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FORUM

JULY 2023 No. 23/07



CHAIR'S LETTER from TIM MEACHAM

One thing about our current rotation of the position of Chair is that no sooner have I written my first letter of 2023 than it's time to compose my third and last! I must remind Ian Reid who takes over from me shortly that he had better get his thinking cap on.

Talking of 'thinking caps', as I reported at the June main meeting, Teesdale u3a quiz team won the recent NE area annual quiz for the second year running. There was a good range of topics covered and our team of Phil and Carol Clark, Annie Clouston, Ruth Lapworth, Ian Royston and myself (standing in for David Yeadon) was victorious. For the last round there was extra stress as a single wrong answer cancelled out all points gained! We knew six of the ten answers but were unwilling to guess which of the seven dwarves was the fattest (Happy); nor were we 100% sure that Dorothy was P D James' middle name, Chicago is the second most populous American city or (it sounds too obvious!) that 'FTSE' stands for 'Financial Times Stock Exchange'. Still, we got home by one point, perhaps thanks to our display of temperance; one or two teams were swayed by the surprising addition this year of a bar selling a full range of alcoholic beverages.

Changing subject, I must sing the praises of the workshops team. I really think this has been our best move since the return from Covid. In June, there was a 'gin visit' to Whitby enjoyed by a coachful of members (is there a theme developing here?); there have been one-off opportunities to get to know (or revisit for many) the music of the Beatles, learn the basics of Tai Chi, tour the blue plaques of Barnard Castle (noting the rather sexist nature of some), create lampshades and wire sculptures and master the intricacies of Bridge. Ahead lie further opportunities such as enjoying yoga in a 'sound bath' and discovering the stories behind local street names.

The great thing with all these sessions is that those members who can't or don't want to commit to ongoing groups can immerse themselves in a subject for one day, then move on (or, as in the case of the Bridge session, help swell the numbers attending regular local groups). I know the organisers would appreciate ideas for further workshops so don't be shy in coming forward with suggestions.

Finally for now, the holiday season is upon us. I hope you enjoy it whether you venture far afield or simply soak in the sunshine at home. Thank you for your support so far this year and good luck to Ian for his stint in the chair over the next three months.

Cover: *The Mud Maid* living sculpture, The Lost Gardens of Heligan, Cornwall

It's Your Forum

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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 interesting articles and silliness we can include! Please limit submissions to 1 page or 400 words and 1 photo, and send them to the Forum Editor at:

forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

DEADLINE for the next edition: Tuesday 8 August 2023

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 or call Celia **07783 419067**
- ◆ Collecting a **back copy** from the u3a file in the library or in The Witham shop.

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JUNE'S MONTHLY MEETING AT THE WITHAM

Report by Ian Reid

Human Evolution was the title of Professor Sarah Elton's talk at our June monthly meeting. Sarah began by asking the audience what human characteristics there are. Evidence of being cared for, the ability to use tools, intelligence and walking upright on 2 legs (bipedalism) were some of the answers suggested. Our nearest living relative is the chimpanzee. We evolved from apes about 25 million years ago and there was then a massive radiation and many different apes evolved, although there are now only a few species left, and these are endangered. Evolution started in Africa, spread to Asia and then to Europe.

Evidence for this premise is obtained from a variety of sources including fossils, archaeology, genetic analysis and also from the effects of climate change. Using information from the analysis of tooth enamel, it is possible to find out which plants had been eaten and this gives an indication of the types of vegetation around at the time.

Sarah listed the names of *hominids* (erect, bipedal, primate mammals) which had been identified so far - from *homo erectus*, including *neanderthals* and lastly, *homo sapiens*.

Remains of some familiar animals have been discovered in unexpected places e.g. a hippopotamus tooth has been found in the River Tees near Stockton and the Victoria Cave near Settle shows evidence of hyenas and other mammals. The earliest of these species appears at about 125,000 years ago and dates to the Upper Pleistocene period when the climate was much warmer than today. There were no humans in this area at this time.

It seems clear now that the 'ladder' description of evolution is not always appropriate and the process is more of a branching tree or bush, called *cladogenesis*—the formation of a new group of organisms or higher taxon by evolutionary divergence from an ancestral form.

This was a fascinating and comprehensive talk which included new research, posing more questions about our evolution.

MEETINGS AT THE WITHAM

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

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.

July meeting: 27 July 2023, Roger Browne — The Great American Songbook: Gershwin, Rogers, Kern, Porter and Beyond

24 August meeting: Veronica Bird OBE - From Prison to Palace. Veronica has had an extraordinary career in the Prison Service. Dedicating her entire life to her work, she rose to become a Governor at the notorious Armley Prison in Leeds – probably as tough a prison as you can imagine. She has helped prisoners in Russia have a better life, and assisted awarding prison staff through the Butler Trust. She has also been honoured by the Queen.

Whitby and Gin Distillery Trip: Report by Ian Reid

On the 17 June, a jolly band of 46 u3a members filled a Maude's coach and set out to enjoy the delights of Whitby. The weather was warm and although the roads were busy, we arrived at about 11.15am when we were left to our own devices. Some members looked for 'culture' by visiting the Abbey with museum, and the old parish church. Others enjoyed some 'retail therapy' and one member pursued a possible family link by visiting Captain Cook's Museum. There were no stories of herring gulls stealing chips or of members dressing up as Goths, or at least not admitted.

15 members of the group then undertook some essential research into the ingredients needed to make a commercial gin. This necessitated a visit to the award winning Whitby Gin Distillery, established fairly recently, and some serious gin tasting took place (see photo overleaf). Alison from the distillery, assisted by Fred, very ably took us through the manufacturing process. This new company has established itself within just a few years and is now making 6 gins, each with its own flavour, using local ingredients such as heather, honey and even seaweed. The distillery has ambitious

plans to develop, including the use of premises near the Abbey to allow increased marketing possibilities.

Some members couldn't leave without purchasing a bottle and the 'Prince of Darkness' was very popular.

We all returned to the bus which left Whitby at about 5.00pm returning safely to Barnard Castle at 6.30pm as planned. Thanks to Sue for superb organisation.





FUTURE DAY TRIPS

15 September - York & York Cocoa House, leave Barnard Castle, from Addison's, Galgate at 08.45, Return about 18.00. Cost - coach £14.00, plus making your own chocolate at the Cocoa house £16.50. Includes a session at the Cocoa House kitchens learning about & making chocolate. For more information please contact: Jane Mathieson **01388 710741**

A note from Dorothy Jameson about travel trips: There is a trip going to Hampshire on Sunday 22 October which includes a day in Portsmouth and a visit to the Mary Rose, a day in Winchester, a trip on the Watercress Steam Railway, and a horse drawn barge cruise on the Kennet and Avon canal and time in Southampton. Chilworth Manor Hotel with 5 nights, dinner, bed and breakfast. Kyle Travel are taking bookings and, depending upon numbers, the coach will leave from either Barnard Castle or Darlington.

FUTURE WORKSHOPS

Waterfalls in the Landscape led by David Ewart 12th August 10.30am - 12.30pm from Bowlees Visitor Centre. Meet at Bowes Museum at 9.45 am for car share. Limit is 18 people. Contact Annie Clouston 01833 637091

Walkabout in Barney - History behind some of Barney's Street Names
led by Tim Meacham. Saturday 9th September 10am - meet at The
Witham. Limited to 10 people. Contact Annie Clouston 01833 637091

Update on Bridge Workshop—Report on Page 36

DUM DE DUM DE DUM DE DUM,,,,,Report by Michael Woodward

Such a lot has happened in Ambridge recently. Where to begin? Perhaps firstly to acknowledge The Coronation, which most residents appear to have overlooked! Why?

Bells were tolled in St Stephens, bunting hung up over The Bull, but very little else.

Where were the older residents, who should have been celebrating? Where was Jill arranging flowers in church or Peggy helping with advice about the street party on the green? Have they become republicans? Maybe a change of National Anthem will jerk them out of their slumber. A while ago, Billy Connolly suggested The Archers' signature tune, *Barwick Green*, should replace the dreary National Anthem. So, as you read this, please stand to attention for that melodious air.....dum de dum.....

