



**TORRIDGE THIRD AGE GROUP** <https://torridge.u3asite.uk>  
**NEWSLETTER**

**Issue 549**

**January 2025**



**Comments from the Chair**

As you read this column, 2025 will have arrived. Let us hope that it brings good cheer and a peaceful New Year around the world!

Forty Seven of our members enjoyed the Christmas Lunch at the Royal Hotel. Although it was a Carvery and we shared the room with other parties, the 'party' appeared to go well. I must say we were a noisy bunch! I hope everyone there enjoyed the food and festivities.

This month sees the launch of our new website which can be found at [www.torridge.u3asite.uk](http://www.torridge.u3asite.uk) initially you will find it looks and feels very like the previous. That was in one sense purposeful, to help everyone to easily navigate to the information they want; - It also made it far easier to port over from the old system! Although this is very much a 'work in progress'; - Please take a look.

So what are the advantages?

- Can be viewed on Tablet and Phone displays
- Easier to Edit (e.g. copy/ paste etc , like a Word document)
- 'Group' information can be viewed by Venue / Category / Meeting day
- How it handles Photos is more flexible with ability to magnify image
- 'Blog' style Group write-ups are possible

We have still not been able to find a cleaner for the Upper Room. If you are aware of anyone who would be interested, please contact myself or another member of the committee. Also, until this situation is resolved the committee would appreciate it if members would endeavour to keep the Upper Room in a fit condition after your group activity.

Finally, I hope that you all had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

***Best Regards***

***Graham Thompson***  
***Chair, Torrington U3A***

**We welcome the following new members this month:**

Christine Ker, Joan Eileen New



**Future coffee morning 2025**

(Provisional dates@ Northam Hall from 10:00am, Saturdays)

- 22nd March, 24th May, 11th October, 22nd November

<b>Chairman</b> Graham Thompson	<b>Secretary</b> Carolyn Kelly	<b>Membership Secretary</b> Julie Thompson	<b>Newsletter Editor</b> Andy Robilliard
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### This month's notice board:

#### Monthly Lunch :

This month's lunch is on **15th January** — please arrive in time to take your seat in the dining room by 12 o'clock.

**Our Speaker will be** David McLellan - Topic TBC

Please remember to **book-in with Helen** before taking your seat, **who will collect the £1 speaker fee.**

Lunch will be served at **1 o'clock**. (Cost **£18.50** for two courses plus coffee). As usual — Please pay at reception prior to making your way through to the dining room.

Please could those interested in attending :

- Order their choice of meal by **10th January** if they haven't already done so.
- Please advise Helen if you are unable to attend, having booked lunch in order that the hotel can be given the correct numbers. Payment to the hotel on the day can be made by cash, card or cheque (payable The Royal Hotel). If you are paying by cheque you will need to present your cheque guarantee card, this is essential and cheques will not be accepted without it.

#### MENU — 16th October 2024

- Roast leg of Pork , yorkshire pudding , stuffing ball, apple sauce Roast potatoes and vegetables.
- Mixed Seafood Vol-au Vent , creamy dill and white wine sauce garden peas and sauteed potatoes
- Jacket Potato with Spiced beef chilli , bistro salad, house coleslaw.
- Stuffed baked Pepper, vegetable casserole and sweet potato falafels
- Mixed meat or Cheddar cheese salad, chutney, house coleslaw egg, pickled onion and minted new potatoes
- Fruit Crumble and custard
- Lemon Cheesecake
- Fruit Salad
- Cheese and biscuits
- Ice Cream
- Coffee

**Miscellaneous:** you do not receive your electronic version or have queries regarding the printed Newsletter, please contact; - **Graham Thompson**

**Availability & Booking of the Upper Room :** - For details, see website, programme in Upper room or contact: - **Graham Thompson**

**Group leader changes :** -Please send note of any change in name or contact details to the group leader co-ordinator : **Dennis Pavitt**

**Upper Room payments :** - Payments due for the Upper Room, etc. should be passed to the Treasurer : - **Heather Williams**

**Proposed events :** - If you are planning to hold an event, please contact **Graham Thompson** first to ensure that there are no clashes.

