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# FORUM

JANUARY 2024

No. 24/01



u3a

## **Chair's Letter January 2024**

Dear All

As I write this letter it's dark and damp outside, positively dismal, but this morning the sun did shine briefly and although it was a quagmire, my walk in the wood did much to lift my mood. I hope that you too are finding joy in your activities at a time when there are such awful atrocities occurring in other parts of the world.

Speaking of activities, we have three new groups starting this month – Android phone group, Chess and Pickleball – making a total of 40 different groups! For contact details, check the list of groups in the Forum or on the website, there's sure to be something of interest.

There are very few gaps in our calendar now but if you have a subject you would like to propose as an interest group, please contact me or Ian Reid, Group Coordinators.

And so, with fading memories of turkey and tinsel and a new year underway, I'd like to finish with the wise words of Brian Bilston who reminds us in his poem 'Waiting on Godot'....

"Don't spend your life waiting. Think later. First, Dance!  
Act now while you can – while you still have the chance!"

Sue Overton, Chair

[Sue hands over the Chair to Annie Clouston in February]

### **It's Your Forum**

Editors: Annie Clouston, Ian Royston and Kate Bailey

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Cover photograph: Snow on Stainmore by Kate Bailey

## It's Your Forum

### 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 send images separately in .jpg format please.

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)

### DEADLINE for the next edition: Tuesday 6th February 2024

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.

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

### TEESDALE u3a Officers 2024

Chair: Annie Clouston [chair@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@teesdaleu3a.org.uk)

Membership Secretary: Tim Meacham [memsec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:memsec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk)

Business Secretary: Liz Colley [bissec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:bissec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk)

Treasurer: Hazel McCallum [treasurer@teesdaleu3a.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@teesdaleu3a.org.uk)

## **U3A BUSINESS MATTERS - RENEWALS 2024**

### **Notice from Membership Secretary Tim Meacham**

The end of February will mark the end of yet another successful membership year for Teesdale u3a and I am pleased to report that the fee for 2024-2025 membership will remain unchanged at **£20** per member (£16.50 for those associate members who are primarily members of another u3a).

Renewals are due by **March 1<sup>st</sup> 2024** so why not get them out of the way early? These can be paid in a number of ways:

**By BACS (Bank Transfer)** as follows: Account: **The Teesdale U3A**. Sort Code: **20-83-73**. Account Number: **23470873** (To make sure we can identify the source of your payment please type '**The Teesdale U3A**' in full and **quote your name** as the reference for the transfer.

**By cheque** (made out to 'The **Teesdale U3A Number Two Account**'), either in person at the February or March General Meeting **OR** by post to 'Tim Meacham (u3a Membership Secretary), 1a Station Terrace, Cotherstone, Barnard Castle, DL12 9PZ

**By cash** and in person, **not by post**, in a sealed envelope, please, with the member's or members' full name(s) written thereon.

These methods are very much in descending order of preference from our point of view. Last year 66% of members who renewed did so by BACS and we would be pleased to see this percentage increase further this year. We hope you will decide to renew for 2024.

We have a full programme of events again this year featuring not only our monthly meetings at The Witham and nearly 40 interest groups, but also our highly successful range of weekend workshops. For details of all these and more don't forget to visit our website at [www.teesdaleu3a.org.uk](http://www.teesdaleu3a.org.uk). Here you can access our monthly Forum magazine which gives reports on recent activities as well as information about forthcoming events. Hard copies of the Forum may be purchased at our monthly meetings.

If you have any questions or any problems with your u3a membership please don't hesitate to contact me on [simontimothymeacham@gmail.com](mailto:simontimothymeacham@gmail.com) or by phone at 07847 182554

## **NEXT IN-BETWEENERS MEETING**

**IN-Betweeners Special Session on Thursday 8th February  
at 2.30-3.30pm** in the Witham Room at The Witham

The topic is 'Coop Estate Planning which is a follow-on from the previous talk about Wills and Power-of-Attorney. The talk will last for around 30 minutes, with a Q&A session for a further 15 minutes.

