The Snowdrop
By Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825)

Already the Snowdrop dares appear,
The first pale blossom of th’ unripen’d year;
As Flora’s breath, by some transforming power,
Had chang’d an icicle into a flower,
Its name and hue the scentless plant retains,
And winter lingers in its icy veins.

www.christmasmagazine.com/the-snowdrop/
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Teesdale U3A
www.teessdaleu3a.org.uk

Established March 2007

Founding Chairman: George Jameson
Chairman’s Letter

Looking at the products we use from day to day and the things that impact our lives, I got to thinking about how much innovation there had been in the last hundred years. By innovation I mean true, created from new, ideas. There have been many developments, things have evolved and become more sophisticated, functions have been combined, miniaturised and made more efficient. But truly new? Consider this list:

- Internal combustion engine 1859
- Electric motor 1832
- Battery 1800
- Radio 1895
- Computer 1872
- Powered flight 1903
- Highways (turnpike) 1752 or the Romans
- Clock circa 1300
- Electric light 1878
- Glass 1500BC
- Photography 1839
- Central heating circa 1830 or 1300BC
- Railways 1804 (with engine)
- Traffic lights 1912
- Alcoholic drink 5400BC
- Pneumatic tyre 1845
- Spectacles 1290
- Nuclear science 1895
- Radio valve (transistor) 1904
- Plastics 1907
- Explosives 10th century
- Turbine (jet engine) 1827

Continued overleaf....
Continued from previous page

Perhaps one area where you might say that there has been true innovation in the last one hundred years would be medical science. There is a good chance that I would have not been writing this and many of you in no position to argue with it if it were not for medical innovations.

Mike Sweeting
Chairman

**Teesdale U3A Monthly Meeting**

*Fourth Thursday* of the month
(unless indicated otherwise) at **The Witham** Barnard Castle

*Meetings assemble from 10.00 for a prompt start at 10.30*

Guests are welcome to attend one of our meetings as a 'taster' before deciding whether to join. Children under 18 are NOT allowed to partake in group activities as guests, as they would not be covered by our insurance.

**Next meeting:** Thursday 27th February 2020

**Speaker:** Grenville Holland

*Apollo 11 and the Origin of the Moon*

Grenville Holland will be speaking on the history of the Apollo 11 Mission to the moon and particularly about the part played by the University of Durham, where James was a Professor at the time. He will include some interpretation of the data collected and also film of the Kennedy speech 'We choose to go to the moon'.
November's Speaker: Michael Leach Wildlife Photographer

The speaker at the November meeting was Michael Leach. Michael is a zoologist and he has travelled throughout the world as a wildlife cameraman. Wildlife was the inspiration for writing books and Michael has written 36, which have been translated into many different languages. He has worked with the prominent personalities of the time including David Attenborough, David Bellamy and many others and he is still involved in making wildlife films.

Michael explained the importance of being in the right place at the right time and how difficult and time consuming that could be. As an example he said that a 52 minute film could take as much as 2 years to produce, reflecting the time it might take to find the animal in the first place and then film the behaviour which was being looked for. It was tempting and perhaps necessary on occasions to improvise and use footage from elsewhere to show situations more accurately. He referred to a well known shot of David Bellamy pointing to and describing a woodpecker when the woodpecker shown was taken from somewhere else. Michael’s view was that if the final result was an accurate description then the use of material from other sources was justified. He also explained that wildlife filming could cost as much as £4000 per day in view of the number of people who needed to be employed.

Some of the most undisturbed areas for observing wildlife were motorway verges and David told an amusing story of having to peg out a rabbit carcass onto a verge as foxes were wily enough to remove the carcass before it could be filmed. Which animals can count? Certainly the raven can and experiments have shown that they can count at least to 9. This can be important when filming birds from a hide. If people enter a hide observed by a bird then some birds can count how many people enter and then subsequently leave and will know if there are any left inside. Other tactics were often used to attract wildlife eg a mixture of raspberry jam and sultanas had proved very effective with pine martens.

This was a fascinating talk from an internationally recognised photographer who was relaxed about giving away some of the tricks of the trade. In future we will all be looking at wildlife films from a different perspective. The vote of thanks was given by Ian Hodgson.

Ian Reid
It's Your Forum

Editors: Annie Clouston & Celia Chapple. This month's editor is Celia. Annie will be editing 2020/2 February-March.

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Editors Annie Clouston and Celia Chapple receive all contributions and share the email account: forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS for the next edition:**  
*Thursday 20 February*

If we do not acknowledge a contribution by email this is probably because we haven't seen it. Please ring us if we have not acknowledged receipt within 48 hours.

Handwritten/typed contributions can be left in the Messages section of the U3A file in the Library or The Witham café. Please phone to let us know if you have left a contribution in either of these files.

If you want to receive a copy of Forum but cannot make it to the monthly meeting, you can acquire one by:

- Asking a friend to collect one for you at the meeting
- Collecting one from the U3A file in Barnard Castle Library or The Witham café
- Sending me some SAEs and I will post them to you each month
- Downloading the colour version from the website
Art Appreciation Group

December 2019 Report by Roger Stanyon

For the December meeting we went to the Hatton Gallery, situated on Newcastle University campus, to an exhibition of the works by the pop artist Roy Lichtenstein (1923 – 1997), one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century. It offered a rare opportunity to see an important collection of the artist’s work in the North East of England. The exhibition drew from the Artist Rooms collection of modern and contemporary art in partnership with Tate and National Galleries of Scotland.

Hazel Barron-Cooper gave us a fascinating talk about Roy Lichtenstein’s work. He is best-known of his paintings based on comic strips and advertising imagery, using his signature hand-painted Ben-Day style dots which mimicked the print used for comic books and commercial newsprint at the time. At the centre of the exhibition was a series of large-scale screen prints made in the 1990s, towards the end of his life. The exhibition also explored his playful adaptations of works of art by other artists; a fascination with reflections and mirroring; and his love of mu-

Mrs Barron-Cooper also discussed the Merz Barn Wall which was part of a construction created by German artist Kurt Schwitters in a Lake District barn in 1947-8. The Wall was based on a collage, and Schwitters applied a rough layer of decorator’s plaster to the wall and incorporated waste objects into it, giving the three dimensional collage an abstract quality.

The barn was designed as a permanent structure; somewhere Schwitters could work and exhibit existing work, but when he died in January 1948 it was left unfinished and the Wall disintegrated. In 1965, after lengthy discussions about the barn’s future, the Wall was given to Newcastle University who undertook its removal, restoration and preserved it in the Hatton Gallery. The barn building still stands much as Schwitters left it in 1948.
Many of the group then walked down Northumberland Street, passing Fenwick’s Christmas window *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, to see Laing Art Gallery’s latest brilliant exhibition *The Enchanted Interior*. The large exhibition explores the sinister implications of the depiction of the interior as a ‘gilded cage’ where women are ornamental objects.

Pre-Raphaelite paintings by artists including Edward Burne-Jones and William Holman Hunt are shown alongside works by their female peers Emma Sandys and Evelyn De Morgan, who challenge and subvert the idealisation of women as captive damsels or passive beauties. We see sorceresses mixing love potions, scarlet goddesses and, in William Holman Hunt’s *Isabella and the Pot of Basil*, a deranged lover who keeps her boyfriend’s severed head in a vase.

There was time for members to study the Newcastle Christmas shops and many thanks to Jane Mathieson for arranging the trip.

The next meeting is on Wednesday, 5th February at 2.00pm at the Jersey Farm Hotel when we will be looking at the BBC Documentary *The Story of Women and Art* in which Professor Amanda Vickery goes on a journey to discover a hidden world of female artistry.

*Whaam!* Roy Lichtenstein, 1963. Tate Modern
Book Group Two

Report by Elizabeth Long: Reservoir 13 by Jon McGregor

Following our ‘bring and share’ Christmas lunch, we discussed Reservoir 13. This is the story of a village over a period of 13 years, following the disappearance of a 13 year old girl who was on holiday with her parents. Although the missing girl and the impact of her disappearance recurs throughout the book, the main focus is on the changing lives of several inhabitants of the village, both in terms of the impact but also generally. It also focused on natural events and creatures, closely woven into the story with changing seasons year by year being described in detail. Written in short sentences and long paragraphs, divided into a chapter for each year, it felt almost factual, and not at all sentimental.

This book certainly divided opinion within the group, leading to an interesting discussion. Those who enjoyed the book found the way that the community was portrayed both fascinating and compelling. We wanted to know how their lives turned out. It was agreed that the main character in the book was time and its relentless passing. No matter what dramatic events unfolded (the missing girl), life went on. The style that the book was written in, leaving gaps for the reader to fill in for themselves, was thought to be interesting.

Those who did not like it felt it was bleak and too repetitive, that it was simply the diary of a village life with no satisfactory outcome. There was an impatience with the style where nothing really happens, just the unfolding of, what seemed to some, depressing events. Still, it was agreed that it did lead to a most stimulating discussion.

We usually meet every two months in the summer and once a month in the winter, on the second Monday in the month, although this can vary.

Please contact Elizabeth Long on 01833 641494 or book2@teesdaleu3a.org.uk for further details.
Future Meeting: Monday 10 February at 2pm when we will be discussing The Tenant of Wildfell Hall by Anne Bronte.
Room to Read (Book Group 3)
December report by Annie Clouston

Rowing after the White Whale by James Adair

This is a travelogue about a pair of overgrown public schoolboys who decide they will row across the Indian Ocean from Western Australia to Mauritius in a 16 foot boat. They candidly admit their incompetence and unpreparedness to make such a hazardous and arduous journey. This was made all the more risky because their expected support system proved unreliable (pulled at the last minute) and the level of back-up was reduced to a phone call now and again to bark instructions that, in the prevailing conditions on the ocean, often seemed unhelpful or irrelevant.

