

INSIDE

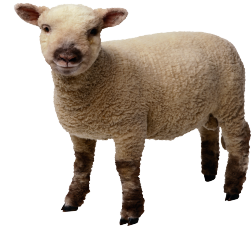
HONITON u3a

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NEWS • VIEWS • EVENTS
PEOPLE and PLACES



Hello all,

Welcome to the spring edition of *Inside Honiton u3a*. I'm sure we are all looking forward to sunnier days, bluer skies and the colours of nature after a grey and wet few months.

We are delighted that Honiton u3a now has a membership of over 350 and still growing, with many and varied groups. Spring is a time of new beginnings and perhaps you have an idea for a new group... there is always space and interest for more.

If you are interested in starting a group please speak to a committee member or contact Jackie Moran. I'm sure members would relish learning or trying something new from those with specialist skills... it's what the u3a is all about, sharing our knowledge, engaging with different ideas and activities and making new friends.

Honor Head

Editor

Cover photo by Jenny Roberts taken in her garden.

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YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD...

Alison Sharples tells us about the amazing work her friend Dorrie is doing for charity...

I thought that I was doing well when I joined the u3a pickleball group that started a couple of years ago. It was my first exercise for some time that didn't involve lying down on a mat. But during November, I helped my friend Dorrie to complete a fundraising challenge for Hospiscare, and Dorrie is 98 years old!

It was decided that she would ride a static bike in the gym with the aim of riding 25 miles in 2025. Her granddaughter sourced a bike for her to try at home before tackling the more comfortable one in the gym. Dorrie achieved her goal with a last session to spare. She has always been keen on exercise, from her years as a yoga teacher up to the present day when she completes a daily regime of exercise at home.

What an example to us all!

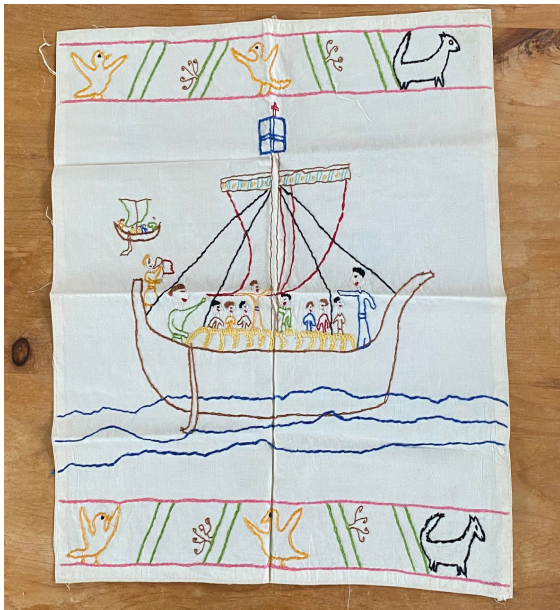


Dorrie on the static bike cycling to raise money for Hospiscare. With donations from friends near and far, she raised over £3000. She is already thinking about another challenge in 2026! Dorrie reminds us that you are never too old to give something a try!!

NEW GROUP

Kay Edge tells us how her new group is coming along...

Recently I started a u3a Biography Writing Group and it's fascinating how variously members are approaching what we are interested in. One chap has already self-published a memoir and some picture books and can give us handy advice. A lady who is new to the area has written quite a lot about her life for her grandchildren, and is keen to share this with us – and unbelievably these two discovered they'd lived in the same area of London as teenagers and shared the memories of school and coffee bars! Someone is focusing on discovering more about one close family member she knows little about while another is basing her research on the many family photographs she's dug out.



I found that objects can trigger all sorts of memories, anything from school exercise books and class photos to objects I sewed – a cross-stitch purse and an embroidered reproduction of a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry.

If people want to read out short extracts of writing or talk about their research we are all agog with interest, but we make sure nothing goes on for too long: fair shares!

Kay's depiction of a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry, done when she was about 10.

Talking of new groups, Russ Connors brings us an idea for a sports group that could, erm, start a new trend...

Well, like me, I'm sure you've been cheered by the achievements of those plucky Brits at the Winter Olympics. An opportunity for a new interest group, surely. 'Ah,' I hear you say, 'but what about the shortage of snow, hereabouts?' We are members of the u3a, I respond. We have a fund of experience accrued over our past lives. We can take a small problem of climate in our stride. Still not convinced? I would say just two words: 'hay bales'! We can easily mock up a downhill toboggan run out of hay bales. A thick layer of cart grease will restore the frictionless surface required. The Beehive has agreed to make drinks trays available for the skeleton bob, and the Honiton chapter of the St John's Ambulance Service are keen to attend as part of their ongoing training programme.

