

# **TEESDALE u3a FORUM**

**Your monthly newsletter about interest  
groups and events in the Dale**

**August 2022 no: 22/08**

[www.teesdaleu3a.org.uk](http://www.teesdaleu3a.org.uk)

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Registered Charity no. 1176746  
Established March 2007  
Founding Chairman: George Jameson

**u3a**

## Chairwoman's letter August 2022

Dear Friends

In the macro-world this has been a challenging month, and so many people that I know have developed an extreme aversion to topical issues – engagement with the real world evokes an almost apoplectic response. Better to dive into the sand headfirst, or indulge in engaging escapism (for example, swimming in Croatia) where no newspapers or news broadcasts can unsettle and distress. All very understandable, but reality will eventually bite, like a vicious nip from a crab, or a spiny intrusion from a sea urchin.

An effective antidote – sadly only partial – is throwing yourself into new activities. When we were at Middleton Carnival on Saturday 6 August with a u3a stall, I found myself evangelising on this theme. It occurs to me that for people in their “third age” the main psychological and social challenges that threaten us are those demon twins – loneliness and lack of stimulation. And that's where the u3a comes in. As a community our goal is to connect people and open up possibilities for having a laugh, learning something new, and giving something of ourselves to enrich our collective social capital. I have Ruskin's words on my fridge and its good for me to be reminded - when reaching for a spot of Pinot Grigio - that “there is no wealth but life” ( and a little Pinot Grigio helps in appreciating this).

Carpe Diem,

With very best wishes

Annie

**Editor: Committee members sharing the joys of Teesdale u3a membership at the Middleton-in-Teesdale carnival. Come and see us at our stall at the Eggleston Show on Saturday 17 September.**



**Photos: Pete Redgrave**

### It's *Your* Forum

Editors: Annie Clouston & Celia Chapple. This month's editor is Celia  
e-mail: [forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk)  
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Both editors receive all contributions and share the email account:  
[forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk)

**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS for the next edition:**

**Tuesday 6 September 2022**

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 u3a file in the library. Please phone to let us know if you have left a contribution in this file.

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

- ◆ Viewing it online on Teesdale u3a website at:  
<https://teesdaleu3a.org.uk/>
- ◆ Sending us some SAEs and a cheque (£2 per copy payable to Teesdale u3a) and we shall post them to you each month
- ◆ Asking a friend to collect one for you at the meeting. The cost is £2 on a 'first come first served' basis.
- ◆ Email [forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk) or call Celia 07783 419067
- ◆ Collecting a **back copy** from the u3a file in the library or in The Witham shop or at TCR Hub.

#### NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

**We are very grateful for all your contributions. Wherever possible, we will try as editors to include your work, and also urge you to be succinct. The more succinct you are the more photos, illustrations and interest articles and silliness we can include! Sincere apologies to anyone who feels they have been cut short or neglected.**

**Please limit submissions to 1 page or 400 words and 1 photo, and send them to the Forum Editor at:  
[forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk)**

## **MONTHLY MEETING AT THE WITHAM**

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

**Tickets are no longer required so please come along.**

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 MEETINGS**

**22 September** Richard Pears (Librarian at Durham University)

***Houses of the North***

**27 October** Tim Meacham **Where There's Muck....**

**24 November** Gary Fildes (Astronomer)

**1 December** **Xmas Bash**, The Coach House, Headlam Hall

### **Thursday 25 August Val Scully *A People's History of Gibside***

George 'Glory' Bowes erected his golden statue to British Liberty in 1757 at the height of his power and influence, the family's wealth having been built on coal. He collected fine art, bred the finest racehorses and brought world-famous musicians, architects and landscape designers to his estate.

Gibside, once one of the finest landscape gardens of the Georgian era, is a lasting testament to hard graft: the miners who gouged the coal out of the ground, the workmen who moved huge weights of earth, the carpenters, stonemasons, gardeners, servants, the skilled and the unskilled; and their families, generations of whom lived and worked on the estate. Its history is fragmented, the evidence scattered to the four winds because of the nature of the human story that governed its fate. Writer Val Scully, who leads Gibside Research Group, began an investigation into the gap in the records: to find out what happened between the death of John Bowes in 1885, and the coming of the National Trust almost a hundred years later: what followed is a story of detective work, family history, co-incidence and luck!

### **July's Talk: Charles Willis, Royal Portrait Painter**

#### **Report by Ian Reid**

Do you have any commemorative tins or mugs featuring images of royalty from the early to mid 1900s? If so the images are likely to have been taken from the paintings of Charles Willis who was an extremely successful commercial artist and illustrator at the time. Although he was an excellent artist he never received the recognition he deserved from the art establishment.

The speaker, Pete Norton, presented a biography of the artist taken from the book which he has co-edited with Roger Stanyon, who is Charles Willis' grandson.



Charles Willis came from a poor background and was awarded a £25 scholarship to attend the Nottingham School of Art where he studied and taught for 10 years. He graduated as a lithographer and started work with Barringer, Wallis and Manners, who made all kinds of decorative tins for companies and individuals. Charles was a brilliant artist, extremely accurate and who worked so quickly that if necessary he could complete a commission within a few days. By the age of 28, he was quite wealthy and owned a large house in Mansfield. Later, he began working with well known newspapers and magazines and moved to London.



Pete Norton displayed a range of Charles' work including a portrait of Edward VIII in full regalia as future King, which was never needed, together with portraits of other royals and important people of the day. Some of his finest portraits are of his family, including his wife Mabel and daughter Nita. There is a beautiful miniature (7cm x 6cm ) of Nita which was probably painted using a single hair. When painting royalty, Charles was usually allowed only a short face to face meeting of about 20 minutes. His work displays intricate details with great skill and amazing accuracy. He could sketch, use pen and ink, watercolours and oils. After WW2, he concentrated on '*Conversation Pieces*'. He continued to work until his death in 1963, when his wife, Mabel, packed his paintings into a wooden box, to be discovered later by Roger Stanyon.

His pictures are in demand today and appear regularly at auctions. Roger Stanyon said 'I am very proud of my grandfather and hope that our book on his life and achievements helps to secure him the recognition he deserves'.

The vote of thanks was given by Hazel Yeadon.

### **Weekend Workshops**

**3 September 10-12 *Blue Plaque Walk*** — a gentle amble round Barnard Castle's notable places. Led by Tim Meacham and Annie Clouston. Free. To book a place contact [annie@cloustons.uk](mailto:annie@cloustons.uk) 01833 637091

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**Weekend workshops continued from overleaf....**

**1 October 2-4 pm *Singing in Harmony*** led by Annette Lowson the Director of the Community Choir and Orchestra. At Guide HQ, Birch Road. Cost £5. Contact Hazel to book a place: Tel. 01833 638710;

[hazelyeadon@hotmail.com](mailto:hazelyeadon@hotmail.com)

**5 November 10-12am *Calligraphy*** led by Tony Craig. At Guide HQ Birch Road. Cost £6. Contact Hazel to book a place (details above)

**3 December 11-2pm *Vegetarian Cooking for Christmas*** led by Annie Clouston. We will prepare and eat alternatives to meat for festive food. Glass of wine included. Cost £10. To book a place contact Sue Overton 01833 908597 [sueoverton@hotmail.com](mailto:sueoverton@hotmail.com)

**Day Trip Organiser Jane Mathieson**

**Harrogate Autumn Flower Show.** I have organised a trip to Harrogate Autumn Flower Show which is at Newby Hall on Friday 16 September, leaving at 09:00. Price £20.50 plus coach fare £15.00; this includes all the gardens, show and ground floor displays of flowers in Newby Hall.

Could you let me know if you would like to go to this day trip as soon as possible, please. You can email me at [janem1947@hotmail.com](mailto:janem1947@hotmail.com) or phone me on 01388 710741.

**Theatre By The Lake: *The Borrowers* 10 December 2022**

To all who have booked this theatre trip, a payment of £36 per person is now required. Could you please make cheques out to Teesdale u3a and send to me, Diana Marks, at 5 Green Lane, Barnard Castle, DL12 8LE. Many thanks, Diana. More details about the trip are at:

<https://teesdaleu3a.org.uk/news/the-borrowers-theatre-by-the-lake-10-december-2022/>

**EDITOR'S NOTE: PAGE 31 Please see details of a special opportunity to hear a trio of classical superstars come together to present a wonderful evening of classical music at The Sage, Gateshead. **\*\*YOU MUST BOOK NOW.\*\*****

**Your u3a needs you!**

Your u3a needs you. Maintain your IT skills, learn something new for your benefit and that of Teesdale u3a.