They made it on pure luck, and that threatened to desert them when the end was in sight. Attempting to enter safe harbour in perilous seas at Mauritius their boat was turned over and they had to swim for it. Exhausted, inadequately nourished and injured they beached on a spiky coral reef that tore at their near naked skin. The coast guards having given up, an adventurer who happily for them was following their progress, launched his boat and effected a rescue. (I was reminded here of the rescue effected by a helicopter pilot who, last year, brought many people trapped on an erupting volcano in New Zealand to safety.)

There are many criticisms that can be leveled at the book: it is not well-written and not well-edited, the whole was devoid of any reflection and depth, particularly in relation to the dynamics of the relationship of the rowers in extreme circumstances when one’s survival is dependent on the other. However, it had a naive and optimistic – not to say gung-ho – quality that made it (and the boys) likeable and proved a page-turner.

Scores on the doors: For book group discussion 4/5. As always recommendations to others relies on knowing their literary taste.

We also reviewed the year’s reading at this meeting.

Book of the year, and the most memorable – The Cut-Out Girl by Bart van Es.

Most important, still relevant, and a phenomenal literary achievement – 1984 by George Orwell

Most divided opinions – Unsheltered by Barbara Kingsolver

Most provoking – The Girl on the Landing by Paul Torday
Next meetings:
Wednesday 19 February  The Secret River by Kate Grenville
Wednesday 18 March  Sea Stories by A S Byatt

Discussion Group

December 2019 Report by Glen Howard

We met the day after the general election but made a conscious decision not to discuss that. Instead we talked about the proposed closure of the gates to the Bowes Museum at night; elderly people being knocked down by cars and driving tests.

The importance of trademarks and their longevity proved interesting as our main topic of discussion.

January Report by Glen Howard

Despite our meeting being the day it became widespread knowledge that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex wished to step down as senior royals, we did not discuss this issue. However, our next meeting will see us discussing the monarchy.

Much of our interest was local – riots at Deerbolt; rates in Startforth; section 106 money from new developments in Startforth; weather patterns; the fires in Australia (not all of us knew that the Aborigines used to burn the forest floor regularly to prevent the build up of dry undergrowth); Zara Tindall being treated like anyone else when caught speeding; and the ever-present irritant of background noise.

Our discussion about equality covered various aspects of the subject including gender, disability, education etc. We did not approve of positive discrimination (except perhaps in respect to employment of people with disabilities where efforts should be made by employers to accommodate their needs) and felt that jobs should be awarded on merit.

Our next meeting will be on Friday 14 February when our main topic will be The Monarchy. New members are always welcome so do get in touch if you would like to join our group.
Film Club
Report by Judy Golds

Eight members of the group met on Tuesday 26 November 2019 and watched *A Private Function* which was set in post World War 2. Food rationing was still in place, which led a married couple to be becoming involved in the flourishing black market. The cast included Michael Palin, Maggie Smith, Alison Steadman and a rather noisy pig.

Synopsis of the three films that we will vote on on 28 January:

**MARVELLOUS** starring Toby Jones and Gemma Jones
The story of a man with a learning disability who goes through life without a care in the world and gets pretty much all he wishes for by simply asking for it. People who come across him just fall in love with his personality, to the point that they feel blessed to have met him and have him in their lives.

**THE ITALIAN JOB** starring Michael Caine
Charlie has a "job" to do. Having just left prison, he finds one of his friends has attempted a high risk job in Italy, right under the nose of the Mafia. Charlie’s friend doesn’t get very far, so Charlie takes over the “job”. Using three Mini Coopers, a couple of Jaguars and a bus, he hopes to bring Torino to a standstill, steal the gold and escape.

**THE LIFE OF BRIAN** starring the Monty Python team
The story of Brian of Nazareth, born on the same day as Jesus of Nazareth, who takes a different path in life that leads to the same conclusion. Brian joins a political resistance movement aiming to the Romans out of Judea.

French Conversation
Report by Annie Woodward

Bonne Année, bonne santé, prospérité et bonheur à tout le monde. Here is a short quiz, courtesy of my dear friend, Claire, secretary of the French Circle of High Wycombe. Bonne Chance!
Quelques expressions courantes à retrouver---

1. Avoir très faim, c’est avoir l’estomac dans les....
   a. genoux. b. chevilles
c. talons. d. orteils

2. Se battre avec quelqu’un c’est le passer à... ..
   a. tabac. b. farine
c. blé. d. blanc d’oeuf

3. Quand il fait mauvais temps, on dit qu’il fait un temps de.......
   a. grenouille. b. chat
c. canard. d. chien

4. S’évanouir, c’est tomber dans les....
   a. pêches. b. poires
c. pommes. d. prunes

5. Être un lâche, c’est être ....
   a. une poule mouillée. b. une oie humide
c. un pigeon froid. d. un poulet trempé

6. Mourir, c’est casser
   a. son seau. b. son cigare
c. ses sabots. d. sa pipe

7. Un instant, s’il vous plaît, c’est .....
   a. minute papillon! b. seconde puceron!
c. moment moustique! d. moment moucheron!

8. Quand quelqu’un ne vient pas à un rendez-vous, cette personne vous a posé
   a. un loup. b. un lion
c. un lapin. d. une limace

9. Quand vous attendez quelqu’un dans la rue, vous faites
   a. le chou. b. le poireau
c. le haricot vert. d. l’asperge

10. Si vous dormez bien, vous dormez comme....
    a. un paresseux. b. un chat
c. un clou. d. un loir

REPONSES
1 c. 2 a. 3 d. 4 c. 5 a. 6 d. 7 a. 8 c. 9 b. 10 d.

Next meeting: Thursday 6 February at 2 p.m upstairs at Penny’s Café, where we enjoy hospitality, refreshment and conversation. Sandra Swindale, one of our founder members, will tell us about her exciting adventures climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. New members will be welcome!
Genealogy

Report by Alan Swindale

Workhouses and Workhouse Records

With the dissolution of the monasteries care for the poor became the responsibility of the parishes. To provide shelter for paupers they set up Poorhouses or Workhouses paid for by the parish Poor Rate. During the 18th century the parishes were encouraged to group together to fund a single workhouse for the region and this was made compulsory in 1834. Up to 1834 parishes often supplemented the wages of underemployed workers - ‘out relief’ - to avoid the need for them to enter the workhouse but this was forbidden in 1834. To discourage paupers from resorting to the workhouse rather than seeking paid employment conditions were deliberately made grim in the workhouse with husbands, wives and children split up and living on minimal rations. Dickens exposed the conditions in some of his novels, famously in *Oliver Twist*. This regime also applied to the sick, infirm and elderly who had no choice.

Due to the number of paupers after the end of the Napoleonic Wars and then population growth leading to yet more paupers, new workhouses had to be built throughout the Victorian period. These could be immense in larger towns with a thousand or more inmates. They provided living accommodation in hospital-like wards, workrooms where inmates were expected to work 9 hours a day, dining rooms, and infirmaries. The work could be, for example, breaking stones down to gravel, picking apart old ropes to make caulking for ships or sewing cheap garments for use in the workhouse or for outside sale. Many of these buildings outlived the poor law system becoming local hospitals, accommodation for the elderly or council offices. The old Bishop Auckland hospital used to be Bishop Auckland Workhouse.

Most workhouse records are only available at the relevant County Record Office. A very few sets of records are available on-line and notably the records for Lincolnshire workhouses are available by download from the Lincolnshire Family History Society. The most useful records for the family historian are the Admission and Discharge Registers and the ‘Creed Registers’ which note not only the religious affiliation of those admitted to the workhouse but also their admission and discharge
The Macclesfield records show how Louisa Swindells, who was left a widow in 1881 with 9 children, was admitted and discharged 16 times between 1882 and 1896, usually for a period during the winter. Initially 7 of her children were admitted with her but over the years fewer and fewer as they began to be able to cope for themselves – or died. Eventually she found a home with her (then) married daughter Emily but died in 1906 aged 61 after twenty five years of living on the edge.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 6th of February at 2:00 pm at Enterprise House in the Dales Room. The main topic of the meeting will be Researching 20th century Ancestors with a video of a talk by Else Churchill. There will also be a discussion on the present value of sums of money mentioned in such documents as wills.

Alan Swindale  genealogy@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

GEOGRAPHY GROUP NOVEMBER 2019

Report by Gerald Blake

Thirty members came to the meeting on 21 November at the Jersey Farm Hotel. The main event was a long promised talk by Gerald Blake about THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST which occupied the first half of the afternoon and seemed to generate considerable interest. It was wide ranging in scope, but included several detailed insights to add colour to the story. One example was the speaker’s own research in Cyprus in 1973 which revealed the extent of the isolation of Turkish villages, existing in effect as self-governing enclaves. Turkey invaded Cyprus in the following year in an attempt to remedy this unsustainable situation.

Gerald outlined the events which created the modern political map of the Middle East, which emerged in the years after World War 1. Britain and France had much to do with this, not least because of the growing

Continued overleaf....
importance of oil which had been discovered in Persia in 1908, and the historic role of the Middle East as a crossroads, not least the Suez Canal which was opened in 1869. The new states and their boundaries left most of the region's inhabitants dissatisfied, and laid the foundations for the political unrest of today. The Arabs sought independence and unity, the Kurds had hoped for a state, and the Turks resented loss of the Ottoman lands, and their islands in the Aegean Sea. Today Europe still depends considerably on Middle East oil and gas supplies, but political conflict means that oil pipelines and oil tanker shipping routes are very vulnerable. Pipelines have been damaged (most recently in 2019 by a drone strike in Saudi Arabia) and tankers attacked as they transited the “choke points” of Bab El Mandeb (Red Sea) and Hormuz (the Gulf).