## **NOVEMBER'S MONTHLY MEETING AT THE WITHAM REPORT BY CELIA CHAPPLE**

### **Speaker Martin Fish - *Judging with the Royal Horticultural Society***

Martin Fish has been a Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) judge for 14 years and gave Teesdale u3a members a colourfully illustrated 'behind the scenes' look at the major flower shows across the country.

Martin is a senior judge at about 12 shows each season, such as at Malvern, Tatton Park, Hampton Court and Chelsea, specialising in the floral marquee. Each of the 6 panels has 5 judges, experts in various fields such as tropical plants, begonias and streptocarpus (household plants). The panel's Chair views all 15 exhibits first, choosing one judge who would be best to lead on each exhibit. There are also 3 moderators who oversee and maintain consistency over the show and between shows. Judges are accredited, training 'on the job' and must renew their accreditation every 5 years.

The three criteria when judging are: the size, maturity, variety and nomenclature of the plants; overall impression (design); endeavour (the work demonstrated on the application form and on the exhibit). All criteria are equally important and points are accumulated to indicate which medal an exhibit has won. There is no limit on the number of medals given in each category. 11 points and over earn a gold medal, 8-10 points for a silver gilt, 5-7 points for silver, 3-5 points for bronze, and no medal below 3. The moderators come together and agree on the awards, although a discrepancy can lead to another vote and can change a medal position. The Chair then walks around the marquee giving exhibitors feedback.

The second half of Martin's talk focused on the Chelsea Flower Show held in May. He explained the intricate measures adopted to ensure that out-of-season cut flowers such as daffodils are flawless.

These flowers are nurtured indoors until they are in bud then gradually exposed to cooler temperatures to restrain growth, and finally brought into the warm show marquee at their flowering best. They are replaced by a new set of flowers half way through the show.

There used to be a waiting list to exhibit in a show but due to the post-covid rise in production costs, less sponsorship, and higher online plant and gardening sales, exhibitors attend fewer shows. The garden exhibits tend to be smaller too.

## **FUTURE 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.

**29 FEBRUARY MEETING: *Patons & Baldwins factory in Darlington*: Speaker: Chris Lloyd**

Chris Lloyd will talk about Patons & Baldwins, in the past the largest knitting yarn manufacturer in the world. It was founded in the 1770s and, from 1951, it played a major part in the lives of many Darlingtonians, not just the 4000 people employed in the factory.

### **Northumbria Region u3a**

The Northumbria Region u3a 'Messenger' website: [u3asites.org.uk/northumbria](http://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria) provides links to their events including a day at the Royal Navy Museum Hartlepool on 15th March 2024, and the u3a Festival 24 at York University 18th - 20th July 2024.

**Yoga Workshops at the Hub** - Report by Merrion Chrisp

u3a's Yoga Group is led by Angela Griffiths, who is a British Wheel of Yoga Teacher. The 75 minute sessions cover breathwork (pranayama), postures (asana) and relaxation. The current term runs from Monday 8 January – Monday 12 February, 6 sessions at a fee of £18.00 to cover room hire charges. The classes are at The Hub on Monday mornings. Numbers are limited and must be pre-booked but if you would like to be added to the waiting list please contact:-

Merrion Chrisp - [mfchrisp@gmail.com](mailto:mfchrisp@gmail.com). or  
Angela Griffiths [angelagriffiths5@icloud.com](mailto:angelagriffiths5@icloud.com)

## WORKSHOP REPORTS

### 'Go Crafty at Christmas' Workshop - Report by Hazel Yeadon

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow . . . and so it did for the Go Crafty at Christmas Workshop at the start of December. However, it wasn't sufficient to stop the hardy participants from reaching the dizzy heights of Boldron, where the snow made it all look very pretty. New u3a member Clare even walked from Startforth!

The intention was to have a relaxed morning exchanging ideas for Christmas decorations and the mulled wine and mince pies, closely followed by coffee and biscuits, ensured that this was the case.



We had air-dried clay stars; crocheted baubles; knitted elfs; rag wreaths; a tricky five pointed star from twigs; a poinsettia brooch and a 'pair of ice skates' tree decoration, amongst others.