We need someone to provide backup and support for Mike Sweeting who looks after the storage of our electronic records and the administration of the software packages we use.

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Full training will be provided and you will not have to do anything on your own until you are happy with the way it works.

**Get in touch with Mike at [websec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:websec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk) If you have any questions, please contact him on 07565 925412.**

### **Be A Guest Editor**

Would you like to try your hand at editing the Forum? As a Guest Editor, you will assist the Forum Editor to assemble a booklet online, making decisions about what to include, writing fill-in pieces, and preparing and organizing the printing of a hard copy.

**Please contact Annie and Celia if you are interested. Telephone numbers on page 3.**

**Email: [forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk)**

### **Pickleball, anyone?**

A u3a member has expressed an interest in having a pickleball group.

What is pickleball, I hear you say?

Pickleball is a fun sport that combines elements of badminton, tennis, and table tennis. Played both indoors or outdoors on a badminton-sized court and a waist-high, slightly modified tennis net, two or four players use solid paddles made of wood or composite materials to hit a perforated polymer ball, over a net. You can find out more about the game on this website:

[Pickleball England website.](#)

**Please contact Phil Johnson, Groups Co-ordinator, on 07792 959320 or email [groups@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@teesdaleu3a.org.uk)**



## **Group Reports**

### **Art Appreciation Report by Roger Stanyon**

#### **Call for new convenor**

I am trying to restart the Art Appreciation Group, which I ran for 12 years. I no longer want to run meetings, but I have lots of DVDs on art and artists which could be used. We also used to have two or three trips a year to galleries where there were interesting exhibitions. If you feel able to co-ordinate this group, for which I am happy to give advice, please contact me on 01833 631758 or [rogerwstanyon@gmail.com](mailto:rogerwstanyon@gmail.com) Roger Stanyon

#### **'Room to Read' Book Group Report by Kate Bailey**

July's book was a warm-hearted story of adoption and discovery by the Scottish Poet Laureate, Jackie Kay, called *Red Dust Road*. Before her son was born, Jackie Kay wanted to find her birth parents, searching with the blessing of her supportive adoptive mother.

The book begins with the 'red dust road' of Nigeria, where the author meets her fierce birth-father, Jonathan. She is alarmed by, but manages to sit through, his embarrassing 'born-again-Christian' theatrical ceremonies ... "he wants me to be cleansed of his own past sin". He feels no guilt for completely forgetting her birth-mother. When she meets her Nigerian cousins, they are much more welcoming and the colour and hot dry atmosphere of the places she visits are vividly described. However, in Africa, she feels neither white enough, nor black enough.

Similarly, she is nervous before the meeting with her evasive birth-mother, Elizabeth, who turns out to be an anxious Mormon church-goer. Their meetings are strange and upsetting, especially when Elizabeth's memory starts to fail. Jackie acknowledges with both laughter and tears that these two strangers would have made impossible parents. She feels blessed to have been adopted by the kind and generous couple who clearly made her feel loved and secure, despite some instances of childhood prejudice against her hair and skin tone. Questions of 'nature versus nurture' crop up frequently, but Jackie cannot imagine her life without her adoptive parents. When her mother hears the stories of the meetings with her birth parents, she says "thank goodness we rescued you".

The story jumps about to start with but the amusing narrative does make sense after a while. It moves backwards and forwards with Jackie Kay's memories as she builds a picture of her life, always with humour, always with love. It is beautifully written, with delightful poetic language such as "recouping lost memories, netting little bits in, they sparkle and please, tiny silver fishes ..."

The group really enjoyed this book and it led to a lively discussion about how society has changed since the 1950's, how families now are more



easily mixed and combined, and how evangelical fervour can triumph over intellect. We marked it 4.5 out of 5 for a book group book and just less than 5 for recommendations to friends.

### **Climate Solutions Discussion Group Report by Kate Bailey**

In the summer months, our group has been sharing experiences of making our own homes more energy efficient. The August visit to see the renewable energy systems installed by one of our members, who is now completely 'off-grid', was both impressive and informative.

At the other extreme, the heatwave in July demonstrated the value of efficient insulation, shading [by curtains, blinds and even damp towels] and natural ventilation from the north side of buildings.

Drier summers also mean that gardens and houseplants suffer. We know we are rapidly losing species of pollinating insects and wild birds, and hotter summers are making this worse. Bumblebees, for example, have furry coats which make them prone to overheating.

Planting trees and hedges, if you have the space, will provide shade and cooling (via the process of transpiration). Making a small 'paddling pool' in a shady space will allow wildlife to cool down in a heatwave, but make sure the sides are gently ramped so animals can get out of the water (a drowned frog is a sorry sight).

Garden solutions can include leaving feeders and shallow bowls of water in shady places for birds and mammals; soaking the soil around vulnerable plants and applying thick mulches of well-rotted leaf mould, manure or compost; burying pots of plants in the soil to keep root systems cool. The RHS suggests other practical ideas, see -

[www.mains2rains.uk](http://www.mains2rains.uk)

Indoor solutions, particularly for when you go away, are to close curtains and blinds, take houseplants off sunny window ledges, place flowering plants on wet matting in the bath or shower, put hanging baskets in washing-up bowls with water in the bottom. If there's no cool place to put plants, drape horticultural fleece over them for shading.

### **Gardening Group Report by Pauline Fawcett**

Our August visit was to two very different National Garden Scheme (NGS) gardens.

Firstly, we went to the garden at Coldcotes Moor Farm which is 15 acres of landscaped grounds and woods. The house was built in 2000 on the footprint of former farm buildings, incorporating some of the old bricks along with a new section linking the wings. The present owners came to the farm in 2010.

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The garden design featured a series of garden rooms which were linked with strategically placed vistas taking you from one garden room to another with views outwards to the lake and fields. The whole garden was wonderful with many benches and pergolas inviting you to sit and take in the views, plus many ornaments and features tastefully arranged around the garden. I should not forget the lovely tea, coffee, and cakes we were offered.

We then moved on to Dobbies Garden Centre where members enjoyed lunch and some shopping, and then on to the Beacon.

The Beacon is a cottage garden on a steep slope and a real contrast to Coldcotes not least because Patricia Hodgson, the owner, greeted us wearing a pair of 'Dumbo' type ears and a saw across the top of her head saying in a strong Glaswegian accent that "she had a bit of a headache but was all ears." What else can I say - we had lots of laughs even though we had to shelter in the summer house and gazebo from a very heavy rain shower. It was amazing what Patricia and husband, Derek, had done with the garden which was not much more than a field covered with brambles when they moved in 25 years ago.

**2<sup>nd</sup> September:** Breezy Knees Garden, described by Monty Don as "a modern garden created on the grandest scales; an extraordinary achievement and beautiful, with café."

This coach is fully booked but, as we know, sometimes members must drop out at short notice. Contact Pauline if you are still interested.

#### **Indoor Meetings in Stainton Village Hall**

**7<sup>th</sup> October.** Jill Cunningham will talk about Bugs and Beasties.

**4<sup>th</sup> November.** Dianne Huntley to give her talk, *Herbal Teas and Edible Flowers*, which will include samples; no tea and biscuit that day.

**2<sup>nd</sup> December.** TBC

**Good news:** 2 or 3 members have offered to take over the running of the group – more information to follow.

#### **Genealogy Report by Alan Swindale**

Sixteen members of the joint Teesdale and Bishop Auckland Genealogy Group met in person at Enterprise House. The topic was *Using the Census*.

In 1798, Thomas Malthus predicted that the population would grow exponentially, resulting in famine or war, which would reduce the population.

The government at the time decided that some population facts were needed and passed the Census Act 1800 which initiated the 10 yearly census from 1801. The first four censuses were purely numbers, not names, but the censuses that family historians have come to love started in 1841 and have now been published up to 1921.

By finding an ancestor in the 1911 census, for example, it should be possible to find that ancestor in a census just after their birth and thus identify their parents and those parents' birth years and birth places. Repeating the process will take the researcher back to 1841 in two or three generations. The gaps can then be filled in to give a broader picture of the family, their occupations and where they lived.

Many occupations recur frequently – Ag. Lab. or F.S., the latter standing for female domestic servant – but others reward further research. A Sagar Maker's Bottom Knocker made a star showing on *What's My Line* many years ago.

The order of entries in the census reflects the enumerator's progress round his district and tracing this on a map can locate where an ancestor lived even if addresses have subsequently changed.