Tim Meacham gave a most amusing and entertaining BOOK REVIEW (seventh in the series of eight) on All the Countries we’ve Ever Invaded (and the few we never got round to) by Stuart Laycock (6456). Britain, apparently, has invaded, had some control over, or fought conflicts in 171 out of 193 UN member states, a fact which will shock and surprise many. Tim found the coverage rather patchy, but thoroughly recommended the book overall.

Gerald completed the afternoon with a ten minute briefing on THE KURDS, explaining why they have featured so prominently in the news recently. Over the centuries the Kurds have maintained a distinct identity in their mountain homelands, and rarely enjoyed peaceful relations with their host countries of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Turkey in particular sees the Kurds as a threat to the state: Kurds occupy about one third of Turkey, and represent about 18% of the national population. There have been some attempts to create a Kurdish state in the past, but the prospects today seem far away.

Members had an opportunity to sign up for TEAM PROJECTS for 2020, and a dozen did so with great enthusiasm. It seems certain that a map exhibition in the Witham will be one of the biggest of the projects. More names can be added to the project teams in the coming weeks.
Geography Group December 2019
Report by Annie Clouston

This was a geography quiz session, "Fun!" said Gerald. Well in so far as laying bare one’s abject knowledge of flags is fun, then so it was for about 90% of us. I think it helps with flags (a study of which is called vexillology) if you are male, a football fan, and something of an obsessive. In fact it is hugely fortunate for balance in the universe that 90% of us did not have all three characteristics.

The trouble began when Gerald’s daughter, the compiler of the quiz, mis-heard Gerald on the phone. When he said maps would be a good focus for questions, she heard flags, and the resultant carnage wrought on the egos of those who thought we knew a thing or two was inevitable.

I am not casting aspersions on the far-away winners, David and Ian, or the brilliant – but probably just lucky - runners-up, Chris and Les, but lets just say they probably need to get out more.

Thanks to Gerald and his (wasn’t paying enough attention to her dear old Dad) daughter for a jolly pre-Christmas mince-pie and minced brain extravaganza.

Future meetings:
FEBRUARY 20 - Speaker: Dr Ian Evans: (Durham University Geography Department) **Glaciers and mountains**

MARCH 19 - Speaker: Gerald Blake: **The oceans (dimensions, uses, geopolitics, threats)**

Geology Group

November report by Robert Tuddenham

This was an excellent meeting led by Trevor Morse. In the first half, we had a review of numerous interesting geological issues that have come up in the news. These ranged from the ‘climategate’ scandal to the auction of a piece of Jurassic amber containing a preserved lizard’s head through to an update of the Whitby Sirius development and then to the...
Continued from previous page

the Cumbrian coast and under an area of the Irish Sea.

In the second half of the meeting, Trevor gave a fascinating talk entitled *Industrial revolution – critical mass* which led to the three klondykes of the Tees Basin i.e. coal, iron and chemicals (anhydrite/halite). Each of these three resources was formed by cyclic sedimentation but in different geological time periods – Carboniferous (coal), Jurassic (ironstone) and Permian (chemicals). Coal and iron were essential components for the industrial revolution and in exploiting these resources Teesside changed from a sparsely populated rural area to an industrial conurbation of over half a million people.

The development of railways in the early 19th Century enabled coal from the SW Durham coalfield to be transported quickly to the navigable Tees. The coalfield expanded rapidly and the Tees area became a major port for coal export. This was followed by the discovery of ironstone in the Cleveland Hills in the mid 19th century which resulted in the formation of massive iron and steel industries. Middlesbrough became a boom town. The final klondyke was the discovery of valuable chemicals such as anhydrite and halite deep beneath the marshes near the mouth of the Tees. The calcium sulphate was used to make sulphuric acid and by the mid 20th century, Teesside had become one of the major chemical complexes in Europe with ICI a worldwide organisation.

Trevor then speculated on possible fourth and fifth klondykes using Teesside’s skilled workforce and infrastructure. The Ekofisk Project, Teesport and polyhalite (ICL and Sirius) were mentioned at the conclusion of an absorbing presentation.

**December 2019 Report**

In the first half of the meeting, Trevor Morse gave his very interesting updated talk entitled *Climate change in geological record.*

As the Earth rotates it slowly precesses and the orientation to the sun varies in cycles. As a result of this, the temperature and the climate experienced by areas of the Earth also varies in cycles. These are called Milankovitch Cycles after the Serbian geophysicist who first put forward this theory in the 1920s.

One of the main observations from these complex cycles is the regularity of ice ages in the geological record with the resulting rise and fall of global sea levels. This in turn affects the nature of sedimentation and the
history of these cycles can therefore be traced by looking at the bedding planes in sedimentary rock. This phenomenon can be observed locally in the carboniferous cyclothems in Teesdale and the Yorkshire Dales and also in the Permian limestone in east Durham.

Trevor then touched on the present issue of climate change and global warming. We currently live in an ice age during an interglacial period and a glacial period will in time follow but exactly when is not certain. The anthropogenic impact on global warming is a controversial topic.

After mince pies and coffee, Bob Tuddenham gave a review of the book *The Earth – An Intimate History* by Richard Fortey. A well written and ambitious book, it is an absorbing read covering some fascinating geology from different parts of the world.

We also looked briefly at the earthquakes and volcanoes that have arisen in the last month including the White Island volcano in New Zealand. The geology of this volcano will be looked at in more detail in January’s meeting.

**Next meeting:**

Monday 27 January at Jersey Farm Hotel. 10 am start. The main talk is by Les Knight ‘The Earth and Moon: Time and Tides Wait for No-one’. All are welcome to come and join us.

**Historical Environment**

*Report by Tim Meacham*

We finished the year 2019 in December with a new venture (unashamedly stolen from the Geography group). Members were invited to bring in one item of historical interest and talk about it for 4 minutes. Nineteen members turned up and most brought an item. Perhaps not surprisingly, most of the items had a personal as well as historical connection and the session turned out to be quite moving as well as instructive. After considerable thought I have not named any names below, but those present may find this a useful summary to recall a very interesting and evocative session.

We heard about (and passed round) the first bearing cast at NSK Holdings of Peterlee, followed by a coin cast to celebrate the cutting of the...
first sod for the Weardale Extension Railway in 1893, then a late 19th century handmade amber brown jug with black etched illustrations of drawings from W. Outram Tristram’s book which takes a nostalgic look at travel in pre-railway days, *Coaching Days and Coaching Ways* (1888); we continued with a replica large Sanctos Cage doll from Venice (although found throughout the catholic world), too big to pass round, but leading to wide discussion; then it was a set of naturalisation documents with a most moving story attached involving incredible suffering and equal fortitude; by contrast there followed a chafing dish, relatively modern but of a type dating from Roman times (described by Cicero as ‘a kind of two-piece saucepan’ with examples found across many ancient and medieval civilisations; our first military item was a fuse from a smoke shell picked up on the battle site at Ypres, at the very spot where the member’s grandfather died on 7th June 1917. This was very poignant.

A silver matchbox was next, given to a fiancé as a good luck charm in WW1. Unfortunately the soldier died, but his fiancée married another more fortunate soldier who returned and the matchbox survives as a family heirloom; a well-worn jacket paid tribute to the expertise of a Sheffield metal specialist, responsible for assessing the quality of steel in his factory; a set of 19th century indentures came next, notable for their exquisite handwriting as well as for providing evidence about the running of a contemporary local hardware shop; back in the military world, we handled fragments of a Chinook helicopter from the Falklands campaign; following a reading from a member’s mother’s diary for the day of his birth in 1957 we were passed a letter composed by the same member as a young boy to his poorly father, complete with Toy Post postage stamp; then came a commemorative mug from Limavady in Northern Ireland celebrating the tercentenary of the Battle of the Boyne (the turning point in the Williamite War) which took place in Drogheda, Ireland in 1690 between William III and the deposed James II. We also heard about the member’s family connections to Limavady.

We were then shown a photograph from June 1917 sent by a member’s grandmother to her husband who was serving on the Western Front at Ypres. It was a photo of herself holding her first-born; happily the soldier later returned, bringing back the photo. Ironically the member’s other grandfather, a Quaker and conscientious objector was not so lucky, being killed evacuating the wounded in Northern France; last but not least we were treated to examples of 17th-century-style farming.
implements, including a clamp for working with leather and a quite fearsome metal branding iron for use on cattle horns.

All in all, a fascinating 90 minutes – so interesting in fact that the planned quiz had to be held over to a later date. Thanks to all the members who took part, particularly those who described some very emotional family situations.

Details of 2020 programme will follow shortly. There will be no meeting in January.

**Next meeting:**

Thursday 13 February at Enterprise House. Phil Johnson will talk on the history of his house in Galgate. As ever, new members will be most welcome; contact Tim Meacham for further details.

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**Ipad Group**

**Report by Rita Wheeler**

We met as usual in Enterprise House, intending to start the meeting with a few questions and problems, which we hoped Ian would answer. In fact, the whole meeting was taken up with questions, sometimes on fairly basic procedures, sometimes rather more complicated. Ian had invited any members to contribute their ideas and the meeting developed into a really interesting series of discussions as people contributed their problems, ideas, suggestions, and solutions.

