

DDS Zoom Group Handbook v1.0

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Dorothy Dunnett Society Zoom Groups Code of Conduct

DDS Zoom group meetings are intended to give DDS members the opportunity to get together informally to discuss anything related to Dorothy Dunnett's books. These meetings are member led and are not overseen by DDS Trustees or Officers in an official capacity; therefore, to ensure members feel comfortable participating, the Society has drafted this Code of Conduct and asks members to read and abide by it.

The Dorothy Dunnett Society aims to foster a welcoming and companionable community that is open to all. DDS members who participate in Zoom events are therefore expected to act in accordance with this aim.

Responsibilities of Society Members:

By participating in a DDS Zoom group meeting or other online event, DDS members agree to be considerate and respectful to others to ensure it is a safe space for friendly discussion, where all are accorded equal opportunities to speak and be heard.

Concerns about Society Member Conduct:

As a volunteer-run Zoom group, we aim to address issues collaboratively. Where this is not achievable, the organisers may, exceptionally, take necessary steps during or after a session – including muting and, as a last resort, removing a participant from a meeting, or limiting future access – to maintain the well-being of the group.

Should concerns arise about a member's conduct in an online event, the DDS Board can be contacted any time at enquiries@ddsoc.org.

Group leadership structure

DDS Zoom Officer

The Zoom Officer *coordinates* the use of the DDS Zoom account for all the group meetings. The Officer books the use of the account for specific meeting times requested by individual groups and is on hand to troubleshoot problems, answer questions and otherwise facilitate the smooth running of group meetings. For now, this role has been taken on by Heather Jacobson (heather.jacobson@ddsoc.org).

DDS Zoom groups leaders

Individual groups are led on a volunteer basis by one (or two) member(s) of the group. Their primary role is to maintain an email list of group members and to *liaise* with the Zoom Officer to book use of the Zoom account for their group. They *communicate* to group members meeting times and joining information (i.e., Zoom links and passcodes) and otherwise serve as the point of contact for the group regarding meeting scheduling and attendance. This is an admin role by intention, and group leaders may delegate, step back from, or otherwise leave this role whenever they wish.

Discussion leaders

While not required, it's recommended that groups select a member to *lead* the discussion of a particular topic during a meeting. This is to help keep the conversation on track and to ensure everyone who wishes to take part has the opportunity to do so. This role should *not* default to the group leader or to the same person every meeting, unless the group together decides that is how they want to proceed.

Where to send feedback/ complaints

Issues relating to group meeting scheduling, technical issues, facilitating discussion (e.g., group size is too large, so not everyone gets a chance to speak), etc. should be shared with the *group leader*, who will pass it on to the Zoom Officer.

Issues relating to group member conduct should be raised with the *DDS Board* (enquiries@ddsoc.org) per the Code of Conduct.

Issues related to the Zoom Officer conduct should likewise be raised with the *DDS Board* (enquiries@ddsoc.org).

Zoom Group Meetings

Format and recordkeeping

It is our intention that Zoom groups have the freedom to run themselves as they wish, so there are no requirements regarding meeting format. Group meetings do not need to have an agenda, unless members decide one would be helpful, nor do minutes need to be taken. Attendance, likewise, needs not be monitored unless the group wishes it.

The only information the DDS Board requests be reported back to the Zoom Officer is the number of attendees at each meeting so that we can monitor the overall success of this scheme. It is the Zoom group leader's (or their delegate's) responsibility to report the group size back to the Zoom Officer after each meeting.

Suggested format

Start with round-robin introductions: At a first meeting, meeting after a hiatus, or one which for some reason has a lot of 'new' attendees, consider going around 'the room' with each person introducing themselves. If everyone knows everyone already, of course this can be skipped.

Discussion leader introduces meeting topic: Remind everyone what the topic is and offer first comments. Hopefully discussion will follow organically! If not, maybe the leader will offer additional thoughts to see if the discussion has legs to go further. The leader may check that everyone has had a chance to participate.

Winding down: If there's time, perhaps people are invited to share any other Dunnett-related news or info. While not required, it's recommended that the group decide on the discussion topic of the next meeting so everyone knows what to look forward to. Setting a provisional date/time for the next meeting might also be helpful, with the proviso that it may not be possible to check availability of the Zoom account for that time until later.

Final comment: Groups are requested to keep discussion focussed on Dunnett or Dunnett-adjacent topics. If discussion starts to wander from Dunnettdom, the discussion (or group) leader is requested to help bring the conversation back on track.