There has to be more to life than sitting at home with a sweet sherry, watching repeats of *Vera*. Would all those of a bold persuasion please leave your name, contact details and blood type after the next meeting.

Reg Valhalla, Group Leader, Exciting Sports

MY VOLUNTEERING LIFE

Ann Halse has had some fascinating experiences as a volunteer. Here is another chapter from her volunteering life...

I became a Lay Inspector for Residential and Care Homes in 2000. Our role was to try and speak, in their rooms if possible, to each resident and ask, 'What is it like for you living here?' We also noted cleanliness, particularly the beds, whether the curtains were falling down, what happened when they asked for a cup of tea at two in the morning and other such-like requests, and whether the residents actually felt cared for. We also noted anything we saw that was inappropriate or lacking in their care. Together with the actual Inspector, we gave feedback to the manager/owner and wrote a report on what we had found. There were lots of good things, although we did have to close one home, but many just needed to upgrade in some areas. I loved these days and met so many wonderful residents.

I also became a 'Mental Health Manager under the Act'. This involved my being with sectioned patients in mental health hospitals or learning disability homes. Each detained patient is entitled to a Review or an Appeal against their section, depending on their section and length of stay. Chairing these panels of three people, meeting the psychiatrist, named nurse, most times the patient and sometimes a relative, was often both with love and concern that life for this person held no happiness at that moment. The question here was, 'Is this patient suffering from a mental illness that could lead to possible suicide or harm to themselves or others? Would they continue to take their medication if released?' I always encouraged the patient to keep taking the medication, listen to the staff and hope that time and patience would bring better days.

Most scary for me was the first time I had to chair a meeting to appoint a consultant. I thought, 'What am doing here? They are all so clever.' With a prayer for help I got through it, with a sigh of relief, I might say! A great learning experience.

Volunteer Hilary Lyne reminds us to repair, reuse and recycle...

Every third Saturday of the month the Honiton Repair Cafe is held in the Cub Building (opposite the LED gym), from 9.30-12.30. There are usually about ten volunteers busy repairing items, ranging from electrical goods like mixers, vacuum cleaners, CD and video players, to toys, garden tools and many more.

Pat Briley and I take our sewing machines and can often give items a new lease of life. Recent repairs range from stitching fraying seams, reattaching anorak pockets, replacing lost buttons and making replacement loops for three dog collars. One lady who brought in a velour jacket with a badly fraying sleeve seam was delighted and declared, 'I can't even see where you've mended it.'

Continuing the 'Repair, Reuse, Recycle' theme, Pat and I regularly have a stall at local craft fairs, selling knitted items, with all money raised going to local charities. Before Christmas £200

was donated to Hospiscare and £100 each to the Honiton and Dalwood Food Banks. The Dalwood Crafters use donated, unused or leftover yarn to knit many small items to add to our stock. Items sold include socks, bags, jumpers, cardigans, asymmetric shawls, cowls, fingerless gloves, socks and the occasional chicken. A much-loved jumper was transformed into a special memory cushion for one family.



If you would like to volunteer at the Repair Cafe pop along to one of our sessions and speak to a volunteer or email honitonrepaircafe01@gmail.com. All skills are welcome. As well as meeting lots of different people at the Repair Café and getting a loved item fixed, excellent refreshments are available including home-made cakes.

One of the knitted chickens sold at the Ottery Craft Fair. There were two different ones and a lady bought both. She couldn't bear to separate them as she said '... they look as though they're talking to each another.'

GOING PLACES

Gill Thomas tells us about a fascinating talk the Nature Appreciation group attended...

Some of the group went to Yeovil to hear wildlife cameraman Hamza Yassin talk about *Life behind the Lens*. We were not disappointed: he was just as enthusiastic on stage for two hours as on the wildlife programmes he presents.

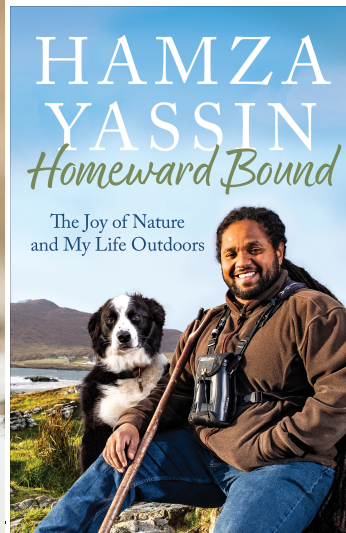
Hamza arrived, aged eight, from Sudan and had only four words of English: yes, no, pizza and chips. By the time he was twelve he knew he wanted to be a wildlife cameraman. Eliciting no responses from the many approaches he made to professionals, he was finally given an unpaid job carrying heavy camera equipment by BBC cameraman, Jesse Wilkinson.

