

INNER WHEEL CLUB OF BARNSTAPLE NEWSLETTER JUNE-JULY 2026

Welcome to this two month edition of the Newsletter. I apologise for combining the two months but circumstances make it a bit difficult to produce a separate one for June. Nevertheless, I hope you will enjoy this. How are you coping with this topsy-turvy weather we've been having? I hardly know what to wear each day and having just changed to a summer duvet I don't know whether to change back to the winter one! (This bit written on June 8th)

Now, in July and sweltering with the heatwave, what a shock to hear of Ann Widdecombe's death and the circumstances surrounding it. I remember our trip to join Bude IW and hear her speak to us and Suzanne has sent me a picture of meeting her at the Rotary conference in Dawlish when she was President (shown later).

Club Events

June Club Meeting and AGM



This meeting was on June 2nd at the Barnstaple Hotel and the main business was our AGM, when we heard reports from all the club officers. The 2024-5 accounts and the appointment Mike Batten as our auditor were approved, as was the subscription of £60 for the 2026/7 year. This amount is payable by July 1st, so by the time you receive this Newsletter, you should all have paid it! (The 2026/7 Accounts are not yet available). The Health and Safety Policy, Child and Vulnerable were also all adopted and signed by Julie Hunt and

Cheryl Gill (our new Health and Safety Officer

There then followed a short Club Meeting and we congratulated Margaret and George Kempton on their recent diamond wedding anniversary and presented Margaret with some flowers (she has also agreed to do Grace at the July meeting). Some resignations were noted including long-standing member Audrey Dever as she was moving from the area, and past Club President and District Chairman Louise French.

After lunch we had a highly entertaining talk by Gary Reed entitled 'School reports of the rich and famous, Before mentioning any individuals he spoke of the changes in reports over the years from the short and sometimes brutally honest in the past to the far more detailed, time consuming and politically correct ones of today, with for example, 'disruptive' becoming 'animated'.

Some more examples from the past – 'Since my last report has reached rock bottom and has now started to dig', 'Could easily win a gold medal if daydreaming was an Olympic sport', 'Would be lazy but for absence'.

Some specific examples (some but not all quite prophetic):

John Lennon – 'Certainly on the way to failure'

Richard Branson – 'Either will go to prison or become a millionaire'

Putin – 'Petulant and impulsive'

Donald Trump – 'Child displayed behavioural difficulties'. All subsequent reports have vanished.

Boris Johnson – 'Really has adopted disgracefully cavalier attitude to studies'. 'Effortless superiority'.

After the talk Julie Hunt gave the vote of thanks for what I think we all thought was a most amusing presentation.



Cheque Presentation to North Devon Hospice

On Thursday 11th June quite a large group of us visited North Devon Hospice to support President Sue as she presented our cheque of £4,250, resulting from our fundraising in the last year. (Picture on next page)



We subsequently received a lovely thank you letter from the Hospice which should be available to read on the club noticeboard.

District Summer Meeting and AGM

This took place at the Waie Inn, Zeal Monachorum, on June 23rd, and was attended by 8 members from Barnstaple. Unfortunately I couldn't go this year as I was on holiday. All the District Officers gave their reports and Pat Bunch as District Treasurer set out the budget for the coming year.

The proposed District Officers for the coming year were approved as follows –

District Chairman Deidre Stewart (second year), Vice Chairman June Tamlyn, Member of Council Gay Ross, Secretary Sue Naile, District Treasurer Debbie Morris, Editor June Tamlyn, International Secretary Jeannette Dommett, Membership and Development June Tamlyn.



There were also reports from each of the clubs describing a wide and varying range of activities and the results of the traditional biscuit making challenge were announced. Actually not many did this but here is a picture of my effort which I served when I did tea and coffee at my church and for which I got a small prize. They seem to have been enjoyed!

The meeting concluded with Jeannette reading a very interesting report by Lesley Roberts (who was unable to attend) which was about loading the CR2EE lorry going to Ukraine and Moldova.

July Club Meeting and Handover

This was on 7th July and saw the presidential handover from Sue Smith to Julie Hunt, with Pam Harman becoming Vice-President.

The meeting commenced as always with a health and safety announcement by Beryl who pointed out it was her last time doing this for which she was thanked and given a round of applause.