Much was made recently of The Eurovision Contest! Why? A concert by Jolene at the bar would have been more entertaining.

Brad and George continue to squabble like 6 year olds, preparing us for Brad as a studious intellectual with George growing up to be a deceitful lying shark.

Tracy and Jazzer's "wedding day" was excellent radio, allowing the listener unlimited imagination on activities behind the bathroom door!

No-one seems to have given a thought to poor Shula, now a curate in Sunderland. Has she become a Mackem, singing "I do like to be beside the seaside" Please someone remember her.

Who is lurking behind all this? The dreaded Rob Tichener! He may have turned over a new leaf. Maybe he is suffering from a terminal illness. Maybe he craves contact with his son in his final years, or maybe he is the same evil manipulator. Phew!!

Too much for me. I'm off for a walk up Lakey Hill to enjoy the sunset. Before I go, as so often warned at the end of R4 programmes

If you have been affected by issues in this broadcast, please contact.....

Moaning Annie W.

THEATRE NOTICE

EMPIRE THEATRE, SUNDERLAND

Wednesday 20 September at 7.30 pm

Straight from the West End, the musical:

EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE

We need to book early for these tickets so please book now if you are interested.

I have 16 good seats in the upper circle at £46.

The coach will cost £5 return; meet at Addison's at 5.30 pm

Please send me a cheque for £51 made out to Teesdale u3a and enclose your contact details (Tel. No. & email address).

Elizabeth Formstone. Bridge House, Piercebridge Darlington DL2 3SG
elizabeth.formstone6@gmail.com

THEATRE BY THE LAKE

The Little Princess

Saturday 9th December 2023

I have reserved 30 seats for the 2pm matinee. The cost for each theatre seat will be £26.50.

The coach price is in the air at present until Steven Maude knows how much fuel prices will rise (or fall).

Please let me know if you would like places reserved by email
dianamarks813@gmail.com

I look forward to hearing from you, Diana Marks

ART APPRECIATION GROUP—Report by Tony Seward

At our June meeting, we explored the early Italian masters with Professor Kloss, focusing on two great 'composite' works by Duccio and Giotto. Duccio's massive 'Maesta' altarpiece was commissioned for the Cathedral in Siena, and can still be seen there. It consists of many pictures and wooden architectural features assembled in one construction: the central grand depiction of the Virgin and Child surrounded by saints, with narrative scenes along the base (predella) and on the back. Over the centuries many of its components have been dispersed or lost, and the back has been sawn off from the front so both can now be displayed side by side.

The narrative panels tell the story of Christ's childhood on the predella, with the life of the Virgin, and Christ's life and death, in 43 scenes on the back. Many are deeply moving depictions of key moments in the cycle, such as the Annunciation and the Lamentation over the dead Christ, which can be compared with treatments of the same themes by other masters such as Giotto. Three have ended up in the National Gallery in London.

The second 'composite' is Giotto's masterpiece, the Arena Chapel in Padua. Again, the sequence follows the lives of the Virgin and Christ, outstanding for the solid modelling of the figures and a new humanism in the depiction of intense emotion. Kloss eloquently conveyed the drama of the Lamentation, and the tenderness of the meeting of Joachim and Anna, the Virgin's parents, after the ageing couple learn that they are at last to have a child.



After the break, a lecture from Dr Valerie Shrimplin gave a slightly different take on these two great painters, and covered other major figures from the Sieneese School - Simone Martini, the Lorenzetti brothers - and the so-called 'Giotteschi', followers of Giotto. The Sieneese were noted for grace of line, retaining elements of what art historians call the 'Gothic swing' - the curving figures and drapery seen in many medieval carvings and paintings. She also

provided much useful background detail on, for example, Sieneese civic life and the effects on art of the catastrophic Black Death in the mid-14th century. **Photo: Andrea Mantegna: Oculus in the Palazzo Ducale, Mantua**

The next Art Appreciation report will cover July's meeting, on *Masaccio, Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden*.

Next up – 2nd August. *Masters of the Quattrocento 1400-1500: Piero della Francesca, Andrea Mantegna*.

AUTOMOTIVE GROUP - Report by Peter Colley

The summer is a bumper season for automotive enthusiasts with plenty of activities in the Northeast and Yorkshire.

If you are interested in attending, contact our convener, petergcolley@icloud.com

Sunday 23rd July from 11am Vintage and Classic Vehicle Show, Hamsterley Forest

Sunday 30th July from 9am British Touring Car Championship, Croft Circuit

Sunday 6th August from 9:30am Summer Italian Cars and Motorcycles Day, Beamish Museum

Sunday 13th August from 9am Classic & Retro Car Meet, Barnard Castle School

We are also planning a trip to The Motorist in Sherburn in Elmet.

BIRDWATCHING GROUP – Report by Andrew Lapworth

FIELD MEETING TO RSPB LEIGHTON MOSS 19 JUNE 2023

We had a warm and sunny day at this wonderful RSPB wetland reserve in Silverdale at the southern end of the Lake District. Sharing 3 cars to travel there, eight of us enjoyed some prolonged views of male and female marsh harriers hunting low over the reed beds and ditches. We began by climbing the “Skytower” which gives an excellent view over the whole area of the reserve, with its reed beds (the largest in NW England), with their backdrop of green fields and lush woodlands, as well as more distant limestone-topped hills. From the Skytower we could see the osprey nest platform with its great blacked-back gull occupants, and we saw lots of coots with their chicks, mallards, various geese and just one very distant and brief bittern flying to its feeding areas.

On the boardwalks between the various hides we encountered a movement of tiny froglets (we avoided squashing any underfoot!), and we heard the repetitive song of reed warblers and the explosive song of Cetti's warblers. We had good views of a perched reed bunting singing its simple song, and everywhere there were blue damselflies and their larger

cousins, the dragonflies. The latter are a main food of the dashing hobby, but we only saw a very very distant one. In the sunny shrub and wooded areas we enjoyed close views of speckled-wood butterflies, patrolling their linear territories. From the hides we watched close grey herons hunting in the shallows and saw a few little egrets, cormorants and little and great



crested grebes as well as families of gadwall ducks. In total we logged 25 bird species; alas we neither saw nor heard the elusive bearded-tits.

On our return journeys we called in at a nearby disused quarry where peregrines had been nesting; they were not at home when we called.

Pastel of Leighton Moss by artist John Reaney for the RSPB 1978. Reproduced for the

RSPB Calendar 1979 and in RSPB Nature Reserves, 1983.



BOARD GAMES GROUP— Report by Hazel McCallum

Five of us met up on a sunny summer's day at The Old Well for our second outing with the game Settlers of Catan. After a brief reprise of the rules, the game was underway with a swift entrance of the Robber who generally thieved and thwarted throughout the game. The game was hotly contested, but not as hot as it got in the room, so an early end was agreed before we all suffered heat-stroke.

The next meeting will be on 14th August, so if you'd like to join us, please get in touch. You don't need to know how to play any of the games as all of the games have been new to some each time.

ROOM TO READ BOOK GROUP— Report by Annie Clouston

June's book was *Tinkers* by Paul Harding, a short novel that, unusually, none of us liked. The novel, which has no discernible plot, starts with a description of the hallucinations of George, a mender of clocks, as he lies dying with heart and kidney failure. In his mind everything is collapsing around him, but at times is lucid enough to have conversations with his loving family, gathered around his death bed, and recollections of his childhood.