This is to respect everyone's time and ensure the focus of DDS Zoom groups, i.e., the discussion of Dorothy Dunnett and her books, has priority. We thank all group members for their help with this.

Nonmember attendance

DDS Zoom groups are primarily intended for DDS members only, but we do want to use them as an incentive to attract new members! *Group members are encouraged to invite people who are not members of the Society to attend one Zoom group meeting as a taster session.* We ask that members only invite *one* nonmember at a time, and that a *maximum of one* nonmember attend any given meeting.

Group members who wish to invite a nonmember should share the nonmember's name and email address with the Zoom group leader (with the nonmember's permission, of course.) *It is the Zoom group leader who is responsible for inviting the nonmember to attend the group meeting;* that is, the group leader will share the meeting date/time and joining information (i.e., Zoom link and passcode) directly with the nonmember and be their point of contact. Nonmember attendance will also be reported back to the Zoom Officer.

Group members are also welcome to invite authors, artists, artisans or scholars whose expertise is relevant to the books or historical time periods to speak at group meetings, as long as it is understood the DDS will not compensate them. The procedure to invite a guest speaker is the same as for a nonmember above.

DDS Trustee and Officer attendance

Occasionally, a Trustee or Officer of the Society would like to invite themselves to attend the first 10–15 minutes of a group meeting to say hello and introduce themselves. This is so group members can put faces to names and otherwise meet the Board members and Officers who help keep the DDS going. Trustees and Officers are DDS members like everyone else and may very well be regular group meeting attendees, but only occasionally they will put their official hats on and speak to groups in these capacities. These occasions are opportunities for members to ask Trustees and Officers any questions regarding the Society and in general get to know them.

Bonus: Possible discussion topics

While the DDS wants to let individual groups to decide how often they want to meet and what they want to talk about, we understand that complete freedom can sometimes be inhibiting! Here are possible meeting discussion topics, offered only with the intention to help get ideas flowing.

First stop: A close read of the books

Group members can take turns picking a chapter or scene in one of the books to scrutinise together as a group. Consider reading it aloud together and then discussing it, or read it individually beforehand and use the meeting time for discussion.

Second stop: *Whispering Gallery*

Look to our superb magazine for inspiration! Did an article in a recent issue surprise you or otherwise provoke some thoughts? Use your fellow group members as a sounding board to ask questions or else just react to what you read.

The content in *WG* (by and large produced by fellow members!) offers food for thought on a wide variety of topics and themes both weighty and frivolous. If nothing else inspires you, turn to each issue's Talking Point topic and discuss it as a group.

Third stop: Recent DDS Events

Use group meetings as an opportunity to discuss a DDS event that recently occurred, whether a DunNET online lecture, an in-person meeting or something else. Those who attended could summarise what happened to others who couldn't make it.

Individual topics (many thanks to Bill Marshall for suggesting a great number of these):

Lymond Chronicles:

Specific characters in LC

Secondary and minor characters in LC

Historical characters in LC

Specific scenes in LC

Arc themes in LC

House of Niccolò:

Specific characters in HN

Secondary and minor characters in HN

Historical characters in HN, e.g., Anselm Adorne

Specific scenes in HN

Arc themes in HN

History and geography of Scotland

History and geography of France

History and geography of the Low Countries

Trading between England and Russia

History of Malta and the Knights of St John

History of Cyprus

Venetian history and trading influence

Venetian glass manufacturing

Byzantine history – rise and fall

15th/16th century supernatural beliefs

French chateaux and the travels of the French court

Ottoman empire – organisation and expansion

Dyeing and cloth making - trade and development

March 2026

Timbuktu and the development of learning

Madeira and the sugar trade

Ciphers and codes and the development of banking

Renaissance music and art

Dunnett's theory of Macbeth/Thorfinn

Dunnett and other authors: compare and contrast

Bonus: *Whispering Gallery* contributions

While groups are not obliged to share topics of their discussions with others, they are invited to share the results of their discussions with other DDS members by writing up short 'bulletins' to appear in *Whispering Gallery*. Did a group discussion lead to new insight, or to you considering a plot development or character in a way you hadn't before? Did your group have a great time discussing a Talking Point topic? Please consider sharing the results with the wider DDS membership! You might encourage people to join a future Zoom group meeting, or to start a new Zoom group themselves.