However, the focus of the morning was a wonderful hanging tree shaped decoration made from thin sticks, brought along by Kathleen, to which you attached whatever decorations you chose

Everyone was very busy all morning, though most were taken home for final completion. It was a happy start to December and to Christmas!



## FUTURE WORKSHOPS

**17th February 2024** 10am-12 noon at Guide HQ, Birch Road.  
Andrew Lapworth will lead a workshop on birdsong and bird identification. Only 4 places left, contact Sue Overton 07512 368884

**March 2024** - date to be fixed - the workshop will be on 'Handbells'

**April 6th 2024** A history of Barnard Castle street names: A Walking Tour (event adjourned from last year). Contact Tim Meacham or Annie Clouston for more information.

**Any ideas you have for activities that you want to explore will be gratefully received by the Workshop Group: Please contact Annie Clouston, Hazel Yeadon, Sue Overton or Hilary Dunnighan. No idea too left-field to be considered!**

## FUTURE DAY TRIPS 2024 - Report by Jane Mathieson

### Friday April 19th

Visit Hawes & Creamery. Leave BC at 9am outside Addisons, arrive back before 6pm. Cost £20.00 includes coach & Creamery demonstration

### Friday 20th September

Visit Woodhorn Museum. Leave BC at 9am outside Addisons, arrive back before 6pm. Cost approx £21.00 includes coach & museum. This is the 90th anniversary of Pitmen Artists so there are extended galleries with extra paintings from their archives

### June/July TBC

Visit to Yorkshire Lavender am, Wine tasting at Rydale Winery pm

Please let Jane know if you would like to come on any of these visits -  
tel: [01388 710741](tel:01388710741)

## TRAVEL - note from Dorothy Jamieson

Several coach firms have ceased trading this year, but there are possibilities for two holidays. The hotels perhaps may not be quite as 'up-market' as some hotels we have stayed in recently. The good news is they are cheaper! Also one of the reasons we go away is to spend time together and to create new memories.

The two possibilities for 2024 are:

**April 6th** Cheddar, Bath and Wells.

Four nights dinner, bed and breakfast staying at the Anchor Head Hotel in Weston-super-Mare. £285 per person, two sharing. There are some single rooms available at additional cost. This holiday is with Alfa Travel.

**September 2nd** Stratford on Avon, Lichfield and the National Memorial Arboretum.

Four nights dinner, bed and breakfast staying at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. £299 per person, two sharing. There are some single rooms at additional cost. This holiday is with National Holidays.

The official pick up point for both these trips is Darlington, but if there is sufficient interest hopefully the coach will pick us up in Barney. As these holidays are from the firm's brochures they are open to anyone and not exclusive to u3a, although the last two trips we have done Barney people were the majority.

Further details are available from Kyle Travel for both these trips. Please contact Dorothy Jameson 01833 637957

## **AUTOMOTIVE GROUP - Report by David Yeadon**

Seven members of the group set out in an interesting selection of cars, to the South Lakes Motor Museum, which contains a wide selection of cars, motorbikes, cycles, and a massive collection of everything to do with motoring and cycling going back to the mid 1800s. Being the age profile our group is, a lot of the cars on display elicited 'I had one like that', 'My Dad had one like that, and we all crammed into it to go on holiday!'

An 'Amphicar', car-cum-boat, with propellers at the back/stern, from the 1960s, brought back memories for David Yeadon, who was in the Motor Trade in Leeds at that time. 'An 'Amphicar' came into stock, some people showed interest in buying it, and I was sent off to Naburn near York, where there was a slipway, to demonstrate the vehicle's capabilities. I put the hood down so that I could swim to shore in case it sank. All went well, and the prospective buyers had a little chug up and down the river, were happy, and bought the car-cum-boat. Horrible to drive and looking as if the smallest wave would sink it !

'A few weeks later the car was back in the garage with gearbox failure,

And it transpired that it had been a rental vehicle on the south coast, and had been sunk in the sea. Spare parts were unobtainable, so it lingered in a corner of the workshop for ages, and I have no idea what happened to it eventually!