The novel describes vividly rural Maine: the poverty of its inhabitants, its harshness in winter, its lushness in summer, and the quality of light in the landscape. In different voices – his father, his grandfather, a horologist – passage of time is jumbled and obscure, so much so that the reader is likely to struggle to sort it out. The most striking character in the book is Howard, George's father, who eked a living as the eponymous tinker, leaving early each day to sell to his isolated rural customers – mainly women - with a wagonload of goods and services; trinkets, pots, pans, mending stuff, on occasion delivering babies, pulling teeth. (I conjured in my mind the pedlar-man's travelling wagon from *Oklahoma*.) It is an unrelentingly burdensome way of life, made perilous by his grand mal epilepsy, not understood at the time, and joyless by his miserable and resentful wife and mother of his four children. Realising that his wife has arranged for him to be committed to an asylum because of his epilepsy he leaves for work one day and doesn't come back.

There is occasional humour, as in this exchange with one of his customers:

The [soap] box is different.

Yes, they changed it.

What was wrong with the old box? Nothing wrong with the old soap.

Of course not, but this is better.

Nothing wrong with the old soap. How can it be better? Cleaned fine before.

This cleans better – and faster.

Well, I'll just take a box of the normal soap.

And so on...

This book won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize and we couldn't quite get why. Being a graduate of the great writer Marilynne Robinson's Masters programme in

Creative Writing might help to explain it, and there is certainly some similarity of style to be found in the writing. The scores we gave the novel were 3/5 for book group discussion – we did enjoy not enjoying it – and 1/5 for recommending to friends.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GROUP - Report by Kate Bailey

In July, we had a most enjoyable meeting at Hazel's house. We agreed to progress Jane's 'Pollinator Park' proposal where, by planting wild flowers, we will make a positive difference to nature recovery for insects and birds. We set up a small steering group to support Climate Action NE, a not-for-profit organisation that works with communities. Possible locations were discussed - the upper boundaries of The Demesnes, the railway path to Lartington, the 'social prescribing' Health Park at Gainsford and a derelict overgrown area of land next to the cut-through from Queen Street. Whichever site is chosen, the owner's support, public access and future maintenance will be important issues to resolve.

We recently circulated an email to all Teesdale u3a members with more information about Climate Action NE and Pollinator Parks. Their website includes lists of wildflower species you could plant in your own garden. If any members would like to be involved in our project, or can suggest a local site that might be suitable for a small wildflower meadow, or a community orchard, or a native hedgerow planted for birds -

- please phone Jane 07816 845 557 or Kate 07867 683 195

Our main topic this month was around food systems, climate and health. We listened to a fascinating talk by Henry Dimbleby about his book *Ravenous* which expands on his recent *UK National Food Strategy* for the government. He is an engaging speaker and he clearly explained how, post-war, highly efficient ways of producing grain were developed to feed rapidly growing populations of humans and livestock, but with very damaging consequences for the health of soils, ecosystems and water supplies.

Ultra-processed food products are known to encourage over-eating and to be harmful in terms of obesity, diabetes and heart disease but, despite frequent medical and public health warnings, their consumption in the UK continues to grow. Our group had an enthusiastic discussion about how we personally could eat better to improve our own health and that of our families. Suggestions include encouraging children to grow fruit and vegetables, and helping them to cook a delicious meal with their own produce; checking ingredients on packets (don't forget your reading glasses!) and avoiding food products that contain chemical additives that you don't use in your own kitchen.

Henry Dimbleby's talk at Oxford Martin School is highly recommended - listen online: <https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/events/ravenous/>

and also a recent Panorama programme on BBC i-Player:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001mp67/panorama-ultraprocessed-food-a-recipe-for-ill-health>

DISCUSSION GROUP—Report by Glen Howard

June meeting: We had very enjoyable discussions this month covering such subjects as: androids v iPhones or iPads; online banking; the Office of National Statistics; car insurance; mileage tax for electric cars; swarming bees; wasps and ants; disposable vapes; noise from neighbours; loft insulation; and obesity.

Our next meetings will be on Friday 11th August 10.15am at Andalucia's. If you would like to join us, please get in touch.

Glen Howard 01833 631639

GARDENING GROUP - July report by Julie Archer and Kate Keen

In July the gardening group visited The Alnwick Garden in Northumberland. It was a glorious day with the sun shining and a very warm temperature for the North East.

The centrepiece of the Alnwick Garden is the Grand Cascade which lives up to its name. This dramatic formal waterfall is even more impressive when, on every hour and half hour, the fountains provide a display which changes every time.



The ornamental walled garden has matured with some pleached trees and hedges providing welcome shade. There were displays of delphiniums and astrantias. In the rose garden, the roses were in full bloom. The serpent garden is full of water sculptures each outlining a scientific principle. The bamboo labyrinth was very tall and imposing and provided another cool retreat. The Poison Garden has some of the plants in cages for our protection and we had to be escorted through the area by a guide. The Cherry Orchard has a fine display of the trees as well as some

adult sized double swings which were well used.

At the end of the visit many of us purchased plants from the well-stocked and reasonably priced Plant Centre.

In August we will visit Levens Hall near Cumbria.

Our September visit is to Harewood House.

GENEALOGY GROUP— Report by Alan Swindale

Numbers at the Genealogy group meetings have settled down to 13 or 14, which is comfortable for the Dales Room in Enterprise House, though there is room for up to 20 or more.

As a 'help your neighbour' meeting, it was more of a free-for-all than the tutorial meetings. Pam showed us how she identified DNA matches using Ancestry's shared matches tool. In turn those identified DNA matches assisted her in pinning down more remote ancestors detected by conventional genealogy. The two approaches, genetic genealogy and conventional genealogy, are complementary approaches.

It became apparent during the meeting that many members were not aware of all the software tools provided by the genealogical sites to make best use of their vast databases. It is worth exploring the menus to see all the alternatives.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 3rd August at 2 p.m. at Enterprise House. The topic will be *How do I know I'm right? An introduction to the Genealogical Proof System.*

GEOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Les Knight

Lithium: What's it all about? Talk by Dr Rick Smith

Lithium is a low-density alkaline metal which historically had relatively few uses. This changed in the early 1990s with the invention of lithium-ion batteries. The signalled change to a low carbon economy has led to an unprecedented rise in demand for lithium for car and large-scale energy storage batteries. The current price is \$75,000 per tonne. To achieve current targets for battery production, lithium mining will have to increase 20-fold by 2050 and we will need 59 new mines in the next twelve years!

Lithium occurs in a number of geological situations but in none is the element concentrated. The largest production is from giant open pit mines working pegmatite (a coarse-grained granite), for example in Australia, or by dissolving salts formed by evaporation of 'salar' intermontane lakes in the Andes of Chile, Bolivia and Argentina. While these latter deposits in the so-called 'lithium triangle' are cheap to extract there is increasing hostility to

mining on environmental grounds.

Rick described other geological situations that potentially could be sources of lithium, but the commercial viability of these has yet to be demonstrated. Lithium can be concentrated in some ancient lake clays. A huge deposit was found in Serbia; however, environmental opposition has led to the cessation of mining this largest European deposit.

Some granites, including those in Cornwall, contain dispersed fine-grained lithium-bearing minerals. Recovery of the lithium involves large-scale open pit mining, crushing the granite to a fine dust, separating the lithium-bearing mineral, and then chemically recovering the lithium. In principle this is possible but the economic and practical aspects have yet to be demonstrated.

Lastly, lithium can occur dissolved in some hot brines such as in Weardale granite. Here, hot brine is extracted from drilled wells in the granite. Heat and lithium are then extracted at the surface before the cold brine is reinjected into the granite. The difficulty here is that 'direct extraction' of lithium in commercial quantities from brine of low concentrations has not been proven on a commercial scale.

Upscaling lithium production to meet decarbonisation targets over such short timescales, using as yet unproven technologies, will prove extraordinarily challenging; however, the shortage of lithium is just one issue. Decarbonising the world's economy by 2050 will require the mining of more minerals than man has mined over the last 4000 years!

Next meeting: Thursday 17th August. Field visits. Details to follow.

GEOLOGY GROUP—Report by Bob Tuddenham

We had a wide ranging and varied meeting at The Witham in June with a talk about the iron industry in the North East in the 19th century before rapidly moving on to the present day and the use of AI in putting together a geology presentation. The meeting concluded with a look at box of rock samples from the Pennines.