In September the topic will be *Civil Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths*. The meeting will be in person at 2pm on 1<sup>st</sup> September in the Dales Room at Enterprise House on the Harmire Estate in Barnard Castle. A one hour tutorial will be followed by a one hour practical session.

In October, our meeting room is not available on Thursday so the meeting will be on 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday but will revert to Thursday for November and December. Alan Swindale [ajs@fivenine.co.uk](mailto:ajs@fivenine.co.uk) 01388 488348.

### **Geology Group Report of Teesdale Field Trip on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

Eleven members took part in an excellent field trip in Upper Teesdale, expertly led as usual by Trevor Morse. This was the fourth and final field trip of the summer.

The trip started at Hanging Shaw layby where there is a magnificent view across the Tees to Cronkley Scar with dramatic exposures of the Whin Sill. We then visited a disused roadstone Whin Sill quarry nearby and looked at some samples of the rock (dolerite) and were surprised at the size of the crystals in one specimen – the Whin Pegmatite.

After a brief stop at Ettersgill, we parked at Bowlees Visitor Centre and walked above Bowlees Beck to the confluence of two becks where the Cleveland Dyke intrusion can be clearly seen. This dyke is much younger by some 250 million years than the carboniferous rocks that it intruded!

This field trip once again showed how fortunate we are to live in an area with such varied and accessible geology on our doorstep. Thanks to Trevor for such an interesting morning.

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After our August break, the first autumn meeting of the group takes place at The Witham on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> Sept at 10 am. All are welcome to join us.

### **Geology Group September 2022 to February 2023 Programme**

We will meet at The Witham on the last Monday of the month until November. From December to February, we will be meeting virtually on Zoom twice a month.

#### **The dates are as follows:**

Monday at **The Witham** 10.00 to 12.00 – 26/09; 24/10; 28/11

Monday - General Meeting - **ZOOM** 10.30 to 11.30 am – 19/12; 23/01/2023; 27/02/2023

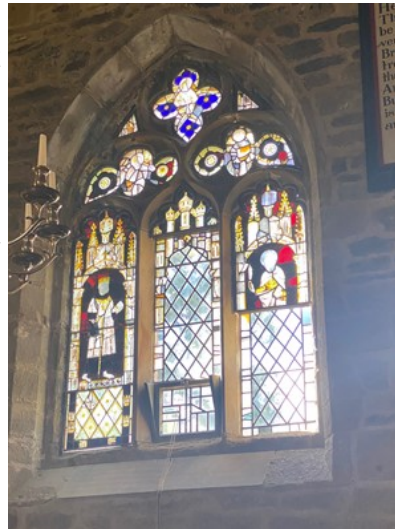
09/01 - Monday - General Meeting - **ZOOM** 2.30 to 3.30 pm – 9/01/2023; 13/02/2023

After that, meetings and field trips will be held face to face between March and July inclusive on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month.

### **Historical Environment Group July Report by Tim Meacham**

Thanks to member Ruth Stables' suggestion, 13 of us were lucky enough to enjoy a visit to St Mary's Church, Wycliffe this month (apologies to the two members who did not find the church in time). Here, Churchwarden Keith Miller welcomed us with unexpected refreshments after aiding with the quite tricky parking situation in the narrow village streets. For 14 years Keith has held his position, all the while assimilating vast amounts of knowledge which he imparted to us in a clear and well-presented way.

The present church dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, although written evidence suggests it is on the site of an earlier building. While the stained glass windows at each end, and the beautiful ceiling, date from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many much earlier features remain: upon entering the building at the west end a 7<sup>th</sup> century cross is displayed; an 11<sup>th</sup> century font, probably the very one where John Wycliffe was christened, remains next to the main altar (itself a rare stone survival from the 13<sup>th</sup> century); the tomb of an early rector who died in 1456 remains in the chancel; the side windows, partly destroyed in the Reformation, retain some 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century stained glass. By contrast, several of the choir stalls and pews retain their mouse carvings which date them to 1949, the work of Robert Thompson (the 'Mouse Man').



Keith took us through the life of Wycliffe's most celebrated native, the reformer (and 'heretic' according to 14<sup>th</sup> century church leaders and his own family), John Wycliffe. "Not an easy man", as Keith admitted, Wycliffe spoke out about what he saw as the corruption of the Church (the use of religion to sell pardons, preaching in Latin and the acceptance of transubstantiation,



for example) and was so reviled by the establishment that after his death, his body was dug up and burnt, with his ashes hurled into the river. History has been kinder to John, although Keith lamented a recent loss of knowledge in Britain concerning the man who set in motion the translation of the Bible into English. There was some discussion as to whether John actually took part in the translation and, if so, how much is his work.

Before concluding with a walk round the church, during which he answered many further questions, Keith spoke with great passion about his disappointment that so many of the fine Churches of England remain, but unloved and little-used. The group agreed with Keith's sentiments, but applauded (literally as well as metaphorically) his refusal to let such a fate befall Wycliffe, which he sees remains open to the public on a daily basis. Anyone who has not yet visited the church may do so in the assurance that they will be made welcome and find much to enjoy and contemplate.

There will be no meeting in August but we resume at 10.00 on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September with a village walk round Eggleston, to be led by Nicky Grace. Thank you Nicky, and full details will follow to Group Members. If you wish to be included among these, please contact Tim Meacham on [simontimothymeacham@gmail.com](mailto:simontimothymeacham@gmail.com) or by phone on 07847 182554.

### **iPad & iPhone Group July Report by Mike Sweeting**

We met again after a break of two months. The first topic was a demonstration of how to check the Diary, Contacts, etc while on a phone call and to be able to go back to the phone screen afterwards. This proved easiest if the phone was set to speaker mode while on the call so that it could be heard while being held away from the ear.

The main part of the session was taken up with the intricacies of the use of the camera(s) built into the iPhone and iPad. The degree of sophistication increased significantly as new versions of both devices were released. The latest devices have several cameras of different focal lengths and even LIDAR to aid focussing. There was much to learn and the importance of

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'playing' with the various settings and seeing what works best in different scenarios was stressed.

The next meeting will be at 2:00pm on 26<sup>th</sup> August in the Witham Room in The Witham.

### **Lunch Group July Report by Jane Mathieson**

The lunch group this month returned to The Fox Hole at Piercebridge. Once again, we enjoyed delicious food appreciated by all. Although we had to decide between bees and an open door, or air conditioning with closed doors, the experience was good. We can recommend this venue for either a full lunch or a lite bite of sandwiches, e.g. a posh fish finger sandwich.

Next meetings: 17<sup>th</sup> August TBC; 21<sup>st</sup> September TBC

All new members are welcome.

### **Needlecraft Group Report by Glen Howard**

We had a good time working on our various projects (crochet, patchwork, embroidery and knitting) whilst we caught up with each other's news. We had all been very pleased with the result of the women's football final the previous day. As usual, we chatted about many things including holidays past and present, and the memories they have made - riding in a gondola, drinking coffee in St Mark's Square, watching orcas and dolphins. We were also happy to see that the house martins had nested under the venue's roof and were busy feeding young.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September. Please get in touch with me if you would like to join us.

Glen Howard 01833 631639

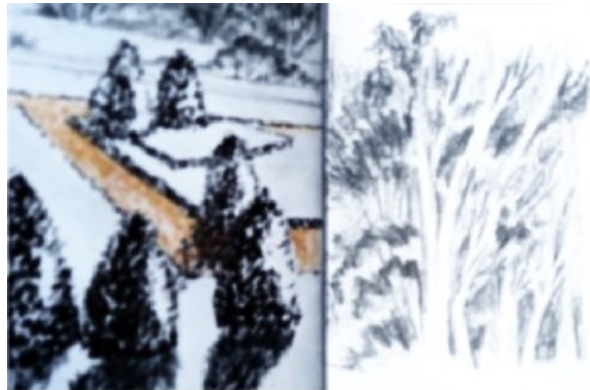
### **Painting Group Report by Martin Page**

If I may plagiarise Robert Browning – 'Oh to be in England now that Summer's here' – and oh, what a lovely day was had by all. That warm sun certainly made for a great day's sketching at the Bowes Museum. Today's tutorial was more about taking off rather than putting on.

We first learnt in water colour to start light and get darker, but for today's sketching, Anne's suggested technique was that we start with the mid tones in Soft Pencil (say 6B ) blotting out the majority of the page. Then taking off the lighter shades with an erasure followed by enhancing the shadows with darker highlights.

As you can see on the following page, the effect can be quite impressive.

