

Welcome to our July Newsletter. After an astounding heatwave, I'm hoping for cooler weather in July, and I hope that means that many of you will be able to join us for July's talk on Grace Darling. Grace's rescue of steamship passengers in 1838 brought her international fame and she was the first woman to be awarded the RNLI medal for gallantry. Sadly, she died young, aged only 25. It promises to be an interesting talk.

Liz Ouldrige (Chair)

Important dates

15th July: Open meeting at the Boniface Centre: 'Grace Darling and the Art of Saving Lives at Sea' by James Taylor
Refreshments from 9:30am. The talk will start at 10:20.

21st July: Coffee morning for all at 'The cafe @ Mole Avon' in the Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am.

18th August: Coffee morning for all at 'The cafe @ Mole Avon' in the Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am.

19th August: Open meeting at the Boniface Centre. 'Bird Migration, how they do it and what we don't know'
A Talk by Roger Avery.

September: National awareness week for u3a – more details next month

Groups News

We are hoping to start up a bridge group and would like to find out if there is any interest. The group will try to include players of all abilities. If you would like to know more, please email me with your name(s) and level of knowledge or sign up at our next open meeting.

We are also hoping to raise the profile of one of our more established groups each month. This month, we are advertising 'Current Affairs'. The 'Current Affairs' groups meet monthly in the morning on the 1st Monday or 2nd Thursday of the month. We have simple rules and try to make sure everyone gets their turn to speak. For this reason, the groups are small and the discussions lively. If you would like to know more, please email me with your name(s) and or sign up at our next open meeting.

June's Talk: A rose by any other name' by Dr Justin Newland

Justin's talk focused mainly on the history and symbolism of the rose rather than their cultivation. Roses have been valued pretty much as long as we have had settled civilisations. Most wild roses originate in Asia particularly Persia and China, although we also have our own species of wild roses in Europe. Wild roses have 5 petals. Our modern many-petalled roses have been formed from centuries of cross-breeding and selective breeding. Our English dog rose is pink; the yellow roses originated in Asia.

As well as cultivating roses for their beauty, we use them to make rosewater; used in perfumes and cookery. The distillation of rosewater also originated in Persia. We have found rosehips (the fruit of the rose) useful as they are rich in vitamin C. I can remember being given rosehip syrup as a child and finding it most delicious.

Roses are widely used as symbols. They are associated with a range of ideas from feminine beauty to socialism. The red rose is particularly associated with passion. In fact, Rose Day occurs on February 7th, just before Valentine's Day. Rosebuds are seen as a symbol of youth and new beginnings.

We often use the symbol of roses in literature. I think we can all quote at least 2 examples. However, you may not know of the legend of the blue rose. This is a Zoroastrian myth. The story says that the original rose was blue and had no thorns. Then evil came into the world and the rose gained thorns symbolising two sides of life; beauty and suffering. People no longer cultivated the rose and so forgot how to do so. Thus, blue roses are associated with forgetfulness.

Rose symbols, including rosettes, are found everywhere in our lives. There is a tradition of carving roses into the woodwork of confessional boxes in catholic churches. The confession is secret and underneath the carved roses. So any secret meeting became 'sub rosa' or beneath the roses.