In the first half, Bob Tuddenham gave the first of two talks on the Iron Industry in the NE. It briefly covered the unique properties of iron before looking at the rapid development of the industry in Durham and the North Pennines, and the geology of the two sources of iron ore which had started the industry in the 19th century. More iron than lead ore was taken out of Weardale over a period of some eighty years and there are numerous interesting artefacts and geological sites relating to this mining and quarrying activity including the extensive track bed of a railway on the high moor above Stanhope. The second talk will cover iron mining in the Cleveland Hills and the development of the Teesside iron industry.

Les Knight has been looking at the use of two free AI systems to create a presentation. He asked for a presentation on *The North Pennine Orefield: A Geological Overview*. In a matter of seconds, impressive presentations were produced. There were no visuals but most of the content was relevant and well structured. However, there were a few significant factual errors and the presentations were at a rather basic level without detailed geology. It was agreed that these AI tools could be useful in providing a starting point for a presentation.

Finally, Trevor Morse had brought along a rock box of thirty different rocks and minerals from the area that had been used for a project with primary schools. There were many excellent specimens which once again illustrated the remarkable geology of the North of England.

There was a July meeting but no meeting in August. The next meeting is at The Witham on Monday 25 Sept at 10 am. All are welcome.

HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT GROUP- Report by Tim Meacham

Illness and access problems caused the postponement of the last two events but normal business should have resumed by the time you read this with the second part of our Walk on Cockfield Fell led by Rob Pearson on Thursday 13th July.

Our next event will be the August visit to the Altogether Archaeology Dig near Cotherstone. This will take place on MONDAY August 21st (note: not our regular Thursday date). The change of day is to allow for us to be shown round the Dig while the work there is in progress. Anyone interested in joining this rare opportunity to see the dig team at work should contact Tim Meacham at simontimothymeacham@gmail.com

A report on the July Cockfield walk will appear in the August Forum.

Ipad and iPhone GROUP—Report Mike Sweeting

Nine of us met as usual at Enterprise House, smaller numbers than usual. As a catch up on two previous topics, Hazel revealed some more tricks of the trade for using voice recognition and we revised and updated the discussion held earlier this year about using QR Codes.

The main topics of the day were:

A more in depth look at using the Apple Pencil and its alternatives. They are tools that are easy to use but will need some practice to get up to the standard of, say, David Hockney. We looked at the Freeform app which is standard on iPad and iPhone and how the Pencil can make using it so much easier. We also looked at a paid for app called Brushes. This is

a fully featured art app capable of producing sophisticated results (depending though on the sophistication of the user). In the process several YouTube videos provided some of the information we needed.

This brought us onto the second topic, using YouTube. We saw how very useful its content can be, providing information and guidance on all sorts of topics as well as music and entertainment. We looked at ways in which we could save videos to view later and keep track of new videos produced by contributors on topics we were interested in. We also looked at how we could control, to a degree, what was served up to us as suggested content.

Our next gathering will be at 1:30pm on Friday 28 July 2023 at Enterprise House. If you are interested in joining the group, you can contact me through the group's web page at teesdaleu3a.org.uk/ipad-group-activities/

LUNCH GROUP Report by Jan Sweeting

As we were a party of ten for the June lunch we were informed by our host venue, Headlam Hall, that we would need to be charged at the group tariff rate which for some reason was more expensive. Fortunately, our savvy leader pointed out that there was nothing to this effect on their website.

We dined in our own room and enjoyed a good meal with all of us having a pudding and then some managed a coffee too. Our 'chatterings' included how we all speak slightly differently to each other and the quirks of local dialects and idioms. It was a lovely session and I am looking forward to our next two venues: firstly, on 19th July at the Black Bull in Moulton, then 16th August at the Rose & Crown, Romaldkirk.

NEEDLECRAFT GROUP—Report by Glen Howard

We had a very enjoyable meeting this month. Our talking covered such topics as cats; holidays; the Ashes; and badly behaved children! Works in progress were mainly knitting, but also quilting and plastic canvas work. It is very difficult to be sociable when trying to work, so I'm sorry to say, the talking comes at the expense of fancy needlecraft on these afternoons.

Our next meeting will be on Monday, 7th August. Please get in touch with me if you would like to join us. Glen Howard 01833 631639

PAINTING GROUP—Report by Val Hobbs

A small band of us met up at Startforth Community Centre on this very bright, but cold morning.

Having missed the last two sessions, and knowing Anne would have something exciting up her sleeve for us, I was eager to get the old

paintbrushes out again.

Anne explained that we would be starting off by drawing with graphite...something we hadn't done before, to create a woodland scene. She demonstrated how we should initially draw the trees, but yet through the gaps, create a horizon. The next stage was to work in reverse and fill in the gaps, leaving the trees blank, and adding undergrowth and foliage by using the graphite stick in a multitude of ways. With deep concentration, we worked in silence, until we had each produced our tree-scape.

A coffee and biscuit break was welcomed and we laughed and chatted, and then returned to work. The next stage was to add colour over the graphite and to work a little detail into the tree trunks, which up until this point, had been left blank. Using the 'lifting out' technique gave the effect of a fading background beyond the trees and a stronger foreground in front. By the end of two hours, we had each produced a unique painting...using yet another fantastic technique.

Another string to our bow! Contact: Val Hobbs 07900497503



PHILOSOPHY GROUP—Report by Wallace Anderson

How do you work?



We returned to the concept of free will at our June meeting.

We all agreed that it feels like we have free will but it seems as if there is no convincing account of what free will is or, in fact, whether we do indeed have it.

Meetings: 25 July at 10am at Enterprise House, Discussion: *Art-what is it?* Next meeting Tuesday 26 September.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP— Report by Pete Redgrave

On 6 June, a group of five intrepid photographers assembled at Cow Green Reservoir with the intention of photographing some of the rare and beautiful flowers of Teesdale. But it turned out that despite it being June the weather at Cow Green was unpleasantly chilly and breezy so most of the flowers were shut up tight and dancing about in the wind. After half an hour or so, common sense prevailed



and the group headed back down the dale, calling in at Forest in Teesdale, Bowlees, and Low Force to photograph the flowers they could find there (in much warmer and calmer conditions!) After lunch at the Bowlees Visitor's Centre, the sun actually managed to put in an appearance and some pleasing images were recorded, so the day was far from wasted.

POETRY GROUP— Report by Marilyn Normanton

"I started Early - Took my Dog -

And visited the Sea –

The Mermaids in the Basement

Came out to look at me -"

So wrote Emily Dickinson, whose imaginative poem was the first to be shared in this month's poetry group where our theme was 'The Sea'. Dickinson herself became a virtual recluse who never saw the ocean but like many other poets used the sea as a metaphor. This is very clear in Tennyson's poignant "**Crossing the Bar**", written after the premature death of a dear friend and which begins "Sunset and evening star/And one clear call for me! / And may there be no moaning of the bar/ When I put out to sea." There were a few wry smiles of recognition when we reflected on Stevie Smith's "**Not Waving but Drowning**", as the dead man moans "I was much too far out all my life/And not waving but drowning." We've all been there at times.

In contrast the wonderfully rich imagery of John Masefield in "**Cargoes**" takes us on a journey across the seas, describing the exotic "Quinquireme of Ninevah...", "With a cargo of ivory/ And apes and peacocks...", and the Spanish Galleon "Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores", carrying "diamonds/ Emeralds, amethysts ...". Bringing us back to home territory with a bump, the last verse describes a "Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack/ Butting through the Channel in the mad March days/ with a cargo of Tyne coal/Road-rail, pig-lead/ Firewood, iron ware and cheap tin trays."

We also shared poems which were descriptive and deeply evocative, such as "**Islandmen**" by RS Thomas. He writes of "the crusted men/ of the sea, measuring time/ by tide fall, knowing the changeless/ seasons..." and whose "dark hull bites/at the water, crunching it/to small glass..." In **Sea Longing**, Sara Teasdale describes how "With the old murmur, long and musical/The windy waves mount up and curve and fall/And round the rocks the foam blows up like snow". Philip Larkin's **To the Sea**, presents us with a scene many of us will be familiar with from childhood, when a seaside holiday was "half an annual pleasure, half a rite".