It was nice to see two new members joining us to day.



Welcome to Gillian and Katherine. We trust that today's challenge was enough to tempt you back for the next . If you think you're up for a challenge, give Val a call and join us for the next summer instalment.

### **Philosophy Group Report by Jen Lee and James Dykes Philosophising in July**

Despite the heat of the previous week, which we thought may have addled our brains, we attempted our second face-to-face philosophy session at Enterprise House. Eight people attended, all enthusiastically contributing.

The subject addressed was the topical problem of political philosophy, led by Wallace, Jen and James. We opened with a whistle-stop tour through the history of political philosophy, starting, of course, with the Athenians. They, we realised, had some sound ideas, not least being Ostracism - if a certain number of fellow Democrats disapproved, one could be sent into exile for 10 years. How useful would that be at the present time?

However, this "Direct Democracy", where everyone could vote, was not what it seemed, for "everyone" meant just adult free males; no women, no slaves, no resident aliens. This actually meant votes for about 20% of the population who had plenty of time to philosophise, since their women and their slaves rushed around doing the dishes and polishing their swords.

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We whizzed through the Romans, the Scandinavian 8<sup>th</sup> century "Thing", the Italian Mediaeval Commune and the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century French parliament before spending a little more time on the development of English democracy, now considered one of the longest lasting systems to have existed.

Next we tried (fruitlessly) to define democracy, so started to explore four of the better known types of the system. We looked at the First Past the Post method which has the advantages of easy counting, and of clear links between voter and winner, but disadvantages including a certain unfairness in that the national winners seldom have the majority of the popular vote and that strong parties are rewarded disproportionately.

We then went on to look at the Single Transferable Vote which, although being more complex, can increase the power of minority parties whether for good or ill. We also discovered, to some surprise, that our third type of democracy, Federalism, a compound mode of government, included such disparate countries as the USA, India, Canada and even Russia. It could, however, be claimed to be more transparent and responsive to local wishes.



The lively debate meant that often the presenters could not get a word in edgeways! Next month we will re-cap progress, and then look at different types of referenda before discussing more general questions on democracy. We very much welcome new members, either contact Ruth (01325 401850) or just come along to Enterprise House on Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> August at 2pm (please note the changed time). In September, we meet on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> at 10am at Enterprise House. All welcome.

**Photography Group July Report by Jim Coleman**

On Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July, a small band of happy snappers met up at the Bowlees Visitor Centre for the obligatory cup of coffee, before going on to take several photos of the nearby Summerhill Force and Gibson's Cave. The lack of rainfall in the preceding days meant the waterfall was not as full as it might have been, but it is always a picturesque spot. From a photographic perspective, we found the light rather challenging, from the dark recesses of the rocks beside the fall, to the bright light at the top in full sunshine. Anyway, we clicked away, experimented with various settings, compared ideas and generally just enjoyed trying different things. Having exhausted the possibilities – or, more accurately, reached the limits of our imagination



and/or patience – we moved on to Low Force. Here the focus (both photographically and metaphorically) was Wynch Bridge, with a view to capturing images for the group's planned 2023 calendar depicting bridges of Teesdale.

Look out for the calendar going on sale in the autumn, just in time for you to buy as Christmas presents! After clambering about the rocks looking for the most advantageous views, we again repaired to the Visitor Centre for refreshments and chat. Whatever camera you use, if you like photography, do come along and try the group. If, like me, you're a relative beginner, then there are others willing to share their knowledge. On the

other hand, if you've been interested since the days of the Box Brownie, then we would love to benefit from your experience.

#### **August Photography Group Report by Jane Mathieson**

Seven of us met to discuss which photos we were going to use for the 2023 Calendar, *Bridges of Teesdale*, out of over 100 the group members had sent in. We reduced the number to 13, some known and some you may not know exist with some interesting history. Alan will put the calendar together and send off for printing. We were made very welcome at Alan's house with tea, coffee & cakes; Alan makes a good tea loaf.

The calendar will be on sale for £6.00, at September, October and November monthly meetings. We hope you will all buy a copy.

#### **Forthcoming Meetings**

6<sup>th</sup> September, County Room, The Witham, 10am. Meeting/Workshop, looking at your photos taken over the last few months and editing.

4<sup>th</sup> October Thorpe Perrow, if the trees have their autumn colour.

New members always welcome.

#### **Poetry Group July Report by Annie Clouston**

Our theme was 21<sup>st</sup> century poetry; it was very refreshing to consider the inspirational work of contemporary writers. The bias was inevitably towards more well-known poets, and this prompts me to think that a future theme should be looking at the next generation of poets.

Seamus Heaney's *Follower* was our opening poem, and it is a pastoral

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homage to his father, a poem possibly less well known than his extraordinarily poignant *Digging*. Less well known than Heaney is Owen Sheers – a mere youngster aged 48. His 2005 poem, also about a tender father-son relationship, *The Hill Fort (Y Gaer)*, evokes the depth of tradition and glory in the landscape of Wales.

An Anglo-Ghanaian poet, previously unknown to us, Caleb Azumeh Nelson (29 years old) wrote a poem that had echoes for me of Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise*. *I'm Strong* is a poem that in my view creaks with desperation to break out of the limits that racism has imposed on his self-esteem.

Having read Jacky Kay's autobiography *Red Dust Road* for book group, I was keen to read her poetry, so my choices were *Divorce*, a bleakly ironic rant against perceived poor parenting, and *Between the Dee and the Don*, a highly personalised and lyrical poem about the intersectionality of her being:

I was born between the Dee and the Don.

I was born in the city of crag and stone.

I am not a daughter to one father.

I am not a sister to one brother.

I am light and dark.

I am father and mother.

Born in Aberdeen to a young Scottish mother who was abandoned by the Nigerian father, with an adopted brother, and three half-siblings, Jacky is gay, and mother to a son. For ten years, Jacky was Macca, the Scottish Poet Laureate, and is also a novelist of acclaim.

Carol Ann Duffy (incidentally a former lover of Jacky Kay) wrote *Text* in 2005, and bemoans that very activity that sends messages that frustrate: "The codes we send/ arrive with a broken chord" and to which we accord a significance that depletes or raises hope, unreasonably in each case. Our final poem was by Robin Beth Schaer – *Holdfast*. It is a work about the power of touch and the sadness of lost opportunities:

...In a study on love,

baby monkeys were given a choice

between a wire mother with milk

& a wool mother with none. Like them,

I would choose to starve & hold the soft body.

In a change to the published programme, our next meeting will be with Meg Peacocke giving readings of some of her poems. Scottish poetry will be the theme of our September meeting.

As always, if you would like our poetry file, please email me:

[annie@cloustons.uk](mailto:annie@cloustons.uk)



## **Science and Technology 11<sup>th</sup> July Group Report by Karen Tranter**

### **Whose face is it? – Ins and outs of facial recognition**

Facial recognition technology has been around for several decades, but it is only in the last 20 years that it has become easily affordable and practical, with an explosion in its use and, consequently, the expression of many concerns. This talk by Roy Tranter explained the basics of the technology, looked at the concerns, and considered possible solutions.

Facial recognition can be of two broad types:

One-to-one recognition: there is a single known face and an unknown face is compared with it to see if it is the same. A widespread use is facial recognition to log in to your phone or an account.

One-to-many recognition: there is a single unknown face to be identified by comparison with a library of known faces. Crowd surveillance monitoring is a major application.

There are many common features in the technologies of the two types, but the one-to-many is much more complex to implement.

There are four principal steps in facial recognition:

Locate a face in an image. This allows much of the background 'noise' in the image to be discarded and the software to focus on only a face. An image might also contain several faces and each of these can also be located and isolated from the background.

Pre-process the image. Adjust the face image to match the library specification in pixel count, lighting, orientation, etc.

Extract the facial features. Measure sizes/positions of eyes, nose, mouth, head shape, etc. One common method uses 68 measurements, all done automatically by software. Other methods do not use explicit measurements but create sets of 'face patterns' which can be combined in different amounts to create any face.

Facial recognition. This final stage is the comparison of the unknown with the library to get an identification. In practice it is intimately linked with feature extraction and they are not done separately.

Roy gave examples of each stage and emphasised that, as facial recognition is a statistical technique with many variables, it can never be 100% accurate. Concerns over e.g. bias against a particular group, are essentially solvable - make sure a library of faces is actually relevant in size and content! However, concerns over, e.g. crowd surveillance, are not facial recognition problems. They are social and ethics questions that society has to pronounce on and resolve.