Slowly he learnt the art of taking brilliant and inspiring photographs. An oyster catcher had laid two eggs but he knew that they always lay three or four. So he waited, and it duly laid a third, a moment that had never been filmed before. Hamza was thrilled and offered it up only to have it rejected: he had been so obsessed with filming the bird laying the egg he had cut off the very top of its head! A poorly composed picture; a hard lesson learned.

A big break came when the phone rang offering him the chance to film penguins... but first he had to answer three questions. 1. Did he have a medical certificate? Affirmative, after a quick call to the local doctor. 2. Did he have a dental certificate? Ditto, after a quick call to his dentist brother. 3. Did he know how to sail? ‘Yes.’ ‘Fine, get yourself to Heathrow in the next twelve hours.’ Unfortunately for Hamza he had lied about his sailing experience and even before cast-off he started to feel seasick and was sent to buy all the anti-seasickness pills he could find. After a week he felt better... until he was heaved up to the top of the mast despite having a fear of heights!

In the Arctic, hoping to film polar bears, Hamza went to have a pee behind a rock only for his guides (who had guns for protection) to point out that the rock was a ‘bear rock’. His crew had stones that they knocked together which frightened the bear away because they sounded like ice cracking and polar bears are wary of falling through ice and being unable to get out again. Hamza’s projects have included visiting a sanctuary for rhinos and elephants (the rhinos had been orphaned when poachers had killed their mothers for their horns and the adult elephants had been killed for their tusks), hosting Dame Judy Dench, who had a great desire to see golden eagles in the wild, and encounters with otters, gyrfalcons, scorpions, leopards, swans and robins. His final plea was that the youth of tomorrow be taught the value of wildlife and that there should be a world full of diversity for them to enjoy.

He talked for almost two hours with a great deal of self-deprecation and humour. When asked if he used conditioner on his hair Hamza replied that, no, he didn’t but he did use L’Oreal, ‘...because I’m worth it!’ His amusing, entertaining and insightful talk was well worth the drive to Yeovil in pouring rain.



One of Hamza’s lovely wildlife photos, showing a barn swallow, and his latest book.

EASTER TIME IN ITALY

With Easter just gone, Greg Arnold of the Italian Conversation Group gives us an insight into how Easter is celebrated in Italy...

As with other festivals, customs vary depending on the region. Many practices are linked to the church, which still has an influence on the Italian year. *Carnevale* (Shrovetide) is a chance to let one's hair down before the Lent fasting. Processions and carnivals are particularly famous in Venice, Verona and Ivrea. *Martedì Grasso* (Shrove Tuesday) is a last excuse for good food, wine and maybe cannoli. *Quaresima* (Lent) is a time of fasting for Christians in preparation for Easter. On *Mercoledì delle Ceneri* (Ash Wednesday) people who go to church receive a cross of ash on their forehead as a sign of repentance.

Settimana Santa (Holy Week) begins with *Domenica delle Palme* when traditionally palm fronds are available to wave in procession in remembrance of Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey before his trial. Many towns have religious processions and enactments on Good Friday (*Venerdì Santo*) especially in the south. Trapani, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto and Ruvo di Puglia are the most famous. On *Pasqua* (Easter Day) St Peter's Square in Rome will be packed with

pilgrims. The Pope gives a blessing '*Urbi et Orbi*' ('To the city of Rome and to the World'). The bells ring out after being silenced in Holy Week. In Florence the *Scoppio del carro* is a tradition where a cart filled with fireworks is lit with a dove-shaped rocket.



Drawings by Greg Arnold

Lamb (*agnello*) is a popular Easter Sunday dish in many regions. *La colomba pasquale* is a dove-shaped pastry common in Lombardy. As in many countries the egg is symbolic of Easter and some families will have painted eggs or chocolate eggs.

Easter Monday is called *la Pasquetta* (Little Easter) and is a day for picnics, outings and enjoying a spring holiday with family and friends. There's a saying: *Natale con i tuoi, Pasqua con chi vuoi*, meaning Christmas is a time for family and Easter for anyone you want.

THE SCHOOL TRIP

Richard Spoerry recalls a trip to Scotland...

In the early 1970s the primary school I taught at organised a visit to Scotland, staying on a council-owned site, which was a disused railway station. The thirty or so ten- and eleven-year-olds were housed in buildings such as converted waiting rooms or storage facilities, while the four staff members had the luxury of the converted ticket office and café.

Each night two staff members were on duty to shepherd children into their quarters for the night. The children were surprisingly well behaved and happy, given that for most of them it was a first trip away without their parents. All went well, until a few days in on one of my duty nights a lad came along to tell me that Anthony had been sick in their room. I went along with mop and bucket to assess the scale of the problem and gauge how poorly the boy was. He was not in too bad a way, but, unfortunately, he had been in the top bunk so the ‘splash site’ was quite comprehensive!