We had a stimulating and enjoyable morning, not always agreeing as to meaning and interpretation, which is the beauty of poetry. It entertains, enlightens, stirs the emotions and makes us think.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GROUP— Reports by Roy Tranter

Meeting 13 February 2023 *Women in Science*

This meeting was based on an idea that Karen Tranter, the co-convenor of the S&T Group, had for a talk in 2023. Sadly, she died before she could fully develop her idea. However, Ian Reid picked up the challenge and brought together four speakers talking about four very different Women in Science.

Ian Reid introduced Henrietta Lacks, who was a scientist herself but unwittingly has had a large impact on medical science. Samples of cancerous cells were taken from her cervix in 1951, the year she died. They proved to be unusual in that they could be easily cultured and survive far longer than normal. The cell line was named HeLa by George Gey, who took and cultured the cells. Cells from these early cultures were distributed to researchers world-wide and have formed the basis of medical research since. The HeLa cell line was one of the first “immortal” cell lines and is still in regular use. In 1951 there was no requirement to obtain patient permission to take, keep, or use tissue samples, and it was not until 1975 that the Lack’s family became aware of the HeLa cells. Since then the questions of ethics and informed consent have become much debated leading to strict requirements in many countries. Henrietta Lacks has been recognised posthumously through honours, statues, memorials, books and films.

Dorothy Hodgkin was Joy Roscoe’s subject. Hodgkin was born in 1910 in Cairo, but she lived with her grandparents in England from an early age – her parents working abroad for several months at a time. As a teenager, she was encouraged to develop her scientific interests, and in 1928 entered Somerville College to study chemistry. She moved to Cambridge for Ph.D. research with John Bernal, a noted x-ray crystallographer. Her subsequent career was very much about the structure of biological molecules: pepsin, penicillin, vitamin B12 (for which she received a Nobel Prize), and insulin. The latter was a lifetime project, taking some 35 years as she and others developed x-ray and computing technologies to enable large, complex biological molecules to be studied. She suffered from rheumatoid arthritis for much of her adult life and died in 1994.

A woman, hardly known outside her specialism of neuroscience, was Pete Redgrave’s subject. Ann Graybiel, MIT, first came to Pete’s notice through her early work on the visual system in a cat’s brain. It was her work on the basal ganglia that has occupied most of her career and for which she has become very influential in the area. Her work has shown how actions are learnt and become habits, and how groups of actions get “chunked” together so that one does not have to consciously think about doing them. The basal ganglia is also involved in learning, memory, cognition and decision making and, when it goes wrong, conditions such as Parkinson’s,

Huntingdon's Disease, schizophrenia, addictions and OCD can result. As Pete put it, "She is a big fish in a big pool".

The final talk was by Roy Tranter about the scientific life of Karen Tranter – typical of many women in science who are not a 'big name.' As a teenager she was encouraged in her scientific interests both at home and at school, and this led her to taking an Honours degree in Botany at Newcastle University, then Ph.D. research in microbiology, also at Newcastle. Although the experimental work was completed in 2 years, the writing up was not completed until 3 years later – marriage, 2 children, a move to Copenhagen and then to Stirling intervened. While in Scotland, she worked as a lab assistant at the local secondary school and as a demonstrator in Biochemistry at the University of Stirling. The move to Barnard Castle in 1980 brought another upheaval. She did 6 years as a supply teacher at secondary school level in Darlington (her least favourite job!) but her favourite was 17 years as a Technical Guide at Barnard Castle Glaxo factory. Here, she saw in detail, and learnt about, all the manufacturing processes at the site, and then took visitors on technical tours of the site, from primary school pupils to company directors from all over the world. Her interests in science were wide ranging – she was a regular attendee at the Geology, Historic Environment, Archaeology and Needlecraft groups of the u3a as well as being joint convener of the Science and Technology Group. She was very much a scientist and natural philosopher!

Meeting 13 March 2023 *Roy's March Miscellany*

Roy Tranter's talk was themed on optics and nanotechnology - increasingly important areas, both in manufacturing and in everyday life. Structures can be made in the 1-100 nanometre scale and have unusual effects on optical and electronic properties of materials.

Roy started by looking at some naturally occurring nanostructures. Many of the colours of butterfly wings are not due to pigments but to very fine repeating structures in the wings that reflect and diffract white light in such a way that only one particular colour is transmitted through, or reflected by, the wing. A similar effect is seen in gold particles in the 10nm size range – the particles appear as rose pink to deep red, depending on size; an effect made use of by glass manufacturers from mediaeval times. Gecko feet also incorporate nanostructures and this enables them to "stick" on very smooth surfaces, such as glass, even when upside down – there is no glue involved, only the physical interactions between the structures on the feet and the glass. Needless to say that manufacturers are copying these structures to create permanent, non-fade colours, and ways of sticking things together that can be peeled apart without damage to either surface.

Etching a pattern of nanostructures on the flat end of an optical fibre gives the fibre a lens without having the bulk of a conventional lens. Other patterns allow the fibre to act as a temperature, pressure or chemical sensor, such as in medical probes and monitors for manufacturing processes.

All current computers, including phones and televisions, use electronic components to work. Changing to systems that manipulate light, instead of electrons, would save an enormous amount of electrical energy. Such devices are in active development and already appear in some niche areas, particularly where weight and power need to be minimised. LIDAR systems for cars and augmented reality glasses are just two examples, but healthcare, bio-chip test systems, CT scanners, food and environmental monitoring are all targets.

At the extreme end of research, quantum dot chemical sensors, single photon detectors for use with very low intensity light, and quantum batteries that could give instant charging are all being worked on.

Nanostructures are clearly the future!

Meeting 12 June 2023 Small Nuclear Reactors and meeting the need for power

Originally, Phil Johnson's talk was to be about the design, development and use of Small Nuclear Reactors (SNR) – when the talk was first planned there was a lot of optimism about the devices and plans for major investments. However, everything has stalled in the UK, so Phil broadened his talk to the need for power and the options available for meeting increased demand.

All current UK electricity generating nuclear reactors are massive, very expensive, bespoke and take decades of planning and negotiation to design and build. SNRs are a small fraction of the size and cost, are standardised designs, built in production lines, and would be located much closer to the areas of high electricity demand. In the UK, Rolls-Royce (RR) is halfway through a 4-year Government evaluation programme for 16 SNRs (4 sites identified so far) based on the very successful design used in nuclear submarines. The programme stalled this year due to funding issues.

The RR SNR is a pressurized water reactor using uranium fuel. Although this technology is well understood and would be effective, the use of uranium fuel is not optimal for SNRs. Reactors using thorium as fuel have many advantages in terms of simpler design and inherent safety. Large thorium reactors are currently operational, particularly in Canada, so their technology, design, operation and costs are well understood.

In the UK, there is still the need to meet an increasing demand for electricity. A major problem is that the National Grid high voltage distribution network was built around the many coal power stations located close to centres of demand. The major wind, solar, tidal, hydroelectric and large nuclear

generators are in remote locations on the edges of the Grid, and wind and solar generators have very variable outputs leading to problems of load balancing on the Grid. Megawatt (if not gigawatt) batteries are needed to smooth out variations. Large installations of lithium batteries have been built recently and pumped water storage (e.g. Cruachan) has been operational for decades. High pressure gas storage in large caverns is being investigated, making use of old mines.

SNRs are part of the solution to increased demand, but there are many issues around implementation and the electrical Grid that need to be solved as well.