The group is having a break in August.

The next meeting is on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Scrabble Group Report by Lillian Smith**

Our scrabble meeting was cancelled this month, as everyone was on holiday or had other commitments.

The next meeting will be at Lillian's home on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September at 2pm.

If you are interested in joining our group, please contact me on 01833 650628. Lillian Smith.

### **Spanish Conversation July Report by Lusía McAnna**

Six of us met indoors due to the extreme heat to discuss our favourite drinks while drinking iced water and eating delicious home-made blueberry muffins. We discovered that Barnard Castle used to be famous for making drugget - a coarse woollen woven, or felted material, used for floor coverings and we were sad at the lack of a vegetarian restaurant in Barney, after having the delightful Proctor's café here many years ago.

Acai berry smoothies were one person's favourite drink, which is a Brazilian 'superfruit' that is now gaining global fame, although difficult to source locally.

It depended on the time of day and situation according to another: coffee with breakfast, tea at the crack of dawn, tap water at lunch, gin and tonic as an aperitif, white wine with dinner; and late evening, if still hungry, porridge or cereal with very cold milk.

Another liked to drink 'café nube' which is hot milk with a small amount of coffee or the thirst quenching 'tinto de Verano', a red wine diluted with soda or lemonade.

One wag stole the words of the song - "I like a nice cup of tea in the morning, For to start the day you see, And at half past eleven, Well my idea of heaven, Is a nice cup of tea. I like a nice cup of tea with me dinner, And a nice cup of tea with me tea, And when it's time for bed, As I think I may have said, I'd like a nice cup of tea."

Milk was another's favourite drink. It doesn't make you garrulous or tipsy or maudlin. It quenches your thirst and is good for you and he loves desserts made with it like semolina and flans. It is versatile and used to make butter and cheese. Ice cold butter on new potatoes is a culinary feast. And then there is yoghurt and kefir now almost superfoods. Since 1942 there has been a government study of milk versus non-milk drinkers, which says benefits for milk drinkers include less cancer, less hospitalisations, less health issues and you live longer. But you have to start drinking it at an early age to benefit from longevity!

Tap water, prosecco or gin and tonic were another's drinks of choice, depending on the mood and occasion.

Our August topic is *Do you like doing crossword puzzles and jigsaws?*

### Table Tennis Group Report by Peter Singer



Although we mainly play table tennis for fun, we do try to improve our game and polish up at least the basic skills. Having mastered the 'ready position', or at least attempted some version of it depending on our various limitations, the focus moves to the 'grip'. Not surprisingly, this is how to hold the racket or bat. Most people use the 'western' or 'shake hands' grip, which comes fairly naturally and involves holding the racket in the palm of the hand, fitting snugly into the 'V' between the thumb and forefinger. The forefinger should be roughly parallel with the straight edge of the rubber at the base of the racket head on one side and the thumb roughly parallel with the straight edge of the rubber on the other side. And away you go! Some of us experimented briefly with the 'penhold' grip used mainly by Chinese, Japanese and Korean players, but this feels more awkward and a backhand shot requires contortions that might well have ended up with a hospital admission. The grip is important, as it determines the angle of the racket and, therefore, the height, depth, speed and direction of the ball and the type and amount of spin.

We have been enjoying watching some of the table tennis matches at the Commonwealth Games, all of which are played on a different planet from the one on which we play. Whilst this may sometimes be a little dispiriting, it can also be exciting and instructive, especially the slow motion replays when you can actually see where the ball is going. We have learnt about the banana backhand flip, which apparently has crept into the game over the last few years (who knew a banana could creep?), as well as pendulum and tomahawk serves, but what on earth all that signalling under the table is about, we have no idea. Table tennis is often thought to be for younger players, but one of the Singapore women players was 49 years old and one of the India men was 40 years old, so our average age of 250+ years for a doubles match may turn out to be an advantage.

For the record, in the women's team event, Wales beat England 3-0 and nearly beat Malaysia in the semi-final, but lost to Australia in the bronze-medal match. The gold was won by Singapore, who beat Malaysia. Interestingly, Malaysia fielded a 'defensive' player, which is rarely seen these days. This involved endlessly and very skilfully returning everything from all angles, without playing any attacking shots, which could become a little boring and, in the end, proved unsuccessful. In the men's team event, England beat Nigeria to win bronze and India beat Singapore for the gold. One interesting aspect was the use by the coaches of the one-minute time-out each team is allowed per match, usually taken to change a losing momentum or allow their player to re-focus and hopefully go on to win (it didn't always work!).

If you would like to join our group to learn the game, improve your skills or just have a bit of fun, please contact Peter Singer. **Continued overleaf....**

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Peter Singer ([pandjsinger@btinternet.com](mailto:pandjsinger@btinternet.com) 07508 663998). All are welcome, whether you have never played before, have not played for some time or are in the England team (well, maybe not the right place for you).

### **Travel/Day Trips Report by Jane Mathieson: Snowdonia Holiday**

21 of us had a lovely holiday in the Snowdonia area, staying at Llanberis. We stopped off at Chester on the way, taking in the architecture of the buildings and looking round the cathedral.

The Royal Victoria Hotel was in a pleasant position overlooking the lake, Llyn Padarn, with the ruins of Dolbadarn Castle in the grounds, built before 1230 by Llywelyn the Great. 4 of the group stayed nearby at the Lake View Hotel, as there were not enough single rooms, but joined the rest of us for dinner.

"I really enjoyed our holiday. I particularly liked the flexibility which addressed everyone's requests. Those of us in the Lake View Hotel received excellent personal service; Amy and James could not do enough for us". Jackie Bateman.

We went to Llandudno via Betws-y-Coed, where we had the Cadwalader's ice cream, informed by one of our group to be the best ice cream. A few of us went up the Great Orme in Llandudno on the Victorian tramway; started in 1902, the only funicular on public roads in Britain, which was an interesting journey. We spent all the holiday trying to spot Snowden; most of the mountains were topped with cloud.

Next day, we went on the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland railway from Porthmadog to Blaenau, the oldest independent railway started in 1832. We walked around Portmeirion, built by Sir Cough Williams-Ellis, opened 1926, to show an Italianate village. Some of the group walked down to the sea and we recognised The Round House where *The Prisoner* was filmed.

The next day we went to Anglesey for a Puffin Cruise. We stopped off at the National Slate Museum, showing the 19<sup>th</sup> century workshops for the now disused Dinorwig Slate Quarry: giant waterwheel, largest in mainland Britain, and re-erected houses showing key dates in the slate industry history. We saw many puffins, cormorants, guillemots, razorbills, shags, kittiwakes and Atlantic grey seals. Most of us decided we liked the locally made Red Boat ice cream, my favourite being Eton Mess and Bakewell tart.

We visited Bodnant Gardens on the way home.

David Yeadon: "One thing that struck me, on our most enjoyable trip, when chatting to young Welsh people, is the fact that they all speak Welsh, and it is their first language. Spoken from the word go in primary schools - English becomes the first language once they are in Secondary school. They take to the conversion like ducks to water, although one girl said that when chatting

to her sister, it could often be a mix of English and Welsh!

Hazel Yeadon: "It was our first u3a holiday - mainly fine weather, perfect destination, good tour leader(s), safe driver, comfortable hotel, stunning scenery, historic Chester, old-fashioned Llandudno, scenic Ffestiniog railway, surreal Portmeirion, quaint Anglesey, Puffin Island's seabirds and seals, magnificent Bodnant Gardens - loved it all and it won't be our last u3a holiday!"

### **Shorter Walks Group 25 July Report by Ian Royston**

A small group met at Hollymoor car park to start our 3.4 mile circular walk around Cockfield Fell. Cockfield Fell is England's largest scheduled ancient monument – almost 350 hectares in size. The fell has a rich historic past, which includes Pre-Roman settlements and industrial evidence that dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1869 the fell became a regulated pasture, managed by the Fell Reeves. This gives local stockholders the right to graze their animals on the land after paying a small yearly rent. The whole area is strewn with earth workings, evidence of the fell's coal mining history. Mining first started on the fell in the 14th century. This was possible due to coal seams being very near to the surface in this part of west Durham.

We passed over a stile onto the Fell and after admiring a magnificent sunlit view stretching from Woodland to Toft Hill, negotiated gorse bushes and the remains of disused deep bell pits to find the route of the NER's 1863 Bishop Auckland – Barnard Castle railway and Cockfield station. Continuing steeply and sideways downhill we found the floor of the Gaunless Valley at The Slack and the remains of another railway; this time the 1830 Haggerleases extension of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. This we followed downstream crossing an early example of a skew arch bridge and spotted some ancient 'beehive' coke ovens in the foliage. The old route, closed when mines ceased in the late 1960's is reverting to nature and its industrial origins are now harder to find.