## GROUP REPORTS



**Badminton** – Group Contacts  
**Wednesday:** Diane Care  
Anne Scott

The Beginners Table Tennis Group meets every Thursday at the Atlantic Racket Centre in Bideford. We welcome new members so if you feel like giving us a try please contact me at the above address and I can tell you about the group. All equipment is provided and no special clothing is required. As long as your shoes will not mark the floor you're good to go!



**Bird Watching Group**  
Group Contact: **Irene Hahn**

This group is full as there is a limit to how many keen birdwatchers can have a clear view of what is going on of interest to us in the great outdoors. Therefore I am happy to add to a waiting list but we do not have vacancies very often.



**Book Group 1.**  
Group contact: **Pat Pavitt**  
On

Instead of our usual meeting this month, we enjoyed a very pleasant lunch at Country Cousins. We will be meeting again in January when our book to discuss will be The Good Liar by Nicholas Searle. A Happy New Year to you all.



**Book Group 2.**  
Group contact **Hazel McLellan**  
On

There was no meeting in December, so we resume on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January at 11am at the Golf Club for our usual coffee/lunch/review of our holiday reading. Wishing all a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.



**Book Group 3.**  
Group contact **Jo Sampson**

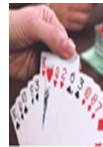
Wild Swans by Jung Chang... tells the story of three generations of Chinese women: Chang's grandmother, Chang's mother, and Chang herself. The book opens with the birth of Chang's grandmother in 1909 and concludes in 1978, when Chang, a 26-year-old scholarship recipient, left China to begin her studies in Great Britain. Interwoven with Chang's family story is the often dark and brutal history of 20th-century China, which Chang chronicles from the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911 through the aftermath of Mao Zedong's death in 1976.

Chang began writing Wild Swans following her mother's 1988 visit to London, where Chang was living. During this visit, Chang's mother told her the full story of their family's experience. The early chapters detail Chang's mother's childhood in Japanese-occupied Manchuria, her activity on behalf of the Chinese Communists, her marriage to a veteran Communist revolutionary, the birth of her five children, and her experience as a Communist official from the early 1950s

through the end of Mao's Great Leap Forward and the resulting famine in 1962.

In more than half the book appear Chang's own memories. From the age of 12, she experienced the indoctrination that turned millions of Chinese youths into Mao worshippers. As a teenager Chang witnessed and even participated in the early stages of Mao's Cultural Revolution which unleashed terror and destruction on an unprecedented scale.

An educational if challenging read.– Maggie Hitchens



### **Bridge for Improvers**

Group contacts: Linda Nicholls

Sandy Madden on

Tuesday evening Improvers Bridge is now starting at 6.45 for 2 hours finishing at 8.45 in the Upper Room. We are very happy to welcome new members. We are a friendly group.



### **Canasta**

Group contact : Christine Davies

We are chugging along quite happily with a convenient number for more good games. The Group is currently full so lookout for vacancies here.



### **Crafty Cards & Creative Craft Class.**

Group contact **Alison Tamplin**

or **Carolyn Kelly**

### **Card Carding**

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday **15th January** 2025 when we will be trying out something new and working on making lace cards.

### **Creative Craft**

Our next meeting will be on Thursday **16th January** 2025 when we will be trying out Indian Block Printing.



### **Croquet.**

Group contact: Anne Young

### **Croquet**

New members are always welcome and we supply all materials and equipment. For additional info contact Alison or Carolyn as above

The group meets weekly at Barnstaple Croquet club, Raleigh Meadow, off St. Georges Road, Barnstaple, EX31 4UX. Tuesday, weather permitting, during the summer from 2pm to 4pm. No experience is necessary and all equipment and coaching is provided. 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



### **Devon Inns.**

Group contact: Peter Mills

Or Marilyn Clarke

Our last group lunch of the year was held for the second

year running at The Royal George Inn, Appledore, superb views over the convergence of the Taw & Torridge rivers, a great location.

Our First outing of the 2025 New Year will be on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January @ The Bell Inn, Monkleigh, Bideford, EX39 5JS as usual meet in the bar area 12 - 12.15.