TABLE TENNIS GROUP Report by Peter Singer

Friday afternoons are a good time to play table tennis, as the pent-up frustrations accumulated during the week (waiting for BT to answer the phone; watching the news; seeing another piece knocked off the Buttermarket) can be released in a wild topspin smash or deceptively wobbly serve. Time spent in a friendly group with a common interest and a shared sense of the absurd is also a therapeutically relaxing way to start the weekend. In any event, we generally enjoy our exploits around the ping pong table and any loud cries of “TGIF” heard reverberating around Teesdale could well be members of our group wending their way to the leisure centre for their weekly workout. For most of us, our play is a bit like the curate’s egg – good in parts – but overall the intention is to have fun and we usually succeed in that.

On a broader stage, Matthew Syed’s always interesting podcast *Sideways* (available on BBC Sounds), has recently included a fascinating three-part mini-series entitled “*China’s Ping Pong Power*”, which tells the story of how the humble game of table tennis transformed China’s international standing. Syed, who was himself an Olympic table tennis player for Great Britain, describes table tennis as a mesmerising combination of strategy and speed, rather like running the 100 metres and playing chess at the same time (he obviously hasn’t seen us play!). His series investigates the rise of Chinese table tennis, with Rong Guotuan, who won the 1959 world championships and was China’s first world champion in any sport, and Zhuang Zedong, who won the title three times in the 1970s. Chairman Mao was himself a keen player and was persuaded by Ivor Montague, who wrote the rules of the game and founded the International Table Tennis

Federation, before becoming a Russian spy (really), that table tennis could be used to promote China's interests in the world. In 1971, an unlikely intervention by a hippy American player wearing a "Let It Be" T-shirt at the world championships in Japan led to an invitation to the US team to go to China. What developed from there into "ping pong diplomacy" is credited with laying the ground work for Kissinger's secret trip to China to discuss the future of Taiwan, China joining the UN Security Council and the thawing of relations that led to Nixon's visit to China in 1972. An extraordinary tale and a world away from our Friday afternoon antics.

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 (pandjsinger@btinternet.com 07508 663998). All are welcome, whether you play regularly, have not played for some time or have never played before.

TRAVEL NOTES FROM DOROTHY JAMIESON

The trip to the Lavender Fields certainly started on a high, temperature wise! Fortunately the coach had air conditioning, although the hotel didn't; it provided fans in each bedroom! It was a most enjoyable trip and it was lovely to enjoy the friendship and fellowship.

Gardiners have agreed that the coach will pick up in Barney for the trip to Hampshire. [see Future Trips page 6]

We did have time to discuss trips for next year, and we are hoping to do two. The Castles and Gardens of Kent, which includes visits to Leeds and Bodiam Castles, Sissinghurst, Penshurst and Chartwell. The other request is for Highgrove Gardens, Blenheim Palace and Oxford.

Kyle Travel are going to keep us informed when next year's brochure is available and if there are sufficient numbers, the coach company will pick up in Barnard Castle.

SHORTER WALKS - Report by Hilary Dunnighan

Sitting in the car park of Bowes village hall on Monday 26th June, the heavens opened, and the rain poured down. Luckily, by the time we started our 3½ mile circular walk, the wind had blown away the clouds and it remained dry for the rest of the time.

10 of us walked towards St Giles church where the churchyard houses the grave of William Shaw, headmaster of the former school known as Shaw's Academy. This became Dotheboys Hall, with its headmaster, Wackford Squeers, in Charles Dickens' novel, *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Turning down Back Lane, we passed the entrance to Bowes Castle, built

in 1170 on the site of an earlier Roman fort. We crossed into the fields and down to the River Greta, then on to Gilmonby Bridge, before taking the long incline up towards The Rigg. We were treated to panoramic views over the surrounding countryside with the Stang Forest in the distance. Our route ran parallel, but a mile away, to the A66. As we were high up, there was no impediment to the view (and the noise) of this arterial road!

On entering Green Lane, there was a warning not to disturb the ground nesting birds - curlews and lapwings. The curlews were in abundance, with their distinctive cry, curved beaks, and mottled brown plumage.

At the end of the lane, we entered The Rigg, which is part of Scargill Low Moor and is full of heather and rushes, and which gets very boggy in wet weather. We crossed the farmyard of White Close Hill Farm, across a very wet, muddy area, and climbed a difficult stile in a high stone wall. In all, there were 13 stiles on this short walk.



On the return half of our circuit, we had good views of the village and Bowes Castle and beyond, the summit of Mickel Fell at 790 metres, the highest point in County Durham. Having climbed many more stiles - and avoiding electric cattle fences - we passed through the Tom Gill Plantation and made our way back over Gilmonby Bridge to the road and back to the car park.

Although a challenging walk, participants agreed that it was enjoyable exercise with magnificent views throughout.

Thanks to Colin for helping with the recce and taking the photos.

4-6 MILE WALKING GROUP – Report by Ian Royston

Slitt Woods- Tuesday 13th June

Seven brave souls braved the heat, sun and trespassing into ‘the other dale’ for our walk on Tuesday 13th June.

Starting at the village of Westgate, its name coming from the west gate of the Prince Bishops’ Weardale hunting ground, our walk headed up alongside Middlehope Beck past a series of waterfalls, where the burn flows over step-like features in the rocks. The landscape is made up of repeated layers of limestone, sandstone and shale, known by geologists as ‘cyclothem’s’. These rocks wear away at different rates resulting in the step-like profile of many hillsides and the waterfalls along the streams. The beck is crossed multiple times by well-maintained bridges, the lower parts seemingly popular with dog walkers.

The water and canopy of trees provided a cooling respite from the sun until we passed into a more open area, a former ‘washing floor’ around the ‘bousesteems’, the remains of buildings used to store the lead ore prior to washing. This is the first obvious evidence of lead mining which ensured Weardale’s prosperity.

We continued north but, on our way, noticed two frogs, or were they toads? (no-one was quite sure) leaping alongside our path. Eventually the woods ended and the vista opened up to high fells and plenty of evidence of the industrial past with spoil heaps and the embankments of wagonways of the Rookhope and Middlehope system. Here in open meadows we found northern marsh orchids and wild pansies lining our route. For entertainment we watched a convoy of ducklings being led by mum across the heath; she seemed wary of our presence.

We left the beck via a short and steepish climb onto a well-used track passing Shield Close, a derelict house not long ago on ‘Rightmove’, associated with century-old quarries and mines which surround the high road.

Our steady descent back into Weardale turned our attention skyward, initially by curlews, latterly by a Royal Navy helicopter, flying at very low level a long way from the sea. Unfortunately, difficult stiles and nettles (six of us were in shorts) forced us onto the main road before we crossed the Wear to its south bank, behind Westgate village as it were. Though the ford looking inviting for a paddle to cool our feet we crossed a narrow footbridge back to where we had all parked.

OS tells us we’d done (once translated) $5\frac{3}{4}$ miles. We’ll call it 6!



Photos by Ian Royston

4-6 MILE WALK GROUP: Eggleston circular 11 July 2023 report by Nicky Grace

Fifteen of us gathered by the green in Eggleston for a walk of just under 6 miles. The rain started just as we set off and showers continued for the first 1.5 hours! However it was sunny in between so there was much putting on and taking off of coats and jackets. We walked down Balmer Lane and across the fields to Newtown (c 5 houses!). We crossed the becks (Blackton Beck and Eggleston Burn) and emerged by the saddle store. Crossing the road we ascended to the moors known as Foggerthwaite allotment. Through the rain we heard the curlew and oystercatchers.

We joined a track and passed Standing Stones Farm heading towards Eggleston chapel. The rain abated for a few minutes for a coffee break beside the parish marker for Eggleston. After one more brief shower, the weather cheered up as we made our way to the Tees by the Millenium Bridge. We all navigated successfully the old road with its slippery stones and tree roots, and emerged briefly on the Middleton road again. We then skirted the edge of Eggleston Wood on a path with brambles and nettles to catch out the wearers of shorts. Heading towards Bogg House, we turned left for a straight walk past the evidence of medieval cultivation terraces or strip lynchets. We went over the fields with two stiles (and no highland cows) to reach the back lane and our destination. In a short distance we had experienced several seasons of weather plus a varied range of landscape and historic routes.