More obvious are the remains of the 1862 Lands or Gaunless viaduct, a once impressive 4-span structure, engineered by Sir Thomas Bouch who later went on to design the ill-fated Tay Bridge as well as the Tees Viaduct in Barnard Castle and most other structures on the long-closed line across Stainmore. Not far east of the last remaining pier of the bridge we crossed the Gaunless to climb back onto the Fell, parallel to the old Gordon House Colliery tramway, emerging at Fell Houses and soon afterwards finding ourselves in a downpour.

With waterproofs donned we recommenced our very wet westerly walk on the most exposed part of the fell, across the top of the infilled former Whinstone quarry, known as Cleveland Dyke. At the remains of a now disused flare stack, we turned left up the track of an old tramway to find

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numerous pigeon lofts, some pea hens and suddenly gained a following of very animated hens which we imagined thought we had food for them. By now the rain had stopped and we could see a splendid collection of sheds on the skyline which marked the boundary of Cockfield village. Looking back east we could see the storm clouds which had drenched us now over Bishop Auckland whilst we were once more bathed in sunshine and quickly drying off!

Yet more sheep, cows, horses, hens and a cockerel strayed onto our path back to the main road and the car park.

#### **4-6 Mile Walking Group 12<sup>th</sup> July Report by Gillian Barnes**

There was a good turn out of 16 folk for our 6 mile circular Cotherstone to Eggleston walk, setting off from Cotherstone. The walk, led by Robert Alabaster, would take us along two loops of the Teesdale Way via Romaldkirk and Eggleston Bridge (approximately 5  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles.) The weather forecast was fine with a comfortable 21degC; there were only one or two spots of rain—perfect walking weather.

Leaving The Hagg at 10am, we crossed one footbridge to access the Tees and walked up stream along the near bank, crossed Wilden Beck and passed by Woden Croft and by an abandoned farm at Low Garth before accessing Romaldkirk by a walled Lane.

Elizabeth had kindly invited us for refreshments at her home overlooking The Green; we had our coffee break sitting in her beautiful and immaculate garden.



Suitably refreshed, we continued upstream to cross over Eggleston Bridge and then made our way downstream to the Jubilee Steps which led us up through woods and on to East Barnley Farm. We passed through one field before James had a quiet word with some loitering, but amiable, cows to secure our safe passage through to the next field where we stopped for our lunch with fine views across the Dale.

On the next section of our walk we passed by the viewpoint Percy Mire next to Shipley Wood. Gillian told tales of a hapless horse and his rider who would, no doubt, have enjoyed fine views as they fell to their deaths from this very spot. We descended through the woods and passed through a caravan park before passing over two footbridges leading back to the The Hagg at 1:50pm.

### **9<sup>th</sup> August walk (report by Carol Oliver):**

A group of 12 walkers assembled at Baldershead Reservoir on a glorious sunny day. We set off to walk across the dam wall then started the uphill climb past Water Knott, the former Leeds Grammar School outdoor centre, but now a private home. We followed a track until it levelled out and Shacklesborough, a flat topped hill came into view. We continued on the track rising steadily up across Galloway Rigg to reach a sheep fold and small barn. On reaching the foot of the steep rocky slopes of Shacklesborough, we made our way up to the flat summit to the trig point. From here we enjoyed the stunning views across the hills of the Yorkshire Dales, North Pennines, Lakeland Mountains and the North Yorkshire Moors. We then dropped steeply from the top, crossing several small



streams to reach the shallow valley of Bleagill Hearne. We headed along a grassy path with the upper reaches of Baldershead Reservoir in the distance to follow a wall which turned sharp right to pass a circular sheep fold. Continuing across the moorland covered in flowering heather, we crossed two streams eventually reaching Water Knott to retrace our steps back to the car park.

### **7-9 Mile Walking Group July Report by Nicky Grace**

There were 11 of us starting out from Bowes Village on a 9 mile walk led by Kathleen Howcroft. Thankfully, the very hot weather of the previous two days had changed to pleasant walking weather. The first stage of our walk was to God's Bridge on a route familiar to several of us. We stopped for coffee by the bridge where there was only a trickle in the stream. We then headed south from the bridge picking up the Pennine Way to Trough heads. From there we continued up the hidden valley of Sleightholme Beck. We stopped at the Intake bridge for lunch and a photo opportunity.

We then returned along a track on the edge of Gilmonby Moor – only to find several exploring tourists/delivery vans and tractors sharing our road. We were pleased to turn down across fields to join the road into Gilmonby. From there it was a short uphill stretch to our cars. It was a lovely walk accompanied by oystercatchers and curlew. Thanks to Kathleen for leading the walk.

On 17<sup>th</sup> August, Peter will be lead us on a walk on Barningham Moor - please contact Nicky Grace on [nickygrace729@gmail.com](mailto:nickygrace729@gmail.com) by 9<sup>th</sup> August if you would like to come along. The walk on 21<sup>st</sup> September will be led by Nicky and will take us up Goldsborough and round the reservoirs.

### **Fell Walking Group Report by Phil Clarke**

Eight members met in the idyllic award-winning village of Blanchlands, Northumberland, for just under a 10 mile walk. We left the car park, followed the Blanchland Geotrail out of the village, past Shildon which was once a bustling lead mining village of 150 people, now only a couple of cottages. We stopped and looked at the old Shildon Engine House and continued up to Pennypie House. The name is thought to have originated at a time when pies were sold to passing drovers and lead miners. We had no luck! The route now took us steeply down in the valley of the River Derwent. That only meant one thing: we had to climb UP to get onto the fell, our main objective. We walked past the interesting Newbiggin Hall and up for a mile or so to get up to the moor. On top of the moor at a bothy, we met a Carriers Way (this route has apparently been used since pre-historic times) and had amazingly clear views out towards Hexham and the Cheviots plus a close-up of the beautiful heather. After a few miles on the grassy moor, we followed a wider, stonier path back down into the village where refreshments were taken at the Lord Crewe Arms.

### **Wild Flower Group July Report by Kate Keen**

Ten of us met at Widdybank Gate on 27<sup>th</sup> July. We were thrilled to see down by the beck a few Grass of Parnassus, a most beautiful white flower with green-veined petals. Other delights were sneezewort, lousewort, several fragrant orchids (very fragrant!), rock rose, mountain pansy, yellow musk (aka monkey flower), great burnet and several zigzag clovers.

Our total, counted up over welcome refreshments at Bowlees Visitor Centre, was 63 – a record our leader told us. I am always amazed at the number of different flowers we see even as late in the season as this. However, it is not the numbers that count but the enjoyment we all had just wandering slowly along spotting the flowers and trying to identify them. We only walked down the road and track to the farm by the ford and back along the road – but it was all a delight. Ruth Stables

The planned walk for Smardale Gill, rescheduled for August due to the leader having Covid, is now postponed due to hot weather.

The next group walk:

Tuesday 23 August Bowlees Visitor Centre. For more details contact Kate Keen

### **Wine Group August Report by Tim Meacham**

No champagne but we thoroughly enjoyed our annual summer tasting of six sparkling wines. Thanks as always to Stella and John for providing the perfect setting with the trees keeping the worst of the heat off us!

We started with our only Prosecco, Lidl's Valdobbiadene Prosecco

Superiore 2021 (11%; £5.99). As so often with Lidl, this light, fruity and floral wine belied its low price with several members voting this the pick of the bunch. This DOCG Prosecco originates from the steep hills north of Venice and went well with the cheeses and meats on offer. Our second offering, again from Lidl, was their Pinot Chardonnay 2020 (11%; £4.99) which again brought cries of surprise when I revealed the price. I had been unable to find any information about this wine, even on Lidl's website, but again it was crisp and refreshing, perhaps with a shorter finish than the Prosecco, but still great value for a hot summer's day. Then we tried a similar style of wine from Sainsburys, their Pignoletto (11%; £6.75 down from £9.75), one of their 'Taste the Difference' range. An online reviewer used one word ('okay') in his review and that summed it up for most of the group. Particularly at its normal price, this would have been a disappointment after the cheaper wines. For our final white we returned to Lidl and their French Cremant De Loire (12%; £8.49) which did not disappoint. As in previous years the Cremant style with its bubbly zest proved the perfect aperitif. Somehow there seemed more richness and body here than in any other of the wines.