I told everyone to stay in their beds while I mopped up and was very satisfied with my efforts, finishing with a decent amount of disinfectant. After I settled them down and told Anthony to let me know if he felt poorly again, I opened the door to leave. As I was about to shut it behind me a small voice called out, ‘Sir, there’s still quite lot of sick in Anthony’s wellingtons!’ Unfortunately, they were directly in the firing line! Despite emptying the boots, giving them a considerable wash out and a hefty soaking with Dettol, during the rest of the trip it was always easy to know exactly where Anthony was situated!

AN EYE-CATCHING PHOTO FROM JOHN JONAS...



... keeping an eye on things!

'THE BLUE LAGOON'

Pam Faulkner tells a story of a trip to the Mediterranean...

There is a magical place off a tiny island called Comino, which lies in the Mediterranean between Malta and Gozo. The Blue Lagoon there attracts tourists because of caves in the surrounding cliffs that can be reached by boat. This story is about my visit.

I trail my fingers in the cool water as the boat reaches the first cave. Outside in the lagoon the August heat is fierce. It's a relief to be out of the midday sun. The lights on the boat are focused on the rock walls covered in blue shadows. It's eerie and enveloping – a different world away from the turquoise water and yellow sand of the lagoon. The tourists around me become quiet in awe of their surroundings. The tunnel-like caves begin to open out and we emerge into a large cavern with a small lake.

I start to remember a film that I once saw in which cavers went under the water and found tunnels that opened out into a huge cavern about the size of a football pitch. It's weird but I'm feeling that *déjà vu* experience. It's not that I'm remembering a film now, it's as though I feel that I've been here before. Suddenly the lights on the boat start to flicker and then go out. We are in total darkness. I stretch out to touch my partner's hand and can't find it. 'Where are you?' Silence.

I begin to shiver – it's not cold but I'm experiencing that fear of the unknown. I can touch the cave wall but I can't see it. I can't see anything. I dangle my hand over the side of the boat and splash it about. The boat is floating but not moving. I shout 'Help!' The sound of my voice echoes around the cave. Closing my eyes and slowly opening them again in the hope of waking from this nightmare – it's still dark but I can hear people talking. Now I can feel the presence of the others and reaching out I am able to grab my partner's hand.

Everyone stops talking as the boatman shouts, 'It's OK everyone, I can get us out of here. The engine has packed up and that's why the lights went out. I can find my way without the lights. I've done this trip hundreds of times before and can feel my way out. Just sit still and keep quiet. I need to tap the walls with my oar.'

My partner whispers, 'It's OK we'll be out of here soon. You were out of it just now – you scared the others shouting like that.'

'I was terrified. I felt as though I'd been in this place a long time ago.'

'Why do you think that happened?'

'Maybe because I'd watched a film about people trapped in a cave for days and days.'

'I remember that, it was on the news, a group of children were stuck in a cave in Thailand.'

The boatman calls, 'We're almost there.'

In a few moments we can see the turquoise water of the lagoon and then feel the hot sun on our faces. Everyone claps.

GROUP NEWS

We love hearing from our Groups. Keep the updates coming in...

ART FOR FUN – Gill Spoerry

The group has been running for almost two years now and we have dabbled with many different media in a variety of ways. The last few months have seen us exploring some more unusual techniques with regular art materials, such as still life using collage and watercolour without the use of brushes. Another meeting saw us exploring mark making with a huge variety of art materials, which one of our members kindly shared with us, and most recently we have explored portrait drawing and textile collage. Our sessions are always very relaxed with plenty of opportunity to circulate, share ideas and chat together.

Mixed media experiments have produced some lively and interesting creations. The top two are by Steph Scotting.



BOOK LOVERS – Gill Thomas

SIMPLY LIES by David Baldacci

Former detective, Mickey Gibson, now works for a company investigating financial fraud. A woman, posing as a colleague, asks her to visit the empty home of an arms dealer where she finds a dead body who has mob connections and is in a witness protection programme. Juggling caring for her two young children with investigating the story, and playing a cat and mouse game with a woman called Clarissa, this becomes a tale of betrayal and revenge.

Verdict: We liked some aspects such as the detective's relationship with her children but found the story rather complicated with convolution within convolution. It is too long and we found our interest flagging in the middle section. None of us felt compelled to look for another novel by this author.

REGENERATION by Pat Barker

In this World War I novel Pat Barker explores the treatment of British army officers suffering from shell shock. Using first-person narratives she recreates the experiences of war poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, who are treated by a pioneering psychiatrist, W.H.R. Rivers, at Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh. She also introduces fictional characters such as Billy Prior who suffers from mutism. The book deals with various themes: the poetry of war through Sassoon's revision of Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'; the reality of trench warfare; the ideology of pacifism (Sassoon published a notorious anti-war letter but was still willing to return to the front); and the different approaches to treating trauma ranging from the gentle Dr Rivers to the brutality of electro-shock therapy.