To begin with, people tended to apologise for asking about something they feared others might consider too simple to be worth bothering about but that soon stopped as others chipped in with their experiences. Ian was kept very busy at the screen, demonstrating the steps necessary to reach satisfactory answers, especially as some iPads in the room were bright and new while others were of another vintage. We covered questions on: extending time before the screen closed, useful apps – one especially useful for photographs with unwanted features – using iCloud for photographs, getting rid of insistent Amazon offers, and several other topics.

*Continued overleaf...*
Continued from previous page...

One particularly interesting device that Ian showed us was a Wireless Speaker – small and not very expensive – which would work in any room in one’s house, picking up the programme being broadcast from the main radio.

Next meeting:
Friday 14 February in Enterprise House, 1.30-3.30. New members are welcome. Please phone me if you would like to come.

LUNCH GROUP
Report by Jean Turner
The lunch group’s January venue was at Penny’s Café, Barnard Castle. Ten members attended and enjoyed a pleasant and relaxing lunch. The chat was lively topics ranging from Whorlton Bridge, heavy traffic in Barnard Castle, Brexit, Norway and discussing future U3A events.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 13 February at The Country Tearoom, Staindrop at 12 for 12.30. Please contact Jean on the Monday before for numbers; telephone 01833 660172

Needlecraft Group
December report by Karen Tranter
This was the last meeting of the year and there was a good turnout of members. Quite a few different projects were being worked on – knitting, crocheting, embroidery, felt Christmas tree decorations, and appliqué to mention a few. There were helpful discussions on how to shorten sleeves on a bought knitted jumper and to close up a slit at the neck in the back of a dress.

Recycling and reduction in the use of plastic was to the fore again. We were introduced to waxed cotton covers to use instead of cling film. These can either be bought, they are quite expensive, or made at home from bees wax and un-mercerised cotton fabric.

Once again we travelled down memory lane, this time to our childhood
days and cod-liver oil, virol and National Health orange juice; all remembered the orange juice with affection but there were differing opinions about cod-liver oil and virol. The latter was a by-product of the brewing industry, packed full of nutrients, including vitamins A, B and D, riboflavin, malt, sugar, egg, orange juice and refined fats. Although we were all probably healthier in the late 1940s and early 1950s than we are now, what with wartime rationing on virtually everything we ate and loads of exercise (few families had cars in those days) there was the lingering fear that we were undernourished. We then tucked in to delicious home-made flapjack, conveniently forgetting about the sugar content etc.

**Next meeting:**

Monday 3 February. Please ring Glen Howard, 01833 631639, for venue details.

**Painting Group**

**Report by Val Hobbs**

On Friday, 13th December, seven of us met at Startforth School, armed with our painting paraphernalia, eagerly awaiting Ann's tuition. We welcomed a new member, Hilary Jenkins, and hoped that she would enjoy the group's activities as much as the rest of us.

Ann pinned a beautiful watercolour on the board and explained that we would be learning how to use a viewfinder. These were simply like rectangular cardboard mounts which could be placed on the larger picture to isolate or crop a part of the scene that you wish to copy. She illustrated on her own painting how to isolate just one boat, the river as a foreground and the bridge behind, rather than utilising the whole picture of a large waterway and town.

Ann had also made some on Perspex, which we could use for breaking an image to be copied down into more manageable parts. We immediately set to work on our individual paintings; some utilised the viewfinder and actually found it so much easier to pick out detail, whilst the grid broke down the images into inch squares. We worked on our Labradors, our squirrels and seascapes and found the techniques that Ann had shown us hugely beneficial. Ironically, there wasn’t a Christmas scene

Continued overleaf......
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produced between us and the concentration was so great that not even the note of a carol slipped from our lips! I’m sure our art pads will be filling up rapidly using these techniques over the festive period.

A very merry Christmas to you all, and may your stockings be filled with brushes and paints!!

January Meeting

Our first session of the new year saw nine members converge on the Arctic climes of Startforth School, but even if the air was chilly the atmosphere in the room was warm and purposeful. Given that a further three possible members have expressed an interest in joining, space could soon be at a premium, but word is clearly getting round about these sessions: Val’s organisational skills and Anne’s expertise in painting make a great combination and this fourth session lived up to expectations with an excellent blend of teaching and practical painting.

This month we were asked to bring salt and cling film, while Anne produced a candle, all of which rather mystified us until she demonstrated methods of producing a range of effects using each of these. The doubters among us were silenced by the examples produced by Anne: the candle acted as a barrier and lightener for her sky scenes, while the salt produced a pitted appearance which was doubly effective when covered briefly with cling film, resulting in a range of impressionistic surface textures and shapes.

We then set out to produce our own landscapes incorporating the new techniques Anne had shown us. The cling film in particular (applied when the paint was wet and removed when dry) produced some startling shapes, some surprisingly naturalistic, others leaving room for various interpretations. It was interesting to compare the results with the basic landscapes we had attempted in our first session in September. Those looked relatively bland in comparison so it was great that Anne had today taken many of us out of our comfort zones with techniques we would never previously have dreamt of trying.

For many of us these first few sessions have rekindled a dormant love for painting and the two hours sped by. There is already an excellent esprit de corps developing in the group and this is in no small way a reflection of the purposeful yet sympathetic approach taken by Anne to each member, whatever their level of achievement!
Next meeting:
Friday 14 February. Please contact Val Hobbs for further details.

Hannah Hauxwell Heritage Exhibition
Fitzhugh Library

A fascinating exhibition runs at the Fitzhugh Library until the end of March 2020. It is a treasure trove of items reflecting life in the dale, dating back to Hannah's great-grandparents’ era.

The exhibition is based on family letters, receipts and all manner of memorabilia discovered in storage after Hannah's death. For example, there are farm animal brand catalogues from 1850s and three generations of handwritten school books.

Organised under topics such as farming, war, the chapel, health and sickness, and politics it provides an insight into a farming family going back to the 1800s.

Fitzhugh Library
1st floor (above the Village Bookshop)
51 Market Place,
Middleton, DL12 0QH.
Tel: 01833 640074
Email: fitzhughlibrary@gmail.com

Opening hours: Monday & Tuesday 10:30am—2.30pm
Philosophy Group

November report by Annie Clouston

This month we considered the philosophers and practitioners of Civil Disobedience

**Definition:** Civil disobedience, also called passive resistance, is the refusal to obey the demands or commands of a government or occupying power, without resorting to violence or active measures of opposition; its usual purpose is to force concessions from the government or occupying power. Civil disobedience has been a major tactic and philosophy of nationalist movements in Africa and India, in the American civil rights movement, and of labour, anti-war, and other social movements, notably XR at the present time, in many countries.

Civil disobedience is a symbolic or ritualistic violation of the law rather than a rejection of the system as a whole. The civil disobedient, finding legitimate avenues of change blocked or non-existent, feels obligated by a higher, extra-legal principle to break some specific law. It is because acts associated with civil disobedience are considered crimes, and are punishable, that such acts serve as a protest. By submitting to punishment, the civil disobedient hopes to set a moral example that will provoke the majority or the government into effecting political, social, or economic change. Under the imperative of setting a moral example, leaders of civil disobedience insist that the illegal actions be nonviolent.

**Philosophers:** The philosophical roots of civil disobedience lie deep in Western thought: Cicero (106BC-43BC), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), John Locke (1632-1704), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). All sought to justify conduct by virtue of its harmony with some antecedent superhuman moral law.

**Practitioners: Two examples**

**Martin Luther King** (1929-1968) was inspired as a student by Thoreau. "One of the great glories of democracy," King remarked at the outset of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, "is the right to protest for right."
awareness of the power of civil disobedience as protest grew during this, his first, nonviolent direct-action campaign, and developed as he reflected on the sit-in movement initiated by black college students in 1960. It reached fruition in the Birmingham campaign in 1963, which occasioned his most extended and influential reflection on the subject. In April 1963 he marched to a Birmingham Jail cell and was imprisoned. There he wrote *Letter from Birmingham Jail* in which he defended himself on the grounds of the right reasons, the right spirit and the right people.

**Mohandas Gandhi** (1869–1948) in 1930, began a defiant march to the sea in protest of the British monopoly on salt, his boldest act of civil disobedience against British rule in India. Britain’s Salt Acts prohibited Indians from collecting or selling salt, a staple in the Indian diet. Citizens were forced to buy salt from the British, who, whilst exercising a monopoly over the manufacture and sale of salt, also taxed salt heavily. Gandhi saw that defying the Salt Acts was an ingenious way for Indians to break British law non-violently. Resistance to British salt policies was the unifying theme for his campaign of *satyagraha*, or mass civil disobedience.

Gandhi set out from Sabarmati with 78 followers on a 241-mile march to the coastal town of Dandi on the Arabian Sea to defy British policy by making salt from seawater gathering many others along the way. At Dandi Gandhi was at the head of a crowd of tens of thousands. Here he walked down to the sea to make salt, but he was forestalled by police who had crushed the salt deposits into the mud. Nevertheless, Gandhi picked up a lump of natural salt out of the mud and thousands followed his lead. In the coastal cities of Bombay and Karachi, Indian nationalists led crowds of citizens in making salt. British law was defied. Civil disobedience broke out all across India, soon involving millions of Indians, and British authorities arrested more than 60,000 people. Gandhi himself was arrested on May 5, but the satyagraha continued without him.