The Inn has had new management since early in 2024, who have made improvements and changes to this cosy venue. Members will need to make a food pre-order prior to the 9<sup>th</sup> from the on-line menu, specials will also be available which members will be notified of prior to the lunch date.

For those not familiar with Monkleigh, you take the Torrington route out of Bideford, after the first bridge in an "S" bend on an uphill slope, there is a sign to Monkleigh, .....A388.....the turning is to the right on a right-hand bend. Take Care with oncoming traffic. Follow on for several miles and you reach the village, The Bell Inn is on your Left, just after a 90" Right hand curve, There is a car park entrance on the far side of the pub, Enter the Inn via the Terrace / car park entrance.



**Digital Camera Group 1 & 2**

Group contact: Nigel Tompkins

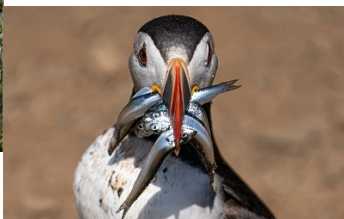
Hello and welcome to Photography Groups 1 and 2 special. This month we had a good turn out for both meetings, more than half of each group were able to attend. The subject for December was "The 10 best images of the Year" This applied to both groups. We were blessed with some stunning photography at the meetings that made the choice for the Newsletter all the more difficult.

Thank you to all members of both groups who contributed immensely to the success of Photography in the local U3A Please find images from Group 1 at the top and Group 2 underneath.

Group 1



No.1 Kudo in the Bush by Melvyn Lowther

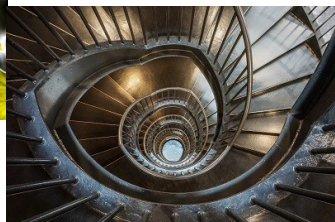


No. 2 Puffin by Nigel Tompkins



No. 3 Leaf by |paul Davies

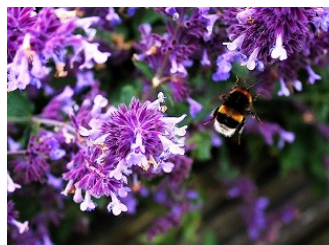
No. 4 Silo Staircase by Jane



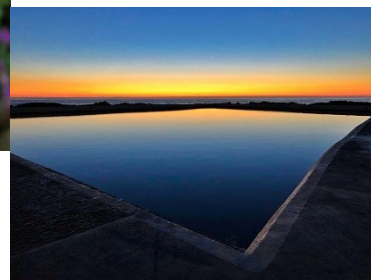
Irvine Group 2



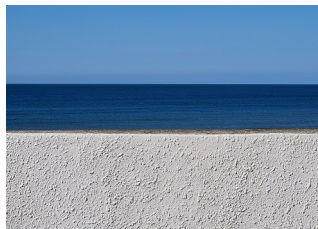
No. 1 Greenland by Paul Green



No. 2 Happy Bee by Pauline Coombes



No. 3 Rock Pool Sunset by Dave de Burton



No. 4 Westward Ho! by Judy James



**Discussion Group.**

Group contact: Irene Baxter

Our topic this month was Assisted Dying, following on from the historic vote in Parliament. It was a very interesting and often emotional discussion, with some very personal experiences shared with the group. We agreed that the current state of the law surrounding end of life for people in intolerable pain and suffering is confused and inhumane. We support the bill proposed by Kim Leadbeater, but with some reservations around ensuring that there are adequate safeguards to protect vulnerable people. We also agreed that provision of palliative care must be more widely available, and that staff in hospitals and care homes should be much better trained on end of life care. As a society we are uncomfortable talking about death, often avoiding the subject or resorting to euphemisms. We hope that if this becomes law it will lead to societal change whereby death is accepted as an unavoidable fact of life.



**First Friday Walkers**

Group contact: Margaret Curtis

Our first walk in 2025 will be on 7th February. Details will be sent to all group members later in January. Wishing you all a Happy and Healthy New Year! Margaret.