Verdict: Generally, we enjoyed it and would recommend it to other readers but with reservations. We all found it difficult to decide where fact ends and fantasy begins. It was also disjointed, perhaps because of the number of complex issues raised. The depiction of the young Siegfried Sassoon was interesting but we would have welcomed a deeper characterisation of Dr Rivers. Our overall view: compelling, satisfying and interesting.

OPERATION MINCEMEAT by Ben McIntyre

The true story of the British deceiving the Germans about their plans for the invasion of Italy. In 1943 a dead body dressed as a British officer is floated ashore in Spain. On him are false documents to persuade the enemy that the landings would take place in Greece not Sicily. It hoodwinked Hitler and German espionage chiefs; thanks to Operation Mincemeat, Sicily was successfully invaded. The hoax was incredibly complex involving an amazing cast of characters including a famous forensic pathologist, a gold prospector, an inventor, a beautiful secret service secretary, the captain of a submarine and a dead Welsh tramp.

Verdict: Fascinating and extraordinarily well researched by Ben McIntyre. Quite amazing that the Germans were fooled; such care was taken to create a person who never existed such as love letters, signing him into a hotel register in North Wales and ticket stubs to see a popular comedian appearing on the London stage. Some of us felt the story got a bit bogged down with the details. Highly recommended.

THE ISLAND OF MISSING TREES by Elif Shafak

The titular island is Cyprus; the tree is a fig that grew through the roof of a taverna in Nicosia. There are two timelines: Cyprus in the 1970s where we are introduced to the star-crossed teenagers Kostas, a Greek Cypriot, and Defne, a Turkish Cypriot; and London in the 2010s where we meet their 16-year-old daughter, Ada Kazantzakis. Kostas and Defne grow their forbidden love in the taverna observed by the fig tree but are parted by the violence between their two communities. Kostas goes to London, becomes a botanist and returns to the island where he seeks out his sweetheart Defne who has become an archaeologist and is excavating for identification those slaughtered during Cyprus's troubled past. Their love is undiminished, they leave the island for London taking with them a cutting of the fig tree and they have a daughter, Ada. Ada is mourning the death of her mother and puzzled by her relationship to Cyprus. Shafak chooses the fig tree to be the narrator enabling her to weave themes not only of love, politics, history, prejudices but also arboreal stories, ancient myths, botany and lepidopterology.

Verdict: Well written but in many ways two books in one. It was very informative about the violent history of the island in the 1970s and the bitterness it created, the trauma of families searching for those who disappeared, natural history, Greek mythology and the prejudice caused by differences in religion. Above all it is about the power of redemption through love.

CROCHET – Ann Halse



This fabulous spread was made by Pam Keen during our group sessions. Members choose their own designs to make and we all learn new techniques and take inspiration from each other.

HISTORY GROUP – Stewart Raine

Our meetings for 2026 started with a look at the emergence of the USA as a super-power in the period between the end of the Civil War (1865) and the end of World War 1 when, in 1920, the Republican Warren Harding won the election using the slogans ‘America First’ and ‘Back to Normalcy’. We felt that more than a century later it could tell us much about the USA under Donald Trump.

Our February meeting was completely different. The 1920s and ‘30s were a time when Art Deco was the favoured style: architecture, interior design, clothes, furniture, jewellery and the fine arts were all influenced by the ideas of this style. And of course, the 1920s was the Jazz Age and the era of the big bands.

For our March session we revisited a subject that we have looked at before: ‘Living in Roman Britain’. Archaeology is constantly making historians rethink their ideas about this 400-year period in our island’s history. Recent discoveries in Devon and Pembrokeshire have forced a re-assessment of the area of influence of Roman power.

Our yearly programme is on the u3a website: the May meeting is on 28th, not the 21st, as it states – a typo that I didn’t spot! Awliscombe Village Hall is large enough to accommodate members who want to come and join us. The fee towards the hire of the hall is £3 for the year.



Exploring the Strand Line on Exmouth Beach



The Goose Pond at Ferne Animal Sanctuary

NATURE APPRECIATION GROUP – Val Flood

As usual the group began the year with a 2026 planning meeting, which nearly all our members attended. Prior to the meeting everyone was asked to submit suggestions for the forthcoming year. Then each person gave their top three favourites to ensure all were happy with what was planned. The outcome was an (almost) full and interesting programme of visits for 2026, a schedule of which can be found on our Honiton u3a Facebook page [Nature Appreciation - Honiton](#).