**Next meeting:** Tuesday 28th January at Penny's at 10am. Doing the right thing? With reference to the philosopher Michael Sandel in his book *Justice, what’s the right thing to do?*
Photo Group

December report by John Harbron

This was the final meeting of 2019, and my last meeting as group co-ordinator, so it's all change in the New Year!

I have enjoyed my time with the group, and hope to join in occasionally, but time moves on, and there is so much to do!

Half of the meeting was taken with discussions about how the group will progress into 2020, and this was extremely positive.

In part two of the meeting members shared their work on a large screen TV which is always a great learning experience, and shows the tremendous variety of interests within the group.

Basically, next year the group decided to have an outdoor/practical meeting in month 1, followed by an indoor/tutorial style meeting in month 2. This is fairly similar to current practice, except that the group leader/organiser will change every time.

Jane Mathieson volunteered to coordinate the group outings etc, and look into booking a local hall for indoor meetings.

Richard Witham agreed to update the website, which has been very neglected, and members agreed to supply him with photographs.

The first meeting of the New Year will be at Bowes Museum on January 7th at 6.30 pm with a view to learning about night time photography.

Meet outside the main gate if you are interested.

The remainder of the programme will come together for publication in late December, after members have volunteered to take the group to somewhere they think offers good photographic opportunities.

If you would like more details, please contact Jane Mathieson.
Catalysts are a fundamental part of modern chemistry and are essential in the chemical manufacturing industry to make processes fast and efficient, both in terms of the materials used and the energy required. Without them most things we take for granted (and not just plastics) would either not be available or would be horribly expensive. Biological systems also rely on catalysts: brewing, baking and life itself depend on catalysts (biological catalysts are usually called enzymes rather than catalysts). David Lobley’s talk focussed on the large scale chemical manufacturing processes, calling on his experiences in the industry.

Ammonia, in the form of ammonium nitrate, is a widely used fertilizer. It is produced in vast quantities and used throughout the world. Without it food production would be a fraction of what it is now. However, ammonia, in one form or another, is produced naturally only in small quantities—usually by recycling dung. David used the ammonia manufacturing process as the basis of his talk charting its development from 1917. The process depends on catalysts and how these have evolved since the early days makes a fascinating story.

A catalyst is a substance which will speed up the rate of a specific chemical reaction. It does this by interacting with the components in the reaction but, crucially, it can be recovered unchanged once the reaction is complete. There are many different forms of catalyst and many different ways they can act, but in many manufacturing processes the catalyst is a solid, usually a very finely powdered metal, and the reactants can adsorb onto the surface of the solid while the reaction product can easily desorb. In the ammonia process the catalyst is very finely powdered metallic iron.

The start of the large scale manufacture of ammonia was around 1917 in Germany and in great secrecy—not only is ammonia a good fertilizer, it is also the basis of a common explosive (ammonium nitrate), and this was needed in vast quantities during WW1. The process that was developed is called the Haber Process, after its developer Fritz Haber. It takes nitrogen gas, isolated from air by removing oxygen (by its reaction with
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<td>Wed 5 Feb</td>
<td>Roger Stanyon 01833 631758</td>
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<td>Anne Harbron 07583034849</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Long 01833 641494</td>
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<td>Judy Golds 01833 630809</td>
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<td>Tues 25 Feb</td>
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<td>Annie Woodward 01833 627264</td>
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<td>Pauline Fawcett 01833 638020</td>
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<td>Alan Swindale 01388 488348</td>
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<td>Geography</td>
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<td>Thurs 20 Feb</td>
<td>Gerald Blake 01833 650899</td>
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<td>Bob Tuddenham 07812 378004</td>
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<td>Historic Environment</td>
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<td>Tim Meacham 07847 182554</td>
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<td>Marie Jenkins 07754 205664</td>
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<td>Val Hobbs 07900 497503</td>
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<td>John Harbron 01325 730935</td>
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<td>Science and Technology</td>
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**WALKING GROUPS**

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<td>Jan Fowler 01833 638815</td>
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<td>Rose Pude <a href="mailto:rosepude@outlook.com">rosepude@outlook.com</a></td>
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**Science and Technology, October report, continued from page 29**

Coke), and hydrogen gas, produced by reacting water with hot coke. The two gases are mixed in the correct ratio and then passed over an iron catalyst at several hundred degrees Celsius and 300 atmosphere pressure (4,500psi). Although there have been refinements in producing the reactant gases and the quality of the iron catalyst, the Haber process now is still essentially the same as in 1917. The problem is that it is very energy intensive and requires a lot of very substantial equipment (the vessel containing the catalyst and the ammonia reaction is made from 6 inch thick high quality steel, for example!).
The steam reforming process, introduced in the mid-20th century, removed the need for coal and coke altogether to produce both nitrogen and hydrogen. This was achieved by using natural gas (methane) as the carbon source and using different catalysts to promote the decomposition of water to hydrogen and the removal of oxygen from air to leave nitrogen. These changes reduced the energy requirements of the process considerably and also removed the principal source of pollution—coal.

Ammonia by itself is not useful as a fertilizer (or explosive); it needs to be combined with nitric acid to produce ammonium nitrate. Nitric acid has to be manufactured and the simplest way is to oxidise ammonia, i.e. react ammonia with oxygen. This is another reaction for which a catalyst is needed. This time it is a platinum-rhodium alloy in the form of a gauze through which the heated gases are blown. Although the overall reaction appears to be simple, there are several intermediate reactions that have to be controlled if unwanted products are not to be produced, and the catalyst is one of the control mechanisms.

To show the diversity of catalysts in use, David then described briefly the production of methanol from natural gas. In this case the catalyst is copper on a mixture of zinc and aluminium oxides with a touch of magnesium oxide to improve the copper crystallites.

Throughout the talk, David explained how the catalysts were developed to improve their performance in terms of selectivity, efficiency and cost. He also showed many photographs illustrating the sheer scale of the manufacturing plant needed to produce ammonia and methanol on the scale to meet current demands. There is still a lot of research into catalysts and these days many such projects are aimed at trying to emulate, or even use, enzymes to dramatically reduce the energy requirements and cost of these large scale manufacturing processes. Many work very well in the laboratory, but it is the scale up to thousands of tonnes per day that is the stumbling block.

He also showed many photographs illustrating the sheer scale of the manufacturing plant needed to produce ammonia and methanol on the scale to meet current demands. There is still a lot of research into catalysts and these days many such projects are aimed at trying to emulate, or even use, enzymes to dramatically reduce the energy requirements and cost of these large scale manufacturing processes. Many work very well in the laboratory, but it is the scale up to thousands of tonnes per day that is the stumbling block.
November 2019 meeting

Talk by Phil Johnson: Explosions and Explosives

Although the title of his talk was Explosions and Explosives sadly it did not include any practical demonstrations, apart from a few toy gun caps and the snaps from Christmas crackers. Phil’s interest in explosives started when he was a schoolboy with experiments in his parents’ kitchen. He made bangs with sodium chlorate and sugar, copper and silver acetylides and the infamous nitrogen tri-iodide (the kitchen did survive though it was a nice shade of purple for a while!). These were complemented with classic examples in the school laboratory and his early career when he worked with gun cotton.

Although he claimed there was no causal link, there were 2 explosions and 3 major fires at William Pearson’s in Hull, where he worked as a research chemist, before the company went into liquidation. When he transferred to a management role at Bevaloid in Beverley there were 2 major fires (with the potential for explosions) and a site evacuation due to a self-decomposition reaction releasing possible lethal fumes. It was while he was at Beverley that the Flixborough explosion occurred in June 1974 and although it was 18 miles away he heard the very loud bang.

His career then took him into the Factory Inspectorate where he was involved in the investigations into several serious explosions and fires. One of his more unusual investigations, which involved 6 site visits over 15 months, involved the attempted murder of a worker through the effects of nitroglycerine and ethylene glycol dinitrate (both used to manufacture explosives).

After this introduction, Phil went on to explain what makes an explosive, what causes explosions, and gave examples of some notable explosions.

An explosive is essentially a substance that will undergo a chemical reaction very rapidly to produce a large amount of hot gas very quickly in a very small volume. The gas then has a very high pressure and it will expand rapidly, creating a shock wave. It is this that gives the bang - the explosion. Explosives fall into three broad classes depending on their speed of reaction. Low explosives such as the various gun powders have relatively low reaction speeds and depend on producing a large volume of gas for their effect rather than a shockwave. Thus they are good for moving projectiles such as bullets, or breaking large lumps of rock from...
a quarry face. Primary high explosives are very sensitive and have very high rates of reaction; the heavy metal azides, stypnates and fulminates are examples. Their effect is largely due to the shock wave and they will shatter things into small pieces. Because of their sensitivity they tend to be used in small quantities as detonators for secondary high explosives. Secondary high explosives are what most people recognise as explosives - dynamite, TNT, RDX. Generally, they can be handled quite safely and require a fast shock, such as given by the primary high explosives in detonators, to initiate their explosion.

The history of explosives is essentially the history of warfare. Chinese fire lances (a firework tied to the end of a lance) are probably the oldest form of weapon using a low explosive. Greek Fire, with recorded usage in the 6th and 7th centuries, was probably an early form of flame thrower using thickened burning naphtha - an effective weapon against wooden ships. Gunpowder, based on saltpetre, charcoal and sulphur dates from the 11th century in China and India and there is a well documented history of the development of weapons using bullets, shells, rockets, and bombs. It was not until the 19th century that chemical knowledge had increased to the point when the first high explosives were made (nitrocellulose and nitro-glycerine) - first as chemical curiosities, later to be used as explosives.