Photo by Ian Royston



7 – 9 MILE WALKING GROUP - Report by Peter Singer

Barnard Castle/Cotherstone Circular

On a pleasantly warm and sunny solstice day, seventeen of us gathered expectantly at Scar Top for a 7.5 mile, classic Teesdale circular walk from Barnard Castle to Cotherstone and back, following the Teesdale Way along both sides of the river. It was great to welcome a number of new members to the group, as well as many of the usual suspects. This was the fourth walk that the leader had recce'd, with the previous three having been discounted because of problems with either vertiginous terrain or an implacably threatening bull, so there was a sense of relief that we actually had a walk to undertake.

The leader warned that the walk, like life, had its ups and downs, but all would be well if we stuck to the right path. The group felt that it was too early in the morning for cod-philosophy, so with no more ado we struck out to cross what had originally been St John's Bridge over Percy Beck, passing the site of the former bandstand and out along the wooded and shady riverside path. This was good walking, although care was needed in places to avoid exposed tree roots and rocks. At the "wishing stones" those who managed to go through the gap between the stones, without touching either of them, were able to make a wish, albeit with no guarantee of fulfilment. Having climbed steeply up Tees Bank, we rounded West Holme Farm, quietly skirting some lovely new calves and distant (and fortunately docile) cows, through meadows and back down through woods, with a splendid view across the river to a former mill, before crossing two bridges to reach Cotherstone. A pretty spot known as the Hagg, by the confluence of the Balder and the Tees, made a good place for our lunch and a deer was spotted briefly as we set off again on the return leg up the steep steps on Hallgarth Hill, leading to the site of Cotherstone Castle. We paused for a moment at the lonely grave of Abraham Hilton, a local philanthropist who founded a number of charities and reflected that, as he had lived to the age of 87 (a good age in 1902), philanthropy must be good for you, although perhaps being wealthy may also have had something to do with it.

The remainder of the walk followed the river back towards Barney, punctuated by the songs of chiff chaffs and wrens, with a hare glimpsed bounding across a meadow, on through Towler Hill plantation and farm and passing the remains of the Tees Railway viaduct (1861), before crossing the Silver Bridge (1898) and back to Scar Top for ice-creams all round. The walk, which some of us had not done for several years, was very enjoyable, with varied terrain, good views and quite a few points of interest – and the weather was kind. Thanks to Judith, we also added the term "sneezing gate" (as opposed to "kissing gate") to the lexicon of rambling. Bless you!



July's 8-mile walk was from Middleton in Teesdale to the heights of Monks Moor (565m) and return through Hudeshope. August's walk is on Wed 16 August. Please contact Nicky Grace if you are interested in coming along. **Photo: Looking across the Tees with Cotherstone mill opposite.** Contact: nickygrace729@gmail.com

FELL WALKING GROUP—Report by Annie Clouston

Ten of us set out on a really grotty day, with low cloud cover, drizzle and significant high level wind, and our walk leaders in consultation with walkers, made the wise decision for a change of plan. We were all keen to traverse Cross Fell, but not so keen on being up there in very inclement conditions without a hope of the glorious views that are a major part of enjoyment of fell-walking. Nevertheless, one of us went rogue and off he went into the mist...



The remaining nine of us drove back to Dufton from Kirkland Hall and instead had a very delightful circular walk along the valley of Trout Beck, via Brampton, a good 10 miles, some of it precarious, where erosion had taken its toll on the path along the valley side. We ended our expedition with refreshments in Post Box Pantry, where the welcome and the scones were splendid.

Our rogue, you may be interested to know, is not still wandering the fells in ever decreasing circles. Unlike Captain Lawrence Edward Grace "Titus" Oates (1880–1912) he returned, though perhaps not by the planned route.

UNDERSTANDING CLASSICAL MUSIC —Report by Bill Heyes

At the meeting in May the group continued to review the basics of classical music. The topic this month was Harmony. Prof Wright showed how harmony can be built by combing other notes at specific intervals with the tonic or home note leading to triads or chords in a specific musical key. To

add further harmony, the chords can be varied to fit with the melody. A number of examples illustrated the points being made. Prof Wright then went on to demonstrate how the harmony can be extended by addition of a bass line, again with examples.

After coffee the group considered the idea that the different musical keys can each have a specific character – romantic, sorrowful, exuberant etc. The idea was first suggested in the early 1800s but not all authorities agree, some arguing that because the octave is divided into equal steps between the notes, all keys should sound the same. If this is so, why then do composers set their work in a specific key e.g. Beethoven symphony no.6 in F major? The group listened to some examples of the use specific keys but were unable to reach a decision.

The June meeting was devoted to a study of music from the Baroque period. Firstly, a video by Prof. Wright introduced J S Bach's choral music interwoven with a biographical account of the composer's life. This revealed some surprising facts; e.g. that Bach composed a new cantata every week for Sunday worship. After coffee an explanatory video described the background to and the compositional aspects of Bach's six Brandenburg Concertos.

The next meeting of the group will be July 28th when we will review the Classical period, particularly the music of Mozart.

WILDFLOWER GROUP—Report by Kate Keen

In June, the Wildflower Group ventured into Cumbria to the Smardale Gill Nature Reserve. The reserve is managed by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust who consider the location to be the best place to see wild flowers in Cumbria. The site is also home to red squirrels but they are best seen at dawn and dusk and so were not seen on our afternoon walk. We did, however, see a greater spotted woodpecker.

A small group of 8 of us spent a pleasant afternoon in the hot sun looking at the flowers. There were numerous orchids along the side of the old railway line. We saw some flowers that the group does not normally see in Teesdale including Enchanters Nightshade and hoary plantain. We also saw salad burnett but the flowers were not open yet. We knew from a notice board at the start of the walk that we could expect to see bloody cranesbill, just as we had turned back to head home, Jenny Selley spotted this for us. A full list of the plants seen has been sent out to the group.

July's visit was to Hayberries Nature Reserve near Eggleston. **Photo: Bloody Cranesbill**





**'Smardale Girls': members of the wild flower walk
at Smardale Gill Nature Reserve**

WINE GROUP—Report by Tim Meacham

In recent months we have kept our focus on Europe with tastings from France, Italy and Spain, the big three on the world stage. For our June meeting we headed west to look at a selection of medium priced wines from the American continent. Thanks to Kathleen and Mark for great hospitality in Startforth.

We started with four whites, all in the £7 - £8 price range to compare the current offerings from Chile and Argentina with the equivalent price range in California. This was tricky as most Californian wines command premium prices, well beyond our range. Our first bottle was a Sainsburys' Trivento 2022 White Mendoza Malbec Reserve (10.5% and £8.00), interesting in that Malbec is a red grape and the use of this to produce Argentinian white wine is quite recent. Less interesting was the taste: 'weak and watery' was the verdict, not perhaps surprising given the 10.5% strength. We moved quite quickly onto our first Californian example, the Wave Break Pinot Grigio 2021 (11% and also £8.00) from M&S. This 79% Pinot Grigio blend (with a hint of Viognier and 18% French Colombard) was better, although also lacking in depth. "Fresh and vibrant" the label told us, and it was a pleasant if unremarkable everyday wine; perhaps rather overpriced however. That led us to try a Valle Del Bio Bio 2022 Pure Viognier example from Sainsburys (13% and £7.00). This Chilean example was not only £1 cheaper than its Argentinian counterpart, but was a much more interesting wine. The Viognier grape dominated this time and is clearly suited to the coastal climate. It had a real 'zing' and for the first time brought approving noises from the group: good value. Our final white took us back to California for an M&S California Vineyards Chardonnay/Chenin 2021 blend (13% and £7.00). This was much better than the other Californian example. The Chenin Blanc brought real flavour to the stock Chardonnay and this would

be a very nice drink for a BBQ on a sunny day. Again the cheaper wine prevailed and credit to M&S for such a reasonable deal.