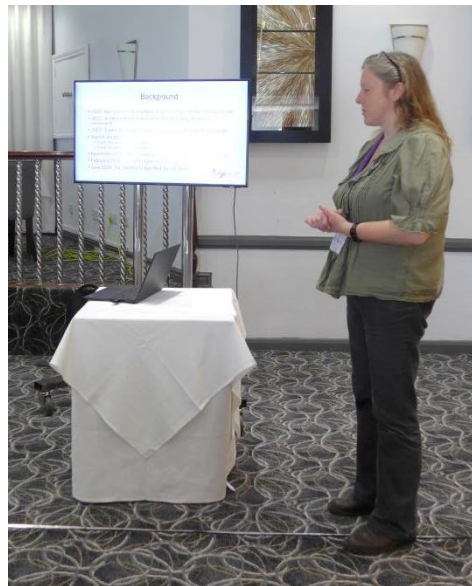


After the minutes of the June meeting were approved the handover ceremony took place with Sue Smith passing on the President's chain and badge to Julie Hunt following a certain amount of trouble with the electronic candles, both with the switching on and getting the right colours (blue for the old year and yellow for the new year). The joys of LEDs! Then Pam Harman was also presented with her Vice-President's badge. Sue thanked everyone for their patience during her year and thanked her committee, particularly Jane Lowe, her secretary and treasurer Maureen who has now done 5 years and has agreed to continue. She also showed a thank you card from Margaret Kempton for her diamond wedding anniversary gift.

Julie then spoke briefly, saying she hoped to do justice to the job, and outlining a few of the future events. The President's tea will be on Tuesday 11th August in the Richmond Lounge at Grosvenor church, time to be announced, and I'm sure further details will soon be forthcoming. Her two main charities will be 'Age Well' (formerly Age Concern Barnstaple and North Devon) and 'Root Cause' (men's mental health).

The full diary of events should be emailed out in the near future.

Julie also told us about the annual Gala Ball she organises which this year is on Saturday 12th September with a Hollywood style theme, £45 a ticket or £400 for a table of 10 and I think we shall hear more about that soon.



After a pleasant lunch we had an excellent talk by Jenny Sparling who had stood in at very short notice. This is the new name for Age Concern Barnstaple and North Devon' and Jenny explained the name had been changed to sound more positive and also to avoid any confusion with Age UK which is a quite separate and unconnected charity. She is the funding and development lead for the charity and told me that much of her time is taken up with applying for grants.

The charity operates with a small permanent staff who are supported by about 175 volunteers and is now supporting 4000 people a year. Demand for its services is bound to increase as the proportion of over 65s is projected to grow considerably in the next few years.

The charity's main aim is to support independent living for those who are over 60, and the vulnerable and is based at Queen's house in the top floor but will be opening a 'shop front' on the ground floor in the near future.

The services offered are a help desk and benefits service, befriending, carer support, community transport eg for hospital appointments, wheelchair

and scooter hire, shopping, and community activities which include bingo, singing, chair exercise sessions, and a monthly lunch. Jenny reported that 81% clients feel the support is helpful as do 100% of their carers and 87% say their wellbeing has improved.

Sue S gave the vote of thanks and Julie also thanked her for coming at such short notice.

Future Club Activities

President's Tea

As previously noted this will take place on Tuesday 11th August in the Richmond Lounge at Grosvenor Church, from 2.30 to 4.30pm. Cost £5, and please bring a raffle prize. Proceeds will go towards Julie's local charities, Root Cause and Age Well.

September Club Meeting

This is on Tuesday 1st September at the Barnstaple Hotel and the speaker will be from the Root Cause Project.

Other Club Activities

Rotary Auction

Some of us went to this on June 11th at the Wimpey Restaurant in town, to have meal early evening followed by the auction which was conducted by Richard Smith in his inimitable style. Over 50 very varied lots were offered and I did my fair share of bidding! I believe the amount raised was about £4,000 – perhaps we should have one, although I know a great deal of work was involved in acquiring all the lots! Thanks to Herbert Malek and his family for supplying the venue. Pat was also there looking remarkably well and I enjoyed a short chat with her.



International Service Officer –

Pam continued to collect ring pulls from tin cans, and used tablet sheets, as well as any more out of date and left over foreign currency up until the July club meeting when Heike O'Neill took on took over. Sue Thomas continues collecting used stamps for the North Devon Hospice.

Community Service – We continue to collect for the Freedom centre at our monthly meetings, tend the Inner Wheel garden, and participate in the reading scheme at Pilton Bluecoat School. As it is quite a while since I've shown an up to date picture of the garden I've included one this time.

Zoom keep-fit sessions – Pat continues her sessions at 11am on Monday mornings for half an hour and if anyone else would like to join in please contact Pat for details, but she is having a break during July and August.





Summer Traditions

There are many celebrations around the country to mark Midsummer Day and Eve, the best known being to watch the sunrise at Stonehenge where thousands flock each year, but other sites with stone circles where this can be done are nearby Avebury, and also on Dartmoor at Hingston Hikk, Drizzlecombe and Merrivale.

Midsummer bonfires and flaming torches

Bonfires are another tradition associated with midsummer in Britain. Considering this festival takes place at the brightest and warmest time of the year, it seems ironic that so many celebrations are based around flames.