**French.**

Group contact Jo Sampson

Our group is conversation based and members have a reasonable level of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. We also listen to native french speakers via you tube. It is not suitable for beginners.



**Knit & Stitch Group.**

Group contact: Heather Williams

We meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursday afternoons at 2pm in the Upper Room. We enjoy working on our own projects, finding out about what everyone else is making, having a chat and a cup of tea or coffee



**Let's Talk About Books**  
Group contact **Peter Flacke**

There was no meeting this month due to Christmas commitments.



**Mah jong**  
**Morning Grp Contact: Nicky Heading**

Would you like a morning of fun and laughter whilst at the same time exercising your brain? Mahjong is a good opportunity to do just that so why not give it a go? We are a very friendly group who would welcome any new members, beginners or "old hands". We meet on the first three Mondays of the month in the upper room at 10am until noon. Cost is £2 per session and we have all the equipment you'll need. Just



**Music—Blues/Rock.**  
Group Contact: David Mclellan

We played a varied mix of music in December; with a distinct leaning towards the blues. New artists, the Northern Irish group The Deep Strikes -who only formed this year - were introduced, as well as a number of regulars (eg: Jo Bonamassa, Gary Moore, Santana, Walter Trout and Bob Dylan). Blues artists -Jimmy Reed and King Biscuit Boy - were played from The Birth of the Blues CD collection and an Old Grey Whistle test performance by the late bluesman Freddie King also featured. Two tracks, from George Thorogood's 30 years of Rock album, included the classic number Bad to the Bone. Some stunning guitar playing was also presented by Steve Vai with the track Tender Surrender. We meet up again on January 9<sup>th</sup>) for our next eclectic session.



**Playreading.**  
Group contact: Christine Holmes

Play reading will be adding their report soon



**Photo, Walk and Talk Group**  
Contact: Alan Gibbons

An informal visit to Exeter.

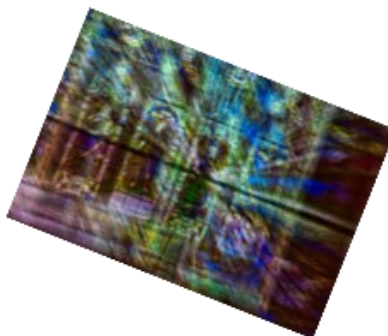


Nativity Scene at the Christmas Market,



Prayer Tree with Cathedral Organ by Nick Bigwood -

Lit Candy Sticks on Guard in Northernhay Gardens,



Zoom in Zoom Out of Cathedral Stained Glass by Alan Gibbons.

Our next walk will start at 10.30am on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January in Barnstaple, starting from the Square, in front of the Museum. We will walk the West Side of the town seeking out the many views and features, and whatever else we find interesting. In February we will return to Barnstaple, setting off from the Square, to walk the East Side of the Town. We will include Rock Park, and again look for interesting subjects. On both walks, and for those who wish to, we will finish with refreshments, at a suitable local Café.

Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas, and Seasons Greetings to All.



**Practical Philosophy**  
Group Contact: **Stuart Mealing**

*Or Irene Baxter*

Instead of introducing a new topic this month we decided to revisit the previous eleven discussions of 2024 and see if any needed to be expanded or updated in the light of recent events or fresh thinking. In the event we found ourselves returning to a couple of old favourites revolving around assisted dying and around gender - though with Elon Musk now being referenced regularly in view of his strong opinions and perceived influence on the future of life on this planet (and perhaps others?).

We had feedback from several other groups fed into our revived debate on assisted dying and found that no one had been against the proposition and only a couple abstained (though it was not claimed that this was fully representational sample) and also that many participants shared personal experiences which formed or reinforced their views. It was noted that the current legislation needed to be effective in preventing coercion, that the bill apparently required the subject to be able to administer the necessary drugs themselves although this might not always be physically possible - and also that our local MP (Geoffrey Cox) voted against the bill after promising to vote in favour. Cultural differences in attitude were also implied by the existence of suicide clubs in Japan, suggesting that whilst in the West suicide is seen as an act by the desperate or terminally ill elsewhere it might be understood as a rational decision that can be taken by sane individuals. It was further

observed that it was considered a matter of humanity to relieve family pets of their suffering when it seemed clear that they were no longer enjoying their lives but that this mercy did not extrapolate to the human animal.