That just left a couple of reds, both quite cheap and cheerful. The Yapo Merlot 2021 from Chile (13% and £6.50) was fruity and light. Even the 'non-reds' amongst us said they quite enjoyed it. Another tick for M&S. In comparison the slightly stronger Argentinian Sab Roso Malbec 2022 (13.5% and £6.50), also from M&S, brought a more mixed reaction but the 'red brigade' gave this the thumbs up for its rich plum flavour. Again, well done Marks & Spencer!

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 15th August for our annual 'Fizz only' session. Details from Tim Meacham.

JULY'S ANIMAL QUIZ

1. What is a hare kid called?
2. Where is the only place the i'iwi bird is found?
3. Woodlice evolved from marine isopods. True or false?
4. What do elephants use their ear flaps for?
5. Who wrote the poem *To a Butterfly*?
6. Which brothers published the first natural history book entirely illustrated with photographs?
7. Like lizards, snakes can lose their tails. True or false?
8. In the historical novel, *West with Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge, where were they heading?
9. Which book in the bible tells of Noah's Ark?
10. An orca whale typically weighs: 1500kg, 3,000kg or 6,000kg?
11. What year was the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) established?
12. What is the real name of the greyhound who plays Cerberus in TV's *Coronation Street*?
13. What is the common name for *anguis fragilis*?
14. Who said: "The better I get to know men, the more I find myself loving dogs"?
15. At what age do dogs start breeding?
16. All bats hibernate. True or false?
17. Who started Chester Zoo?
18. What is an underground formicary used for?
19. The lion's larynx is the longest of all the big cats. True or false?
20. Little owls and short-eared owls are diurnal. What does this mean?

JULY'S ANIMAL QUIZ—ANSWERS

1. A leveret
2. Higher elevations of the Hawaiian Islands
3. True
4. To regulate temperature
5. William Wordsworth
6. Richard and Cherry Kearton
7. False. Only lizards can
8. To San Diego zoo
9. Genesis 6-9
10. 3,000 to 4,000kg
11. 1961
12. Boss
13. Slow worm
14. Charles De Gaulle
15. 2 – 3 years
16. False
17. The Mottershead family
18. An ant colony
19. True, giving it the most robust roar
20. They hunt during the day

Update on Bridge Workshop from Sue Overton

Since the Beginners Bridge Workshop held in January, many of the participants have continued to meet in their efforts to improve their knowledge and skills. However, this is not as yet a specific interest group of our Teesdale u3a mainly because of the difficulty in catering for all the different level of skills in one group.

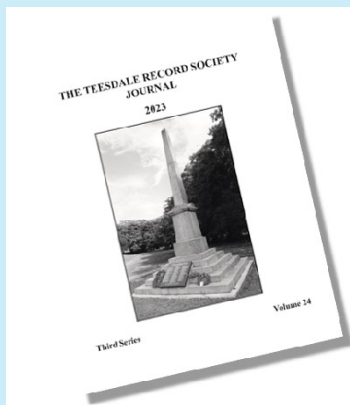
Currently, a few of us (beginners) meet fortnightly with a couple of experienced players, some people attend the Wednesday evening Duplicate Bridge Club at the Glaxo Sports and Social Club, some attend a group in Eggleston, and I have recently been informed that there is an intermediate group who meet every Friday 10am – 12noon at the golf club in Bishop Auckland (contact is David Wilkinson).

If you have knowledge of other groups in the area, please send the details to me sueoverton@hotmail.com

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Don't forget!

**The Inbetweeners
get-together**

**An opportunity to meet other members of the u3a
informally for a chat, a cuppa and good company.**

**Thursday 10 August at 14.30
Ground Floor Gallery, The Witham**

Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Art Appreciation	1 st Wed pm	Tony Seward 01833 630050
Automotive	3 rd Tuesday am	Peter Colley 01833 695197
Birdwatching	3 rd Monday am	Andrew Lapworth 07962 038052
Board Games	2 nd Monday pm	Hazel McCallum 01833 316484
Book Group 2	2 nd Mon pm	Maggie Cleminson 01833 640801
Book Group Room to Read	3 rd Wed pm	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Climate Solutions	1 st Thurs am	Kate Bailey 07867 683195
Discussion	2 nd Fri am	Glen Howard 01833 631639
French Conversation	4 th Thurs pm	Stella Kirton 01388 488919
Gardening	1 st Fri pm	Julie Archer 07774 903377 01833 637576
Genealogy	1 st Thurs pm	Alan Swindale 01388 488348
Geography	3 rd Thurs 2pm	Gerald Blake 01833 650899
Geology	4 th Mon am	Bob Tuddenham 07812 378004
Historic Environment	2 nd Thurs 10am	Tim Meacham 07847 182554
iPad & iPhone	4 th Fri 1.30pm	Mike Sweeting 01833 630005
Italian Conversation	Every Wed am	Marie Jenkins 07754 205664
Lunch Group	3 rd Wed noon	Jane Mathieson 01388 710741
Needlecraft	1 st Mon pm	Glen Howard 01833 631639
Painting	2 nd Fri 10am	Val Hobbs 07900 497503
Philosophy	4 th Tues 10am	Ruth Sansom 01325 401850
Photography	1 st Tues	Jane Mathieson 01388 710741

Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Poetry	2 nd Wed am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Science and Technology	2 nd Mon am	Roy Tranter 01833 638288
Scrabble	2 nd Mon pm	Lilian Smith 01833 650628
Spanish Conversation	3 rd Thurs 10am	Michael Harris 07799 051389
Table Tennis	Every Friday 3pm	Peter Singer 07508 663998
Theatre	Varies	Elizabeth Formstone 07979 204212
Travel and Day trips		Jane Mathieson 01388 710741
Understanding Classical Music	4 th Friday 10am	Bill Heyes 01833 640885
Wildflower Group	2 nd Wed 2pm	Kate Keen 07880 741151
Wine Group	3 rd Tues pm	Tim Meacham 07847 182554
Walking Groups		
Shorter walks 3-4 miles	4 th Monday pm	Sue Overton 07512 368884
Walking 4-6 miles	2 nd Tues 10am	Gillian Barnes-Morris 07941 852165
Walking 7-9 miles	3 rd Wed 10am	Nicky Grace nickygrace729@gmail.com
Fell Walking	4 th Wed	Annie Clouston 01833 637091

Most meetings are held in or near Barnard Castle though Photography and the Walks may start further afield.

For further details of any group; to confirm the start time and venue, or if the meeting is going ahead, please contact the Convenors/Group Leaders

**Coming up at your
Community Arts Centre**



Thurs 27 July 7.00pm	FILM – Allelujah (12A) Starring David Bradley, Judi Dench and Jennifer Saunders. Shown with subtitles.
Sat 29 July From 5.00pm	COMEDY – Edinburgh Previews – 4 shows Up and coming stars of the UK comedy scene present their new shows ahead of the Edinburgh Festival and UK tours.
Sat 19 Aug 2.30pm	FAMILY – The Ultimate Bubble Show Exciting stunts, amazing magic and spectacular bubble displays.
Sat 9 Sept 8.00pm	TRIBUTE – NE Street Band: The Songs of Bruce Springsteen An audience engaging tribute show of all things Bruce Springsteen.
Fri 15 Sept 7.30pm	FOLK – Tannahill Weavers Traditional Celtic music at its best!
Sat 16 Sept 7.00pm	BRASS – The Reg Vardy Band Premier Brass Band of North East England returning to The Witham for the third consecutive year.
Wed 20 Sept 8.00pm	COMEDY – Andy Parsons: Bafflingly Optimistic (14+)
Fri 22 Sept 7.30pm	COMEDY – Ashley Blaker: Normal Schmormal (14+)
Sun 24 Sept 2.00pm	FUNDRAISER – Community Choir in Concert: Sing Sing Sing!
Wed 27 Sept 7.30pm	THEATRE – Mrs Roosevelt Flies Again Alison Skilbeck’s critically acclaimed one-woman show, with special permission to use Eleanor Roosevelt’s writings.

www.thewitham.org.uk

Box office: 01833 631107