3387 and pass the Moorland Hotel and Visitor Centre on the left (note: toilets at the Visitor Centre). Then pass three paying car parks on your left and drive to the top of the long hill beside Haytor and continue about half a mile to the free walkers' carpark on the right. The best route to Haytor is via the A361, M5, Devon Expressway and then the B3387 from Bovey Tracey uphill to Haytor. Allow about 1hr 40mins to drive to Haytor from Barnstaple.

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

Friday JULY 17: Cow Castle and River Barle

Route: From Simonsbath outward on the high path above Cow Castle (Iron Age fort) and back along the River Barle. Easy/moderate 8m with great views, skylarks and deer. For more details, contact Peter Loombe

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

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POSSIBLE NEW GROUP – DAY TRIPS BY COACH

Possible new group / looking for support!! We have 3 trips on offer

Wednesday 1st July to Montacute House at a cost of £35) National Trust members pay only for the coach)

Wednesday 15th July Beaulieu house and motor museum or Exbury gardens - same coach different venue - cost £54

Friday 7th August - Taunton flower show (in conjunction with the gardening group)
Cost £39 Please contact Mary young

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.

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 May**, please submit any articles before the **24th May** if possible. **Lynne Dickinson, Editor**

Photographs of the strollers' group around the Tarka Trail in March, thank you to Melanie.



Hikers at Bucks Mill, Parkham and Peppercombe



Ramblers at Ilfracombe and Hele Bay



How it Works studying the pottery samples, books and leaflets during Helen and Mike's talk



Evening Diners enjoying a meal at the Golden Horn, Barnstaple





Practical Gardeners visit to Upper Gorwell House Gardens



Group Leaders – thank you for sending lots of pictures for the May newsletter – Lynne