We then moved away from the traditional white wines, tasting a quite unusual Argentinian Morador Malbec Rose (13%; £10.00) from Sainsbury's. This produced mixed reactions but a number of members agreed with the producer's claim that it exhibited a 'fresh and fruity character,' although again the price tag did not find favour after the Lidl bargain finds. We finished with an unusual sparkling red wine, again from Sainsbury's: the McGuigan Black Label Shiraz (12.5%; £7.50) from Australia lived up to its reputation ('think spiced plum, blackcurrant and chocolate') and was by some way our favourite of the Sainsbury's trio. Well worth picking up if Sainsbury's still have it in stock.

There will be no meeting in August but for the second year running we are planning a vineyard visit in September. This will be to one of the award-winning local York vineyards (yes, they do exist!). To receive further details, non-members may contact Tim Meacham on the email address on page 13.

### **Two people, two motorcycles, 3,500 miles to Norway and back by Mike Sweeting**

Travel to Norway by motorcycle requires a ferry from Hull to Amsterdam and, after another 600 miles to Hirtshals in Denmark, another ferry across the Skagerrak to Norway. This takes about three days.

Once there, it is worth it. On this occasion, the first destination was Stavanger, the hub of the Norwegian gas and oil industry. It is a bustling and attractive town, and the Norwegian Petroleum Museum is well worth a visit.

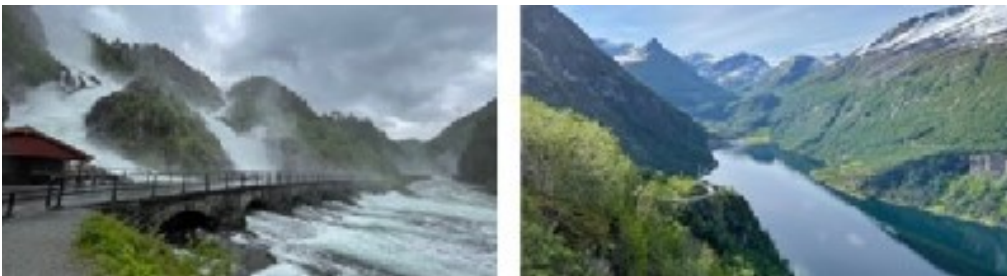
Moving on, it is almost impossible to go any distance without using a ferry. It is not unusual to use three ferries in a 150 mile journey. Gradually, ferries are being replaced with bridges and tunnels. The third day in Norway

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included the longest tunnel to tunnel suspension bridge in the world. The approach to the Hardanger Bridge is through a 1.2 kilometre tunnel, then the bridge itself at 1.4 kilometres and then a further tunnel of 7.5 kilometres. Both tunnels include a roundabout with exits to other roads.

Our tour took place in June and some roads had only opened days before the journey; the result was that the many waterfalls were charged with torrents of melt water, some spilling onto the roads.



One of the most attractive places visited was Geiranger. The approach was via the Geirangervegen, a pass that rises to 1038 meters and incorporates 16 hairpin bends. A day in the area, a trip on the fjord and it was time to move on. We left Geiranger on the Ørnevegen or Eagle Road which climbs 620 metres through 11 hairpins over six kilometres. On over the Trollstigen pass, which had only opened two days previously and a descent through 11 hairpin bends towards the towns of Åndalsnes and Molde and into less mountainous countryside.

A must travel is the Atlantic Road, a series of eight bridges, plus causeways, connecting islands and skerries exposed to the full might of the northern Atlantic Ocean. This road starred in the latest James Bond film, *No Time To Die*. Luckily, the weather was kind and the 8.3 kilometre journey was completed without incident.

The northernmost point of the tour was Trondheim, at 63 degrees North, about 320 kilometres South of the Arctic Circle. The journey south was through the scenic interior of Norway, back across the Skagerrak and so home. A memorable holiday!

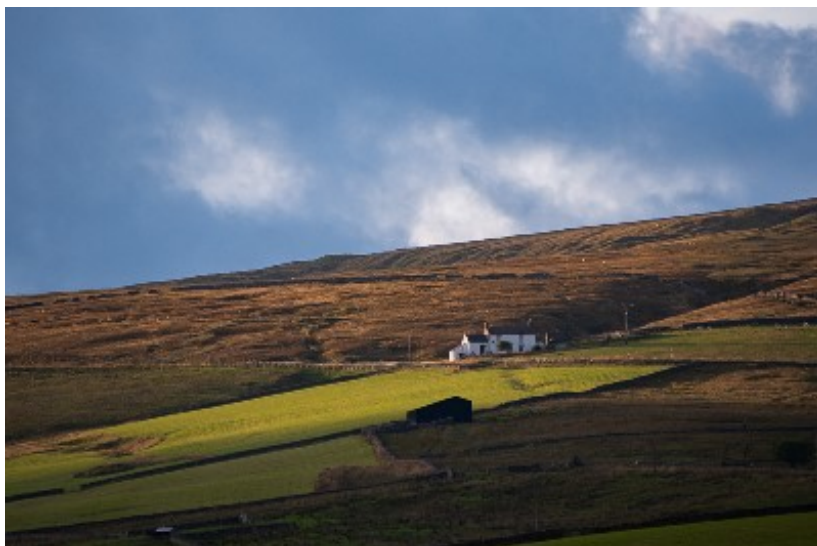
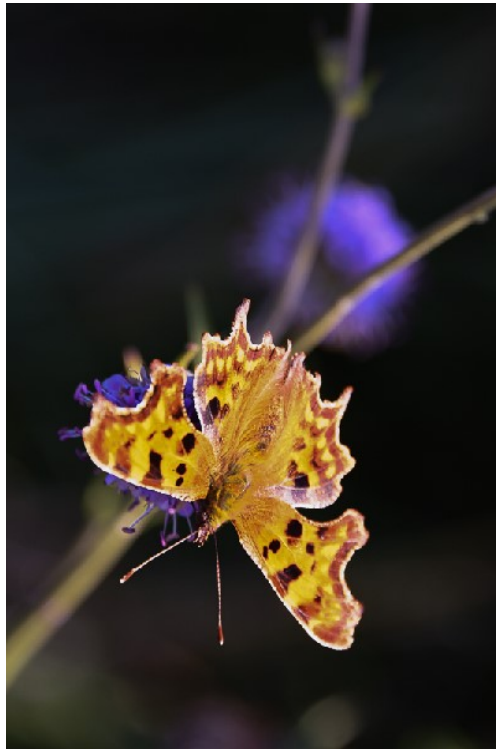
**Nature Notes sent in by Janet Sweeting**

**The daisy got its name because it is the first flower to open in the morning - Day's eye.**

**Blackberries picked after Michaelmas taste like gnat's pee.**

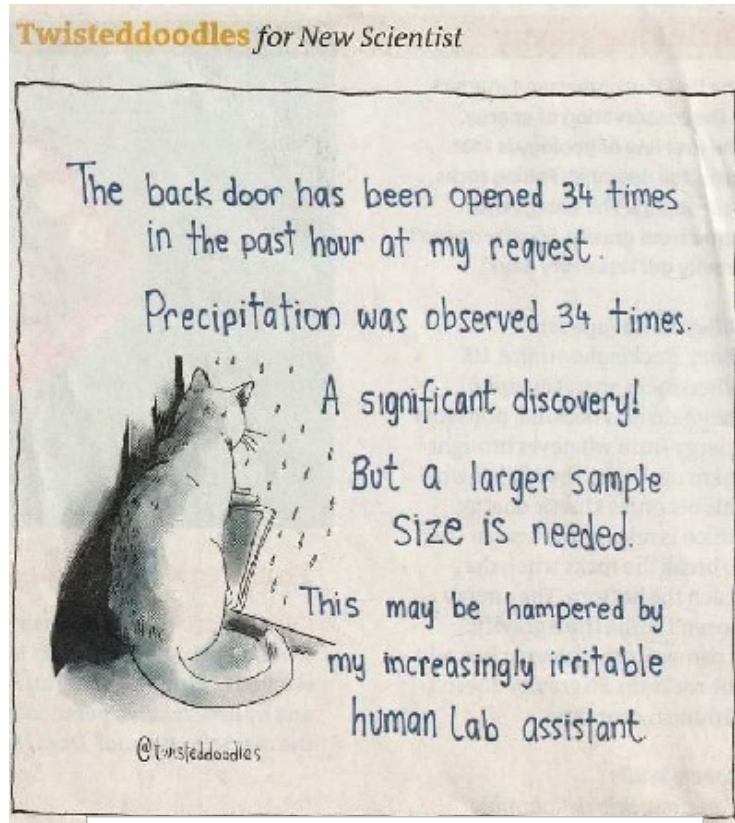
**And now for some beauty.....**

A comma butterfly in the upper dale (right) and a shaft of sun on the upper valley (below). Thank you to Pete Redgrave for these photos.