Leaping over bonfires was – and still is – a popular pastime on Midsummer's Eve in some parts of Britain, especially Yorkshire. Traditionally, the highest leap indicated the height that wheat might grow that summer.

Flaming torches are frequently carried in midsummer processions, and if fire were not spectacular enough, when gunpowder reached British shores, places like Trencom Hill in West Cornwall cut 'midsummer holes' into the rock. Every summer solstice, these would be filled with gunpowder and plugged with clay and then detonated as darkness approached on Midsummer's Eve.

A pre-Christian explanation for all these flames ran that at such a powerful time of the year – when the sun was never stronger – the veil between this world and all others was very thin indeed, so evil spirits were emboldened to walk the Northern Hemisphere.

Also, at this time, old-year fairies might steal babies and replace them with changeling replicas who, on closer inspection, looked like little old men.

So, fire was a good way of deterring demons. (I'm not sure all this fire would be such a good idea this year!)

Flowers and Midsummer celebrations

Another precaution was picking special flowers and herbs that the harvester could weave into protective garlands. Plants plucked on Midsummer's Eve had special potency.

St John's Wort with its blood-red sap if lain to dry on a window ledge could keep the house free of evil spirits, fire, and thunderbolts.

Worn around the neck, it even guarded against mental illness. Vervain, trefoil and rose were also considered efficacious and worth picking.



A Summer Poem

This hot summer weather reminded me of a poem which many of you must have learnt at school and which I feel captures the feeling of a hot still summer's day perfectly –

Adlestrop by Edward Thomas

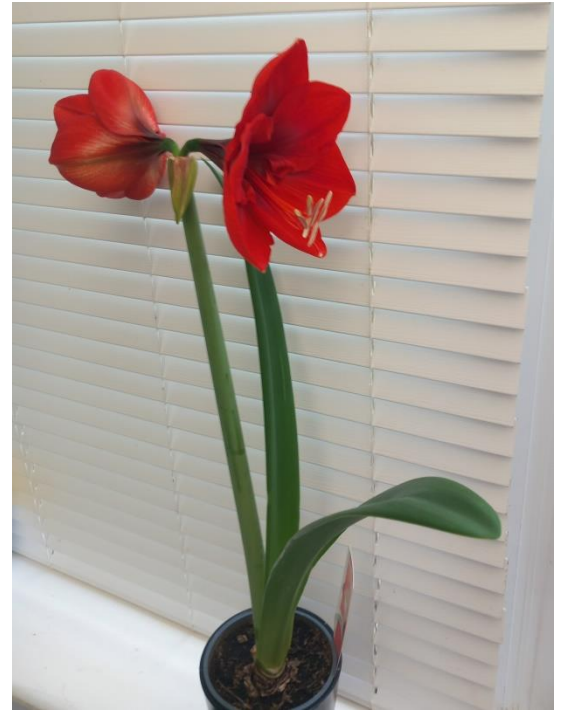
Yes. I remember Adlestrop—
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop—only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Here is Suzanne's photo with Ann Widdecombe that I mentioned and another one she sent me of her amaryllis which surprised her by suddenly deciding to flower recently. Thank you, Suzanne.



Another poem, this one from Pam Harman

Grandpa's Garden

Grandpa made a garden
When I was just a child,
Reclaimed a scrubby wasteland
All overgrown and wild.
He dug and hoed and weeded,
And with his help I too,
Cleared space for beds and borders
Where once just thistles grew.
We planted trees and veggies,
Saw shrubs begin to thrive,
With flowers bright and blooming,
Our garden came alive.
Still clearly now I see it,
The garden that we made,
For though time dims the picture,
Sweet memories never fade.

Some Jokes and Quotes

'A Country that has moved from youth to senility without a period of maturity' – *Adage about the US, quoted in the New Statesman*

'For a politician to complain about the press is like a ship's captain complaining about the sea' – *Enoch Powell*.

Anyone can do any amount of work provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at the moment' – *Robert Benchley*

'Diplomacy is about surviving until the next century;; politics is about surviving until Friday afternoon.' – *From 'Yes, Prime Minister'*

'I had lunch with a chess champion the other day. I knew he was a chess champion because it took him 20 minutes to pass the salt' – *Eric Sykes*

Where are the noisiest dogs? In Barking!

Barking and Dagenham council has received 2,239 complaints about dogs barking since 2020, more than any other London council.

A sign of the times?

Work together and give hope

Do all the good you can by all the means you can
In all the ways you can in all the places you can
To all the people you can as long as you can.

Well, that's about it – enjoy your summer and if you're going on holiday I hope you can avoid the queues.
Look forward to seeing you all again soon, with best wishes from Bridget.