Our previous discussions on gender issues became further nuanced this month with a general consensus emerging that attaching labels of male, female (or other) obscured acknowledgement of the individual and that the politicisation of gender had become the main problem. The proposition that evangelical trans activists aggressively sought more than simple equality was considered but the group was clear that human rights should be prioritised over gender labelling. Fresh observations were made about the relaxed fluidity of sexuality when one is young and about the new identification of 'micro aggressions' (tiny discriminations such as the opening of a door for a woman) which some now cite as being sexist. We did recognise however that the social constructs that we learned as children for treating different sexes are happily changing. The subject of our next meeting is yet to be confirmed.



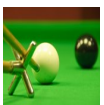
**Science, Technology & Society.**  
Group contact: **Barry Zussman:**

Happy New Year everyone! Our first meeting of 2025 will take place on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> January, at 2:30pm in the Upper Room. The topic(s) have yet to be decided, so if you have any suggestions of your own, then please do let me know.



**Short/Soft Tennis** - Group Contacts:  
Tuesday session: Janet Broomhead (Jan)  
Thursday session: Lynn Woolley

We meet at 2pm for an hour every Tuesday and at 3pm every Thursday at the Atlantic Racquet Centre. All equipment is provided free and an hour long session cost £3. No experience necessary. All equipment supplied. Fun and exercise guaranteed



**Snooker (Tue & Wed)**  
Current Contact: Dennis Pavitt  
on

The U3A Snooker Group has two separate weekly sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings at the Kingsley Hall in Westward Ho! We spend two enjoyable hours trying to re-capture past snooker skills and enjoying the company of similar snooker enthusiasts. If you would like further information please give me a call or send me an email.



**Table Tennis.**  
Group Contact: **Christine Isaac**

The Table Tennis Group are still enjoying our sessions at the Youth Centre and are gradually picking up numbers again. We would be happy to see any new players that might wish to give us a try



**Beginners Table Tennis.**  
Group Contact: Melvyn Lowther

The Beginners Table Tennis Group meets every Thursday at the Atlantic Racket Centre in Bideford. We welcome new members so if you feel like giving us a try please contact me at the above address and I can tell you about the group. All equipment is provided and no special clothing is required. As long as your shoes will not mark the floor you're good to go!



**Third Friday Walkers.**  
Group contact: **Linda Burgess-Bentley**

**January Walk:** For January, we will repeat the walk we did last January along the River Exe in Exeter as several people have requested it. The details are as follows:

On Friday, 17 January, meet inside Barnstaple railway station at 9.05am to take the 9.35am train to St David's Station, Exeter. (The cheapest parking is Seven Brethren car park, Barnstaple which is next to the old Leisure Centre (recently demolished). It is currently £2.50 for the day and only a 5 or 6 minute walk to Barnstaple Railway Station). The train journey is about one hour and ten minutes. From St David's Station we will walk along the flood basin then join the River Exe at the weir where we will stop for our coffee. After our break we will continue on to Exeter Quay. The walk from the station to Exeter Quay is about 3 miles on an easy, level footpath. In the past we have had lunch at The Prospect Inn, Exeter Quay but unfortunately they cannot accommodate us this year as it is their first day of re-opening after an extended break. I will email everyone when I have had time to sort out an alternative place to dine, hopefully on The Quay. After lunch, we will make our way to Exeter Central Station, Queen Street for the return journey to Barnstaple - a walk of about 0.75 mile. The walk from The Quay to Exeter Central Station leads gently uphill as far as the cathedral then we take a level path to the station. The trains back to Barnstaple are roughly one per hour ( 2.14pm, 3.14pm and 4.13pm).