At the end of the meeting, during coffee and chat a video was shown of photos from our excursions during 2025 – this too can be found on the Honiton u3a Facebook page back in January or click on the link below.

Our first outing in February was to Exmouth beach to explore the Strand Line. Only seven members braved the cold winds, but in March we crossed over the county line into Somerset for an

extremely interesting and informative visit to the Ferne Animal Sanctuary which nineteen members enjoyed (there are loads of photos on the Honiton u3a Facebook page).

Spring is upon us, which for nature lovers is always an exciting time, and in April we are planning to explore the hedgerows of the lanes and byways surrounding the Donkey Sanctuary, and after our walk we will no doubt enjoy a coffee in their restaurant!

To view the video click on this link: [Nature Appreciation in One year - V I D E O.mp4](#)

READING FOR PLEASURE – Peter Searl and Hilary Lyne

As a group we have had several discussions over the months on how to try and rate the books we are discussing and whether readers would recommend the book. Both are very difficult as observations and comments are so subjective. Perhaps in desperation Peter came up with the following grading system, following several difficult and long books:

0 = did not open the book

1 = gave up before page 50

2 = gave up after page 50

3 = skipped bits but reached page 596

4 = read almost every word but did not understand quite a few

5 = a really satisfying experience.

Perhaps another time we'll see how this system works!

THE ASHES OF LONDON by Andrew Taylor

This book has an intriguing premise, murder and mystery set against the dramatic backdrop of the Great Fire of London, but the execution did not work well. While the historical detail is rich, the characters were one-dimensional, and their motivations sometimes felt thin or predictable. The mystery itself unfolds at a crawl, and the atmosphere, though vivid, couldn't compensate for the lack of momentum...

Verdict: Overall, despite its promising setting, the book felt more like a slog than a suspenseful historical thriller. The majority of us disliked the book and would not recommend it.

IN COLD BLOOD by Truman Capote

This is a chilling and meticulously researched account of the true and apparently motiveless murder of a Kansas family in 1959. The book was published in 1966 and was radical at the time for transforming a real crime into a haunting narrative. Capote's restrained prose and psychological depth make the book both unsettling and compelling.

Verdict: Some of our group liked it very much but several hated it. We were divided!

THE BRITISH MUSEUM IS FALLING DOWN by David Lodge

The action takes place over one day in the life of a married postgraduate student struggling to conform to the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding contraception.

Verdict: We all agreed that it seems dated, shallow and irrelevant, even though it is cleverly

written with a number of parodies of literary styles peppered throughout. We would not recommend this book, but we would recommend later novels of his, such as *Deaf Sentence*.

POSSESSION: A ROMANCE by A.S. Byatt

A clever literary novel that mixes mystery, romance and academic satire. Its rich Victorian-style letters and complex structure are impressive, but it is a very long (511 pages) and dense book. Overall, it's an intelligent exploration of love, literature and the power of the past.

Verdict: Most of the group did not get far into the book, some found it impenetrable and disliked the novel. A minority of us found it challenging but worthwhile and a satisfying read.

PAGE TURNERS – Pam Faulkner

THE TIME TRAVELLER by H.G. Wells

The story begins with the Time Traveller hosting a dinner party, where he explains his theory that time is the fourth dimension. He demonstrates a small model of his machine, which vanishes, proving his concept. He uses his full-sized machine to travel to the year 802701. He finds a world inhabited by the Eloi, a frail, childlike race living above ground in apparent ease. Beneath the surface dwell the Morlocks, a brutal nocturnal species that maintain machinery and prey upon the Eloi for food.

Verdict: This novel was published in the late 19th century and has themes of class struggle, conflict and escape. It is a bleak view of the future when the Earth is in decline. Wells was making a political statement on Victorian anxieties about class division and industrialisation. It helped establish science fiction as a serious genre and coined the term 'time machine'.

FALL by John Preston

An account of the rise and fall of the notorious business tycoon, Robert Maxwell. Born an Orthodox Jew he escaped the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, fought in World War Two and was decorated with the military cross. He went on to become a Labour MP and an astonishingly successful businessman, owning several newspapers and publishing companies. But after his dead body was found floating in the sea, having fallen off his super yacht, his empire fell apart as long-hidden debts and unscrupulous business dealings came to light.

Verdict: A dramatic and gripping account. Engrossing, revealing and appalling!

THE SILENCE OF THE GIRLS by Pat Barker

The novel re-imagines the events of the Trojan War from the perspective of Brisels, a woman whose life is irrevocably changed by the conflict, highlighting the experiences of women in wartime. It begins with the sacking of Lymessus by Achilles and his Myrmidons, where Brisels, the young queen, witnesses the brutal slaughter of her family and the capture of women as war prizes. After the city is destroyed, Brisels is taken as a concubine by Achilles. The narrative explores her transformation from a queen to a captive.