Explosions can be caused by means other than chemical explosives. Clouds of dust (wood, flour, sugar, custard powder are just a few) and gases (e.g. petroleum vapour, LPG, hydrogen) can explode violently when ignited and have caused many seriously destructive explosions in factories, mines and kitchens. Exploding boilers, where the explosion is due to excessive pressure bursting the boiler, meteorites (Tunguska 1908, Chelyabinsk 2013), sonic booms, lightning and volcanoes are just a few that occur surprisingly frequently.

In amongst all of this, Phil described how many explosives used to be made as well as the modern methods. He also recounted many stories of (largely) accidental explosions, some of which were from his personal experiences as an investigator after the event, and some because they had significant impact and are well documented.

Because of the immense scope of the subject Phil has a lot of material that could not be included in this talk. He was enthusiastically invited to give a second presentation on the subject in early 2020 - see the Science and Technology 2020 Programme for more details when it is published!
December 2019 meeting

A contributions meeting:

The theme for this meeting was Christmas presents; either those that had been received and loved or that would like to be received.

Rose Pude started with one of the latter. She would like an AI program that can easily, quickly and cheaply read and transcribe handwritten documents into a standard font text document. She gave the example of the handwritten documents of Isambard Kingdom Brunel which, despite years of study, are still almost completely illegible. She has also been working with old handwritten wills where the scribe had particular ways of forming letters so that they are unlike modern representations, thus making it very hard work to read and understand the contents of the will.

In recognition that Christmas now runs from January to December, Jenny Lee described the expedition she was treated to as a 50th wedding anniversary present. This was to Boggle Hole in Robin Hood’s Bay where she was greeted by a guide, expert in fossil hunting, and spent several happy hours fossicking for fossils. The bonus was at the end of the day when the guide picked up an unremarkable looking stone and cracked it open. Inside was a perfectly formed amonite! A treasure worth more than its weight in gold.

Roy Tranter had two items, seemingly very different but linked by making things. The first was the Meccano sets he had as a young boy, and he still has many of the pieces. He brought along the Meccano booklet illustrating, and giving construction details for, many models. Amongst the prizes in his box is the small clockwork motor used to drive many of the models. The second gift was received only a couple of years ago and is a Dremel multi-tool kit. This is a small handheld electric motor which can take a range of small tools for doing a wide range of cutting, shaping, polishing jobs. He has found it incredibly useful, not least because it is in a compact carry case that is easily brought out and carried.

Over the years we have all received many gifts and it is almost impossible to pick the best. This was the case for Rob Mead so he opted for having a list of a dozen, most from his childhood and student days. These included his teddy bear (received when he was 1 year old), the metal pedal car (which, when broken, was rescued by someone who could
repair it - recycling in action decades ago!), a fairly large steam engine, a small brass microscope, a candle powered model steam launch and a wind-up gramophone. But he brought along one of the bound volumes of the Children’s Encyclopaedia he collected as a youngster. Unlike many modern books, this is packed with detailed information on a vast range of subjects. It includes accurate illustrations and many full colour plates to illustrate the text. It is still consulted, mostly recently to identify a moth found in the garden.

Karen Tranter took a similar route with half a dozen examples. There was the coach built Silver Cross doll’s pram which was looked for at many Christmases but never received (such prams were very expensive and well outside her parents’ means). But she did get a medium sized quality brass microscope when she was 16 and spent many enjoyable hours preparing and viewing slides. And there was the small Mamod Steam Engine, an Ikea wood frame chair that gently rocks (ideal for the pre-breakfast cup of tea!) and a Kipp’s Apparatus that was rescued from the store room at Hull University Chemistry Department by her son when old und unused equipment was being thrown out to make more space for new things. She brought to the meeting a Galileo Thermometer. This shows temperature by the position of sealed glass balls floating in a clear liquid inside a tall glass cylinder (it works through the density of the liquid changing with temperature and glass balls are calibrated to sink at particular densities). Although it is not as accurate as a "proper" thermometer, you know it is a hot day when all the balls are at the bottom of the cylinder!

The final present was shown by Joy Roscoe, taking the approach of Jenny Lee that Christmas is all year round. This was a wedding gift, received in 1965, that has turned out to be incredibly useful. It is a multi-purpose bottle, jar and can opener. It is made of metal, so is very durable, and shaped like a very unwieldy set of pliers. But it can grip bottle and jar closures of almost any size and give the extra leverage to open even the most stubborn ones.

All of the presentations provoked much discussion and reminiscing with many of those present saying "I remember that" or "I didn't have one of those but I did have ...".

**Next meeting:** 10am on Monday 10 February 2020 in the County Room at The Witham.
SCRABBLE GROUP

December report by Judith Fanner

Nine players met again to play Scrabble at our house in Cotherstone. We split into three groups, so had three games on the go. The winners then played each other. Well done Sharon, our overall winner today. There were some high scores achieved and some interesting words.

@Jedau & @Verbal-D's Post-Game Scrabble Stories # 1: Solo Assassin (Original Short Story)

Some interesting words, but raviolis?
Would our Scrabble Group entertain such a dubious plural?
January 2020 meeting

Report by Paula Thompson

The Scrabble group had our first meeting of 2020 in Phil and Judith’s house in Cotherstone on a wild and windy day. There were 9 of us, who split into 3 groups of 3. At the end of the first games we stopped for refreshments, and then went into 3 new groups, the first made up of the winners of the first rounds and so on. There were some big scores making the most of treble and double scores, GLOOPING (scoring 89), QUILT (scoring 48) and making use of obscure 2 letter words.

There is plenty of chat and banter, we all enjoy playing and each other’s company.

Next game: Monday 10th February and will be held at Lilian's house in Cotherstone.

If you are interested in joining our group please contact Lilian on 01833 650628. You will be made most welcome.

Spanish Conversation November 2019

Report by Lusia McAnna

Five of us enjoyed Robert’s generous hospitality for our November meeting, discussing the topic of “my favourite season”, with electronic input from two of our members currently enjoying the more temperate climate of a Spanish winter.

Many felt that winter was a season best endured by hibernating indoors in the safety of one’s home with the comfort of sitting by a log fire reading books and looking forward to warmer days. It feels lovely at this time to close the curtains and exclude the cold and dreary outside world.

Whereas spring was considered a more joyful season with its glorious displays of colourful shrubs and flowers. The new growth of this season being an affirmation of the resilience and continuance of life itself.

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We are lucky to live in a European country, with its seasons breaking up the year into four distinct parts, rather than in a hot arid dry country with little visible seasonal change.

Another member enjoyed all the seasons for its differences, the new bright green growth of Spring, the long light days of summer particularly in Scotland where it barely gets dark and its harvests and soft fruits, the glorious golden colours of Autumn and the beautiful light of a crisp cold dry Winter dawn.

One member didn’t like spring and quoted T.S Eliot saying “April is the cruelest month, breeding, lilacs out of the dead land, mixing, memory and desire, stirring, dull roots with spring rain.” He used to like summer but now finds it too hot for walking and therefore draining and exhausting. His favourite seasons are imaginary ones - those depicted in the world of music and literature. Vivaldi’s Four Seasons, with the music emulating the feelings of each season, violins making one shudder with cold or vigorous playing being like stamping ones frozen feet to get them warm, you can hear the cracking of ice and hear the furious gusts of icy wind in the music.

And the autumn portrayed in John Keats poem of that name- “Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Close bosom friend of the maturing sun” It paints a picture of a time of rich, subtle colours with the leaves changing from green to many shades of yellows and oranges.

One of the group rejoiced in all the seasons although he felt that English winters were too long and dark. He loved to see the golden daffodils appear highlighted against the green and the wonderful colours of the tulips, all emerging from the bulbs that have sheltered underground during the winter months. To see the trees that had been grey and bare for many months suddenly burst into buds and leaf with that special new green colour. Spring is a season that gives us hope that life will become better, the temperatures will increase and we will once again see the beautiful blue skies and enjoy the warm rays of the sun.

Another group member enjoyed winter with its dark cold and wet and windy days, which differs greatly from the Christmas card pictures of the season. As a gardener he found the spring glorious with its new growth, the smells of flowers, shrubs and trees and the sound of bird-song, bringing hope and a warmer sun. Summer is special too with its long hot days, picnics on the beach and long walks in cool forests. But
Autumn is his favourite season with its rich harvest of fruits made possible it has to be said by all the other seasons of the year.

So our final conclusion was that all the seasons had something good to offer and that the most important thing is to enjoy and appreciate them all to the full. Carpe Diem.

December 2019 meeting

Five of us met at the Corner Bistro on the Bank for an excellent lunch and had a very loud and festive gathering. We apologised sincerely to all the other diners for disturbing them, two of whom were U3A members, who had perhaps hoped to have a quiet lunch out. Apologies again.

Inevitably our talk about festive traditions turned to food, with some French Christmas standards being French Onion Soup, Black Pudding, White Pudding, Nuts, Apples and Tangerines. The mainland European tradition is to bring the Christmas tree into the house and decorate it on Christmas Eve.

The Scots never used to celebrate Christmas and 25 December was just a normal working day, although sometimes a half day was allowed. It was considered to be a religious festival which the Kirk disapproved of and was abandoned in Scotland in 1640 and not officially resurrected as a Public Holiday until 1958.

Hogmanay or New Year was the big Scottish festival with a very old tradition of burning Mountain Ash branches to stop witches and bad spirits using them to fly around and cause bad feeling between family and friends.