**Rail Fares :** Standard return fare = £13.80. Senior Railcard return fare = £9.20 per person. Groups of 3 or more, return fare = £9.20 per person. To qualify for group fare, one person only pays at the kiosk for the whole group. **(When booking, please ask for a return fare to Exeter Central Station).**

I hope you can join us; and don't forget to bring a woolly hat as it can be cold along the River Exe in January! In the meantime, look out for my email about the restaurant or pub. Thanks, Linda



**Ukulele group.**  
Group contact **Richard Patmore**

Nothing was received from the Ukulele group this month



**Watercolour Groups 1&2.**  
Contact: Brenda Cammann

Group 1 (Improvers) painted a snow scene using techniques learnt throughout the year. Everyone's was slightly different which added to the wonderful end results when they were all lined up for a critique.



Due to the close proximity of Christmas, Group 2's session was cancelled.

# DIARY PAGE

ACTIVITY	DATE	START	END	LOCATION
<b><u>Groups below meet every week</u></b>				
Badminton	Wednesdays	10:00	11:00	Atlantic Racquets Centre
Bridge for Improvers	Every Tuesday evening	18:45	20:45	Upper Room St Margarets
Croquet (Braunton)	Weekly on Tuesday - (May to Sept)	14:00	16:00	Croquet Club Barnstaple
French	Every Tuesday	10:30	12:30	Upper Room St Margarets
Short/Walking Tennis Thursday	Every Thursday afternoon	15:00	16:00	Atlantic Racquets Centre
Short/Walking Tennis Tuesday	Every Tuesday Afternoon	14:00	15:00	Atlantic Racquets Centre
Snooker on Tuesday	Every Tuesday from 10 a.m till 12 noon	10:00	12:00	Kingsley Snooker Hall
Snooker on Wednesday	Every Wednesday 10 am - 12 noon	10:00	12:00	Kingsley Snooker Hall
Table Tennis	Every Thursday	10:00	12:00	Bideford Youth Centre on the Pill
Table Tennis for beginners	Every Thursday between 10.00 and 11.00	10:00	11:00	Atlantic Racquets Centre
<b><u>Groups below meet two or three times a month</u></b>				
Canasta Group	Twice a month on 2nd and 4th Thursdays	10:30	12:30	Westward Ho
Knit and Stitch group	1st & 3rd Thursdays	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Mahjong Morning	1st and 3rd Monday between 10 am and 12 noon	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Play Reading	Every fortnight on Mondays at 2pm	14:00	16:00	private members houses various
Ukulele Group	1st & 3rd Mondays of every month	14:00	16:00	Northam Hall
<b><u>Groups below meet once a month</u></b>				
Bird Watching	TBA			Contact Group Leader
Book Group 1	3rd Tuesday in every month	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Book Group 2	4th Thursday in every month	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Book Group 3	1st Tuesday in every month	14:30	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Crafty Cards	3rd Wednesday in every month	09:30	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Creative Craft Class	3rd Thursday in the month	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Devon Inns	2nd Thursday in every month	12:00	14:00	See Newsletter or Contact Group Lead
Digital Camera Group 1	2nd Wednesday every month	14:00	16:30	Upper Room St Margarets
Digital Camera Group 2	3rd Wednesday in Month	15:00	17:30	Upper Room St Margarets
Discussion Group	1st Wednesday in every month	10:30	12:30	Upper Room St Margarets
First Friday Walkers	1st Friday in every month	10:30	13:00	See Newsletter or Contact Group Lead
Lets Talk About Books	4th Monday of the month at 2.00 pm	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Monthly Lunch	3rd Wednesday in Month	12:00	15:00	The Royal Hotel,Bideford
Music - Blues/Rock	2nd Thursday in every month	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Photography Walk & Talk	4th Friday	10:30	14:30	Contact Group Leader
Practical Philosophy	2nd Tuesday in every month	14:00	16:00	Upper Room St Margarets
Science,Technology & Society	4th Tuesday in every month	14:30	16:30	Upper Room St Margarets
Third Friday Walkers	3rd Friday in every month	10:30	13:00	See Newsletter or Contact Group Lead
Watercolour Group 1 (Improvers)	First Wednesday of the month	14:00	16:00	The Northam Community Cen-
Watercolour Group 2 (Beginners)	Fourth Monday of the month	10:00	12:00	Upper Room St Margarets