....And some silliness (thanks to Karen Tranter for sending these in).



**SAGE GATESHEAD**  
**14<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 7.30 pm**

**Royal Northern Sinfonia**  
**Dinis Sousa, Conductor**  
**Nicola Benedetti, Violin**  
**Scheku Kanneh-Mason, Cello**  
**Benjamin Grosvenor, Piano**

**Programme**

**Brittany Bystrom *Walk to Beethoven***  
**Ludvic Van Beethoven *Triple Concerto***  
**Felix Mendelssohn *Symphony No4. "Italian"***

A trio of classical superstars come together to present a wonderful evening of music.

I have reserved a number of seats on Level 2 costing £35 each and the Box Office will keep these for one month only. This is a popular concert and the seats are already going quickly.

Please post me a cheque for £35 p/p. The coach travel will be around £12 and payable in cash on the day.

**\*\*I must have payment by cheque by 30<sup>th</sup> August.\*\***

Make cheque out to Teesdale u3a and post to me:  
Elizabeth Formstone, Bridge House, Piercebridge, Darlington  
DL2 3SG

Tel. 079792 04212

Email: [Elizabeth.formstone6@gmail.com](mailto:Elizabeth.formstone6@gmail.com)

I know this is a long way ahead, but it is the only chance to reserve the seats. Elizabeth Formstone

**August - September quiz (devised by Karen Tranter)**

**Where in the human body is/are the:-**

1. Glomerulus
2. Hyoid bone
3. Islets of Langerhans
4. Anvil
5. Alveoli
6. Supercilia
7. Philtrum
8. Epiglottis
9. Eustachian tube
10. Golgi body
11. Pineal gland
12. Uvula

**What are these parts of the body commonly known as?**

1. Clavicle
2. Patella
3. Hallux
4. Trachea
5. Elbow
6. Navel
7. Phalanges
8. Gingiva

**July—August answers**

- |                                     |                          |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Cleethorpes                      | 17. Seaweed              |
| 2. St. Ives                         | 18. Barton Turf, Norfolk |
| 3. Broadstairs                      | 19. A fish               |
| 4. Chariots of Fire                 | 20. A limpet             |
| 5. Brighton Rock                    |                          |
| 6. About 70%                        |                          |
| 7. Silica                           |                          |
| 8. An entrance to a beach           |                          |
| 9. North Berwick                    |                          |
| 10. 3                               |                          |
| 11. Castletown, Isle of Man         |                          |
| 12. Great Yarmouth                  |                          |
| 13. On the beach. It's a breakwater |                          |
| 14. Shell                           |                          |
| 15. Medium sized scallops           |                          |
| 16. Italy                           |                          |

**Anagrams:** 1. Nine thumps—punishment; 2. Dirty room—dormitory  
3. Imagine dragons—gormandising



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<b>Group</b>	<b>Meeting Time</b>	<b>Contact Details</b>
Art Appreciation	1 <sup>st</sup> Wed pm	Roger Stanyon 01833 631758
Birdwatching	3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday am	Andrew Lapworth 07962 038053
Book Group 2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Mon pm	Elizabeth Long 01833 641494
Book Group 3 Room to Read	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wed pm	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Chess		Diana Marks 01833 631616 07762 626912
Climate Solutions	1 <sup>st</sup> Thurs am	Kate Bailey 07867 683195
Discussion	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fri am	Glen Howard 01833 631639
French Conversation	4 <sup>th</sup> Thurs pm	Stella Kirton 01388 488919
Gardening	1 <sup>st</sup> Fri pm	Pauline Fawcett 01833 638020
Genealogy	1 <sup>st</sup> Thurs pm	Alan Swindale 01388 488348
Geography	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thurs 2pm	Gerald Blake 01833 650899
Geology	4 <sup>th</sup> Mon am	Bob Tuddenham 07812 378004
Historic Environment	2 <sup>nd</sup> Thurs 10am	Tim Meacham 07847 182554
iPad & iPhone	4 <sup>th</sup> Fri 2pm	Mike Sweeting 01833 630005
Italian Conversation	Every Wed am	Marie Jenkins 07754 205664
Lunch Group	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wed noon	Jane Mathieson 01388 710741
Needlecraft	1 <sup>st</sup> Mon pm	Glen Howard 01833 631639
Painting	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fri 10am	Val Hobbs 07900 497503
Philosophy	4 <sup>th</sup> Tues 10am	Ruth Sansom 01325 401850

<b>Group</b>	<b>Meeting Time</b>	<b>Contact details</b>
Photography	1 <sup>st</sup> Tues	Jane Mathieson 01388 710741
Poetry	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed 10am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Science and Technology	2 <sup>nd</sup> Mon am	Roy Tranter 01833 638288
Scrabble	2 <sup>nd</sup> Mon pm	Lilian Smith 01833 650628
Spanish Conversation	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thurs 10am	Lusia McAnna 01833 638989
Table Tennis	Every Friday 3pm	Peter Singer 07508 663998
Theatre	Varies	Elizabeth Formstone 07979 204212
Travel/Day Trips		Jane Mathieson 01388 710741
Understanding Classical Music	4 <sup>th</sup> Friday 10am	Bill Heyes 01833 640885
<b>Walking Groups</b>		
Shorter walks 3-4 miles	4 <sup>th</sup> Monday Phone	Sue Overton 07512 368884
Walking 4-6 miles	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tues 10am Phone	Gillian Barnes-Morris 07941 852165
Walking 7-9 miles	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wed 10am	Nicky Grace <a href="mailto:nickygrace729@gmail.com">nickygrace729@gmail.com</a>
Fell Walking	4 <sup>th</sup> Wed	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Wildflower Group	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed 2pm	Kate Keen 07880 741151
Wine Group	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues pm	Tim Meacham 07847 182554



**Coming up at your  
Community Arts Centre**



<b>Sat 27 Aug</b> 7.00pm	<b>SCREENING – André Rieu’s 2022 Maastricht Concert</b> A captivating summer concert, featuring popular feel-good classics, show-tunes, and joyous waltzes.
<b>Fri 2 Sept</b> 7.30pm	<b>COMEDY – Billy Pearce Live (16+)</b> A National Treasure, and without doubt one of Britain’s most talented and best loved comedians.
<b>Thurs 8 Sept</b> 7.00pm	<b>SCREENING – NT Live: Much Ado About Nothing (12A)</b> Shakespeare’s rom-com of sun, sea and mistaken identity, starring Katherine Parkinson (The IT Crowd) and John Heffernan (Dracula).
<b>Fri 9 Sept</b> 7.30pm	<b>SPOKEN WORD – Turning Pedals into Poems Show</b> Join poet, writer and cyclist, Caroline Burrows (@VerseCycle), for her one-woman poetry show, touring sustainably by bike.
<b>Sat 10 Sept</b> 7.30pm	<b>MUSIC – Anthems of Rock: The Rock Opera</b> For fans of live 80s Classic Rock.
<b>Sun 11 Sept</b> 2.00pm	<b>MUSIC – Sunday Classics: Sophia Strings</b> Led by professional Ukrainian violinists, playing a wide range of short popular classics and lighter music, and Ukrainian traditional music.
<b>Mon 12 Sept</b> 7.30pm	<b>MUSIC – Peggy Seeger and Neill MacColl: First Farewell Tour</b> A glorious evening of up-close performance.
<b>Wed 14 Sept</b> 8.00pm	<b>COMEDY – Rich Hall: Shot from Cannons (14+)</b>
<b>Sat 17 Sept</b> 8.00pm	<b>MUSIC – NE Street Band: The Songs of Bruce Springsteen</b> A fun-filled, audience-engaging show of all things Bruce Springsteen. This is a standing gig.
<b>Thurs 22 Sept</b> 7.00pm	<b>FILM – Downton Abbey: A New Era (12A) with subtitles</b> The Crawley family goes on a grand journey to the South of France to uncover the mystery of the dowager countess’s newly inherited villa.

[www.thewitham.org.uk](http://www.thewitham.org.uk)

**Box office: 01833 631107**