We Poles celebrate on Christmas Eve with an elaborate 12 course meat free dinner, clear beetroot soup with wild mushroom dumplings, raw herring and vodka, pickled wild mushrooms, boiled Carp fish, steamed cabbage and mushrooms, and Pierogi a type of ravioli with cheese and potato filling followed by dried fruit compote. So basically, all the food that was preserved from the harvest and stored ready for winter. An extra place is set for any hungry traveller to join us and straw is put under the tablecloth in memory of the stable where Jesus was born. Before the meal, which starts when the first star shows in the sky, we share wafers of bread with each member of the family and wish them

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all the best for the coming year. We then sing carols by candlelight and open our presents before going to midnight mass.

In Spain there are huge parades and festivals on the eve of the 6th of January celebrating The Three Kings and children put out their shoes that night and get chocolate in them if they have been good. And at seaside places the Three Kings often arrive by boat before processing through the town.

So we had a great end to a year of Spanish conversations, which have hopefully inspired people to spend some time away from the meetings improving their Spanish.

Next meetings- all start on Thursdays at the NEW TIME of 10am.

January 16th at 10am Lusia’s house topic - travel plans for 8686.

February 20th at 10am Venue TBA a favourite flower.

Table Tennis Group

Report by Celia Chapple

A Winter’s Tale

Alphonse was the best squirrel in the dray when it came to collecting and storing acorns for winter. The other squirrels greatly appreciated his enthusiasm and this made Alphonse happy. As winter set in, Alphonse became sad, because there were no acorns to find and he had nothing to do.

One morning, as the weak sunlight lit up a clearing in the wood, Alphonse sat on a log and declared to himself that he was bored. Just at that moment, he heard a ‘ping’ on the log beside him and saw an acorn shoot off into the mossy floor of the wood.

Where did that come from? he thought to himself. He looked around and could see no-one. ‘Pong’ went the log, followed by a chuckling sound. He looked up into the branches above him, as squirrels do, and there was Audrey, his cousin twice removed, sitting on a branch above him, and smiling.
“Did you see that?” Alphonse said. “It bounced!”

Yes, I did” said Audrey “and it made a pingy-pongy sound, like music. Let’s do it again.”

Audrey ran down the tree and took up her position by the log. Alphonse, curious if he could ping another acorn, threw one onto the log and Audrey batted it back to him.

“Pong ping!” went the log.

“Do it again! Do it again” Alphonse shouted, and so they did.

On an ordinary winter’s day, when Alphonse and Audrey had nothing to do, they played their first game of ping-pong, batting an acorn between them, laughing as they went. Some people think the knocking sound in the woods is a woodpecker banging on a tree trunk, and some people think it is branches creaking in the wind, but we know better, don’t we?

If you go down to the Teesdale Leisure Centre on Friday at 3:00pm, you might even see Alphonse and Audrey warming up for a game of ping-pong.
THEATRE VISITS 2020

Wednesday 8 April at 7.30pm
Theatre Royal Newcastle

ACOSTA DANZA

Ballet superstar Carlos Acosta and his Cuban Company perform a programme of new and existing works with Carlos himself dancing in one of them. I have reserved seats in the front stalls. The cost for seat and coach is £55. We meet at Addison’s at 5pm.

Please make your cheque out to Teesdale U3A and include your contact details to:

E Formstone,
Bridge House,
Piercebridge DL2 3SG.
Tel: 01325 374727
Closing date: 28 Feb

Friday 16 October 2020 2.30pm
Newcastle Theatre Royal

THE BOOK OF MORMON (musical)

Booking is already open and I have reserved seats in the Grand Circle. The full cost is £57.

Please let Elizabeth Formstone know if you are interested as she has to confirm the booking early in 2020 (contact details above). Make sure you send her all your contact details.
**Walking Groups**

**Shorter Walks Group**

**Report by Jan Fowler**

If you are considering joining the Shorter Walks Group (3-4 miles), you are welcome to join us for lunch, upstairs at Penny’s Tea Shop, on Monday 27th January, 12 noon for 12.30 orders.

We will be having lunch together and planning our walks for the next ten months: you will be able to see how we do this/what our criteria is for these walks.

If you want to join us, please email or phone me to say so, in order that I can forewarn Penny’s as to the size of the group. Thank you.

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**4-6 Mile Walking Group**

**Report by Gillian Barnes-Morris**

**December’s Walk (and Lunch) – Bowes Village**

In spite of a weather forecast predicting strong winds and torrential rain twelve walkers from across the walking groups arrived for a pre-Christmas lunch walk. Meeting at Bowes Village car park the group began their 5 mile walk to God’s Bridge and back (I wasn’t one of them). They had barely started when the heavens opened. However, as luck would have it, the winds were so strong that the rain was moved along at such a speed they barely felt a drop (so I’m told?!).

In any event the walkers were joined at the fire side in the Ancient Unicorn by members of the Fell and Goldilocks walking groups for a combined lunch which lasted several hours and was enjoyed by one and all.
Fell Walking Group November 2019

Report by Philip Clarke

November’s walk was over in Richmond in Swaledale. The walk started at Easby Abbey in reasonable conditions, the talk being about who had the best and correct weather app and when the rain would appear. The consensus was about midday. It arrived just after. The walk started in the car park next to the - easier to spell than say- Premonstratensian (white canons) Abbey and followed the Swale into Richmond. Here in town we walked up some seriously steep roads and paths on to Richmond Racecourse. The old Georgian racecourse and grandstand were just about visible as the mist closed in, so no magnificent views of the North York Moors today. We headed off to Coalsgarth Gate and on to Willance’s Leap on Whitcliffe Scar for our lunch stop before the rain.

Robert Willance was a successful Richmond merchant and who also had lead smelting and mining property at Clints in Swaledale. He was the first Alderman (the equivalent of Mayor) of Richmond in 1608, but two years earlier he survived a hunting accident on Whitcliffe Scar, just outside Richmond. The site is now known as Willance’s Leap in commemoration of the amazing event in 1606.

After lunch the walk continued towards Richmond crossing Wainwrights Coast to Coast down towards and past Reeth road on the Leyburn – Richmond road. The Swale was crossed by a footbridge below Billy Bank
Wood and some us walked along a path extremely close to the river-challenging and back towards and over Richmond Bridge. The walk followed the river towards The Station where shelter from the rain and drink and cakes were most welcome. After our rest the last mile back to the cars was fine. Many thanks to Bob for a great, well planned 10 mile walk.

Thank you to all the walkers for coming this year and especially to the leaders who planned out walks. The highlight for me was again our yearly walk in the Lake District,

**Next walk:** Castle Bolton Wednesday 22\textsuperscript{nd} January 9:45 pm

Annie very helpfully brought along her birthing tent.
Wildflower Group  
October report by Rose Pude

Our last meeting of the year was a talk by Fal Sarker entitled *The Wonder of the 7th Continent & the Southern Ocean*. This was about the natural history of South Georgia and Antarctica, an area none of the audience had visited.

Fal’s long journey started at Gatwick Airport with a flight to Buenos Aires followed by another flight to Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego. Here Fal, accompanied by her sister, boarded a scientific research ship that took the 210 passengers on a voyage to first the island of South Georgia, then to Antarctica before returning to Ushuaia. The entire holiday, including the time for the flights, lasted nearly four weeks. As on a more conventional cruise, the food was excellent. The onboard entertainment was lectures on all aspects of Antarctica provided by scientists who were experts in their field.

Where the cold water of the Southern Ocean meets the warm water from the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans the mixing of the water creates a zone rich in nutrients. This supports an abundance of wildlife, including many species of penguins, other seabirds, seals and whales. The captain could identify a species of whale by the shape of the spray formed when a whale breathes out of its blowhole. When the captain spotted whales he stopped the ship for up to an hour so the passengers could see them at close quarters. Seeing a blue whale was the highlight of the trip for Fal. By the time whaling was banned in 1966 the once abundant population of blue whales in the Antarctic had been reduced to 360 animals. Numbers are recovering slowly but they are still scarce. Seabirds seen by Fal on the way to South Georgia included the wandering albatross which is the world’s largest bird; the Antarctic skua that steals fish from other seabirds and the blue-eyed shag named after the blue ring around its eye.

The ship made nine stops around South Georgia. Each time the passengers disembarked their clothes were vacuumed and their boots disinfected before they got on to the Zodiac inflatable boat that took them
ashore. This was to avoid contaminating the vulnerable environment with alien organisms. Elephant seals, named after the elongated nose of mature males, raise their pups on the beaches of South Georgia. Four different species of penguin were seen, including a very large colony of king penguins. Some of the penguins were still incubating their eggs but there were also chicks around.

King Penguins

There were not many species of wildflowers but Fal did find Antarctic burnet and Antarctic buttercup along with some grasses, the most spectacular being tussock grass that grows up to two metres tall.

Antarctic Burnet

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Fal also visited the former whaling station. Piles of bones from the seals and whales slaughtered for their oil are still visible.

The voyage from South Georgia to Antarctica took three days. Highlights here were cape petrels that spend their breeding season on the Antarctic shelf and killer whales (these are dolphins not whales). On the shore of the Antarctic Peninsula Fal found some salps, a primitive animal that looks like a jellyfish but has a stiff rod of cartilage extending along the inside of the body. The only two flowering plants on Antarctica are Antarctic hair grass and Antarctic pearlwort. Fal saw these as well as some of the many species of mosses and lichens to be found. During their stay off Antarctica some passengers went kayaking and paddle boating and a few even had a brief dip in the ocean.

The final stage of the voyage was back to Ushuaia passing through Drake’s Passage which separates the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. This is notorious for its extremely rough waters so Fal was relieved, but also a bit disappointed, that her passage through it was very calm.