Verdict: Not an easy read.

ELEANOR OLIPHANT IS COMPLETELY FINE by Gail Honeyman

The novel is about Eleanor’s attempt to overcome the emotional and physical abuse her mother inflicted on her. She comes across as occasionally rude and uncaring but in spite of this we recognise that she is a kind person. She finds it difficult to both express and accept love because she is so unused to warmth, affection and kindness. Sadly, we find out that Eleanor’s only boyfriend was physically abusive. Her life is extremely regimented. She goes to work and drinks vodka at the weekends by herself. She calls her mother once a week, phone conversations that reveal to us the coldness with which her mother treated her. At the same time Eleanor tries to develop a friendship with the IT man at work, Raymond. Gradually Eleanor overcomes her past but there are setbacks. The ending gives the reader a sense that she is on the road to recovery.

Verdict: We liked the writing style and found it hard to put down despite some very upsetting sequences.

WINE GROUP – Richard Spoerry

Over the past two months we have been comparing wines from particular grapes, but grown in different countries. We’ve been tasting three white and three red wines. It’s been interesting to discover how much a Chardonnay from South Eastern Australia can differ in taste and colour compared to one from, for example, New Zealand. Or that a Chilean Malbec can be quite different to an Argentinian Malbec.



One thing that can make the difference is price, but we’re also learning that climate, geography and clever wine-making also influence quality. In April we’ll be doing a ‘blind tasting’. Nothing serious. Just living up to our title – Wine Tasting For Fun!

THE LAST WORD...

... from Richard Sperry, who has a spring in his step...

This is the third edition of our new-style magazine, the first to emerge in Spring. We have had such a wet, miserable winter so it's great to see some occasional sunshine, with bright fresh flowers and greenery emerging and the days lengthening. This is the time when we might hear the words 'spring cleaning' applied in terms of household matters but what about having some thoughts about ourselves? Could this be the time to undertake something new and different, something to improve our health and fitness, perhaps?

The better weather might encourage us to get out and about more. If you're a lapsed sporty person, or just thinking of getting more exercise, Honiton u3a has four walking groups that might meet your needs, plus a thriving pickleball group. Outside the u3a there are many other activities to choose from in and around Honiton. You can play walking football or netball, tennis, bowls and pétanque, and for a more gentle approach there is Tai Chi or Shibashi, all places where new friends and acquaintances can be made. You could even introduce them to our own organisation! The local sports centre offers a wealth of choice too. However you choose to spend your time, enjoy the seasons and stay well!

Happy Spring time to all our members!



Spring Lambs by Gill Sperry

HONITON u3a TALKS 2026

April 15 | **The Wonderful World of Glass** by Dr Francis Burroughs. An acknowledged expert on the history of glass, featuring items from his own personal collection.

May 20 | **Restoring the Balance** by Kate Jellying and Lisa Ward from the Barn Owl Trust.

June 17 | **An Audience with Lady Katherine** by Rosemary Griggs. Travel back in time with Lady Katherine, and learn about her life in Tudor Devon and the amazing clothes she wore.

July 15 | **Sidmouth Toy Museum** by Ian Gregory, a Trustee of the Charity.

August 19 | **Summer Social** for members only.

*Meetings (unless indicated otherwise) take place at 2pm at the Beehive Centre, Dowell Street.
Doors open at 1.30pm and finish at 3.30pm.
The cafe will be open before the meeting for refreshments and light lunches
and will remain open after the meeting.*

GROUPS AND GROUP LEADERS

Group Leaders can be contacted by emailing: honitonu3a@gmail.com
Or phone or text Jackie Moran on 07818 413161.

GROUP	LEADER/ CONTACT	GROUP	LEADER/CONTACT
Book Lovers	Gill Thomas	Strollers	Jackie Moran
Page Turners	Pam Faulkner	Walking	Pauline and Tim Clark
Reading for Pleasure	Peter Searl and Hilary Lyne	Walking 2	Brian Houlihan
Play Reading	Alison Tucker	Walking	Brian Houlihan
Poem Sharing	Peter Searl	Nature Appreciation	Val Frood
Writing Group	Pam Faulkner	Historic Churches	Marilyn Medforth
Writing for Fun	Sue Horswood	History	Stewart Raine
Jane Austen Reading Group (JARG)	Linda Martin	Family History	Stuart Jones
Biography Writing Group	Kay Edge	Local History	Lynda Pidgeon
German Conversation	Brian Houlihan	French Conversation	Stephen Boyd