Everyone thought the talk, and the photographs taken by Fal and her sister, were excellent and we hope Fal will be able to give us another talk next year.

Thanks to Fal and her sister for the photographs.

Wine Tasting Group

January 2020 Report by Tim Meacham

As ever our Christmas meeting (also celebrating the fourth anniversary of the group) proved a highlight despite being held over into early January. Thanks to Stella and John for their usual splendid hospitality.

As a number of the group have joined over the last couple of years, the Convenor rather unfairly repeated the 2016 and 2017 quizzes rather than searching out new festive questions – not that you would have known from the scores, particularly those of the long-term members!
The wines themselves got off to a good start. For the third month running the 25% discount at Sainsbury’s proved irresistible and our three whites and three reds were all sourced from there. We started with a sparkling wine, the New Zealand Oyster Bay Sparkling Brut (12% and £9.00) which found great favour. One member’s comment was ‘who would pay £30 for a champagne rather than £9 for this delicious Chardonnay.’ The group agreed wholeheartedly. For our first still white we moved to a French (Languedoc) variety, the Baron De Guers Picpoul de Pinet (13% and £7.00). This ‘nicely made, fresh mineral wine with juicy lemon character’ kept up the good work, refreshing and offering a nice finish. There was general surprise at the reasonable price for this quality of wine. A pleasingly reasonable trio of whites was completed by an Italian number, Verdiccio Dei Castelli Di Jesi 2018 (13.5% and £6.00) which was a more complex wine than the first two. Apparently the Visigoths drank a version of this wine as they marched on Rome in the 4th century AD. While our group quite liked it, it was ‘less special than the other whites’.

As with the whites we started the reds with a sparkling variety, the Australian Bortoli Woodfired Heathcote Sparkling Shiraz (strong at 13.7% and £9.00). This Shiraz-based wine was very full-bodied (too much so, according to most of us!). Its claim to be ‘soft, textural and very tempting’ was rejected by all. Quickly moving on, we continued our globetrotting with a very nice Spanish red, a CVNE Ribera Del Duero 2018 (14% and £10.00), made 100% from the Tempranillo grape. Roger, our red wine expert, expressed approval, and the other red drinkers agreed, although we were slightly puzzled by the label’s claim to be a ‘rustic wine with grippy hedgerow fruit’. By comparison the third red, also from Spain, was a multi-grape concoction, the Priorat 2013 (14.5% and £10.00), ‘a rich red with heady aromas of black fruits’, the strongest of the day by some way. The group complimented it for its smoothness and long finish, bookending our fine selection of wines very well; thanks to Sainsbury’s for offering the six for a total of £38.25 after 25% discount!

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The next meeting will feature Lidl’s ‘Only while they Last’ selection, a genuine new year sale of wines from some interesting countries and grape varieties. This will be on Tuesday 18 February at 3.00 pm. Further details from Tim Meacham.

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**Book Recommendation by Celia Chapple**

*Serpents In Eden: Countryside Crimes*

Edited by Martin Edwards

The book, *Serpents in Eden: Countryside Classics*, caught my eye in Barnard Castle Library and has proved to be an intriguing collection of old and new writers investigating crimes that occur in the countryside, remote and otherwise. The crimes are not all midsummer murders as we have come to expect, but clever fraud, theft and trickery that becomes a good crime writer. Well-known authors such as Arthur Conan-Doyle, Margery Allingham, E.C. Bentley and G.K. Chesterton are joined by lesser known authors such as Leonora Wodehouse (step-daughter to P.G.Wodehouse) and Herbert Jenkins, owner of a well-known Victorian publishing house.

The book is published by the British Library in a Crime Classics series which includes titles such as Continental Crimes and Capital Crimes.

Amazon Books [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)
You can’t beat a good scone!

Wholegrain Spelt, date and molasses scones (makes 6)

125 g pitted dates
150 ml freshly brewed strong black or Earl Grey tea (I used EG)
125 g wholegrain spelt flour
¼ teasp allspice
¼ teasp flaky sea salt
30g cold cubed unsalted butter
1 tablesp molasses
75g buttermilk or thin natural yoghurt

Glaze
1 free-range egg, 1 tablesp milk, handful of rolled oats

Method
1) Soak the dates in the hot tea. When cool, mix together the dry ingredients and rub in the butter until the mix looks like breadcrumbs.
2) Line a baking tray with baking paper and heat the oven to 200C/180 fan/gas 6
3) Drain and chop the dates, add them to the mix along with the molasses and yoghurt. (NB Go easy on adding the liquid, it could get to resemble a slurry pit if your dates are quite wet)
4) Turn out on to a floured surface and form a ball, flatten to about 1’ thick and place on the baking tray. Cut through the top bit only into six segments.
7) Mix the egg and milk and paint the top of the scone dough then press into the glaze some rolled oats with the back of a spoon.
8) Bake for 15 minutes, then turn the tray and reduce the heat to 180C/160C fan/ gas 4 for about another 10-15 mins – check there is no soggy bottom, if so give it another 5 mins.

These scones were tested at the Room to Read Book Group, and pronounced good. This time not one of my inventions but from Anna Jones *The Modern Cook’s Year*, a cookbook I (Annie) had for Christmas.
January—February Quiz

These are the first lines of well-known poems. Can you name their authors and possibly their titles?

1. Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,
2. I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
3. Half a league, half a league,
4. How do I love thee? Let me count the ways
5. In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
6. O my Luve's like a red, red rose
7. Do not go gentle into that good night,
8. She walks in beauty, like the night
9. On either side the river lie
10. I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
11. Drink to me only with thine eyes,
12. Gather ye rosebuds while ye may
13. The curfew tolls the knell of parting day
14. Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone
15. Had we but world enough, and time,
   this coyness, lady, were no crime.
16. I wandered lonely as a cloud
17. Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
18. Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
19. Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)
20. I come from haunts of coot and hern
November December Answers

Playing with fire!

1. The wedding of King Henry VII in 1486
2. True
3. Dumbledore's pet Phoenix
4. Blue
5. Handel
6. 1605
7. Ronnie O'Sullivan.
8. York
9. China
10. Sparklers
11. 36
12. Potassium nitrate
13. A penny for the Guy
14. Gunpowder Treason and Plot
15. Pyrotechnics
16. to deepen colour
17. zinc
18. Small Round Pellets
19. Trumpton
20. Retire

Thanks to our Quiz Master Karen Tranter
Margaret Atwood recently won the Booker Prize for Fiction for *The Testaments* jointly with Bernadine Evaristo for *Girl, Woman, Other*. This was the first time the prize was awarded jointly which caused some controversy. Whilst best known for her novels, Margaret Atwood is also a poet. Thank you to Roger Stanyon for sending me this poem.

*Provisions*

What should we have taken
with us? We never could decide
on that; or what to wear,
or at what time of
year we should make the journey

So here we are in thin
raincoats and rubber boots

On the disastrous ice, the wind rising

Nothing in our pockets

But a pencil stub, two oranges
Four Toronto streetcar tickets

and an elastic band holding a bundle
of small white filing cards
printed with important facts.
Making Music in Teesdale

Research has clearly demonstrated that making music is excellent brain exercise and raises the endorphin levels. It is also good for the soul. Why not get the vibe in 2020? Here are some local opportunities:

**Barnard Castle Choral Society** meets at Barnard Castle School on Thursdays during term-time from 7:00—8:30pm. Currently rehearsing *Schubert’s Mass in G* and *Vaughn Williams’ Five Mystical Songs* for a concert in March at the Bowes Museum. Some level of musical literacy an advantage, but all are welcome.

**St Mary’s Community Orchestra** meets at St Mary’s Parish Church on Saturday mornings, 10:00 to 11:15am. Open to string, woodwind and brass players, all levels are welcome. For details contact Annette on 07411 825230.

**St Mary’s Community Choir** meet at St Mary’s Parish Church on Fridays from 5:00—6:00pm. New members are always welcome to join this friendly group. Just turn up or contact Annette on 07411 825230.

**Deerbolt Ladies’ Choir**. Weekly rehearsals at Startforth Community Centre each Thursday at 6:30pm. New voices always welcome.

**Middleton Community Choir Altogether** practises at The Pathway Middleton-in-Teesdale each Thursday at 7:00pm.

**Gainford Community Choir (Scherzo)** meets every Friday at Gainford Village Hall at 1:45pm. Contact Barbara Levett on 077909 184841 for more details.

**Teesdale Folk**. Musicians and singers of any ability welcome. Meets at Barnard Castle Workingmen’s Club, Sundays 7:30—9:30pm. Wide variety of songs and music. Contact Caralinda 01833 908613 or Pascal 07964 066637.
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Fri 7 Feb 7.30 pm  

Sat 8 Feb 7.30 pm  
Barnard Castle Brass Band: a fundraising concert.

Sun 9 Feb 2.30 pm  
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Fri 14 Feb 7.30 pm  
Matthew Bourne’s Romeo and Juliet: bursting with youth, vitality and Bourne’s trademark storytelling. Screened live from Sadler’s Wells.

Fri 21 Feb 7.30 pm  
ABBA Sensation (tribute band): with stunning harmonies, costumes, choreography and a sprinkling of light-hearted humour.

Sun 23 Feb 2.00 pm  
The Witham Tea Dance: a relaxed, social event for everyone who enjoys dance! Each ticket includes a hot drink and a sweet treat.

Tues 25 Feb 7.15 pm  

Sat 29 Feb 7.30 pm  
Navy Lark (live theatre): sees a cast of three bring to life three classic episodes from the much-loved radio series.

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Visit www.thewitham.org.uk for more information.
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