Italian Conversation	Greg Arnold	Spanish Conversation	Chris Keen
Recorder Group (not Beginners)	Tricia Lewis	Lunch Club	Marilyn Adhamy
Handbell Ringing	Rhona Hitchcock	Sunday Singles	Rosie Dale
Singing for Fun!	Janet Young	Lunch Club	
Opera Appreciation	Derek Ballard	Wine Tasting for Fun	Richard Spoerry
Music Appreciation	Peter Williams and Howard Lyne	Groups 1&2	
Current Affairs Discussion	Peter Searl	Cribbage	Val Frood
Philosophy	John Sadler	Games Group	Jackie Moran
Knitting	Hilary Lyne	Pickleball	Angela Brooks Karon Sturtivant
Crochet	Ann Halse	Bridge (Rubber)	Derek Ballard
Art for Fun	Gill Spoerry	Smart Device Workshop	Brian Churchill
		Photography	Dennis Jacobs
		Talking Art	Jan Prosser

TIMES OF GROUP MEETINGS

For times please check out the website or contact Jackie Moran on 07818 413161.

LITERATURE, LANGUAGE AND ART

Art for Fun – 2nd Fri 9.30am

Biography Writing – 2nd Mon 2.30pm

Book Lovers -1st Mon 2pm

Jane Austen Reading Group – 3rd Mon 10.30am

Page Turners (Book Group 2) – 3rd Mon 2pm

Reading for Pleasure – 4th Mon 2pm

Play Reading– 2nd Tuesday 10am

Poem Sharing – 3rd Tues 10.30am

Talking Art – 2nd Mon 3pm (Art App changed name/day)

Writing – Alternate Fridays 10am

Writing for Fun – 4th Mon 2pm

OUTDOORS AND SOCIAL

Nature Appreciation – 3rd Mon 10.30am

Strollers – 2nd Wed 11am

Walking – 2nd Wed 10am

Walking 2 (All Day) – 1st Mon **OR** 1st Thurs 9.30am

Walking 3 (Short Walks) – 2nd Thurs & 4th Wed 2pm

Lunch Club – 1st Wed at lunchtime

Sunday Singles Lunches 1st Sun at lunchtime

Wine Tasting for Fun (Group 1) – 1st Mon 7pm

Wine Tasting for Fun (Group 2) – 4th Mon 7pm

LANGUAGES

German Conversation – Fortnightly Tues 2pm

French – 2nd Thurs 10.30am

Italian Conversation – Twice monthly Mon **OR** Tues 2pm

Spanish – 1st Thurs 10.30am

MUSIC

Handbell Ringing – 4th Tues 2pm

Music Appreciation – Last Wed 2pm

Opera – 1st Thurs 7pm

Recorder Group – 2nd Mon 10am

Singing for Fun! – 1st and 3rd Tues 2pm

HISTORY, SOCIETY AND THOUGHT

Current Affairs Discussion – 1st Wed 10am

Philosophy – 3rd Thurs 2pm

Historic Churches – 2nd Thurs 10.30am

History – 4th Thurs 10am

Local History – 3rd Fri 10.30am

Family History – Last Mon 10.30am

Smart Device Workshop – 2nd Tues 10.30am

GAMES, SPORT AND CREATIVITY

Bridge (Rubber) – Weekly Wed 2pm

Cribbage – 3rd Thurs 2pm

Crochet Group – 1st Mon 2.30pm

Knitwise – 1st Wed 2pm-3pm and 3rd Wed 10am-11.30am

Games Group – Last Fri 1.45pm

Pickleball – Weekly Fri 3.30pm and Sun 10.30-11.30am

Photography – 3rd Thurs 10am

HONITON U3A WALKING GROUPS ROUNDUP

Group Name	Frequency and Day	Time	Approximate Distance/ Duration	Status and Notes
Walking	Monthly, 2nd Wednesday of the month	10am	About 4 miles	Active, but full (can join a waiting list). Usually ends with a pub lunch.
Walking 2 (All-day walks)	Usually on the 1st Monday or Thursday	9.30am	8-10 miles	Focus is on all-day walks. Welcomes new members; taster walks available.
Walking 3 (Short Walks)	Twice a month: 2nd Thursday and 4th Wednesday	2pm (afternoons)	2-3 miles	Perfect for shorter, more leisurely rambles.
Strollers	Monthly, 2nd Wednesday of the month	11am (mornings)	Approximately 1.5 hours	Focuses on easy paths and social walks, usually followed by lunch.

HONITON u3a COMMITTEE

Post	Name
Chairman	Richard Spoerry
Treasurer/ Membership Secretary	Anna Jacobs
Secretary	Kay Edge
Groups Co-ord.	Jackie Moran
Network Co-ord.	Richard Spoerry
Communications	Brian Churchill
Programme Secretary	Suzie Blithe
Magazine and Bulletin Editor	Honor Head
Comm member	Stephen Boyd
Comm member	Dawn Wood
Comm member	Jean Goss
Comm member	Robert Newell