A fun day out for a bunch of u3a 'petrol heads!



## **BIRDWATCHING GROUP - Report and photo by Andrew Lapworth**

For our last outdoor meeting of 2023, eleven of us made the trip to Bishop Middleham for a wander around this historic rural site. We met and parked on the village green by the church, and then walked along Fourmarts Lane. Contractors were working on the sewage farm, and we needed to make way for some big trucks accessing their site.

After all the rains, the lane and fields were very soggy and muddy, and there were flash ponds in many of the low-lying fields; wellies weren't out of order!

Crows, Jackdaws and Magpies were soon noted as we booted up, and Blackbirds, Woodpigeons and Tits were found in the surrounding and nearly leafless trees. We stopped and scanned the huge Hornbeams in the lane, but the **Hawfinches** that have frequented the trees in past winters were not found; maybe they will turn up later this winter.



*Hawfinch present in February 2023*

As we walked along the lane we stopped to 'scope small flocks of Starlings, Fieldfares and Redwings when they settled in the distant trees. The winter-visiting thrushes were still feeding on

the abundant crops of berries along the hedgerows at this time of the year. A high flying Sparrowhawk kept the flocks mobile.

Next we visited the Durham Bird Club hide overlooking Castle Lake; this gives a warm and sheltered place to scan the lake in relative comfort. We were soon looking at hordes of wildfowl scattered across this extensive area. On the hilly slopes opposite were flocks of Canada and Greylag Geese, and large numbers of grazing Widgeon.

On the lake we sorted out the diving ducks from the dabblers and up-enders: Tufted Ducks and Goldeneyes in the former; Mallard, Gadwall, Shovelers, and Teal in the latter. In between the numerous Coots hid one of two Little Grebes; there were also a few pairs of Mute Swans.

We returned to the track and walked down to scan the flooded fields and very full drains. We added Grey Herons, Moorhens, Shelduck and the Little Egrets, including a group of 4 huddled together. Eagle eyes found a Greater-Spotted Woodpecker on a fallen tree, Linnets in the field, and a very active group of foraging Reed Buntings and Stonechats along the scrubby edge in front of us. En route back to the cars a Mistle Thrush called as it flew over us, and we saw a Kestrel.

Around 30 species were seen on our visit; we particularly enjoyed the thrush species we saw, only missing Song Thrush. Not long after our visit the **Hawfinch** has been seen almost daily feeding on or under the Hornbeams.

In December we held a planning meeting, and have plotted out our monthly visits for 2024. Thanks to all who have offered to lead various meetings.



Birdwatchers at  
Bishop Middleham

## **BOARD GAMES GROUP - Report by Clare Tamea**

'Twas the week before Christmas when 9 of us came  
To the fine Old Well Inn for mulled wine and a game.  
Bananagrams, Skylo and our fave - Rummikub  
Were the games we had chosen to play in this pub.

After learning the rules, and on the cry, "start!"  
We all checked our tiles, with fast beating hearts.  
Quick! Make a crossword! As quick as a flash,  
Before someone calls "peel" and your hopes are quite dashed!

One of us curses, "Oh, bloomin' Noel,  
I've only gone and drawn another vowel!"  
Now Hazel, now Annie, now Judith and Jean,  
On Alan, on Andy, on Sue, Clare and Jane!

Pub goers bemused by our squeals and our groans,  
Our mutters and shrieks, our laughter and moans.  
Sue throws down a "Qi", and with glee wins this round,  
And the tiles are then shuffled in to a fresh mound.

And so we continued our games with delight,  
Until it was time to wish all a good night!  
So if you like fun with fine friends and some games,  
Then let Hazel know and give her your names.

*(With apologies to the original author of this poem!)*

## **CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GROUP - Report by Kate Bailey**

Our December meeting was very sociable and generally positive. We celebrated the recent publication of Martyn's climate-solutions letter in the Teesdale Mercury with mulled apple juice punch .... !

Members who had attended the North Pennines AONB 'Nature and Farming' talk reported that the speaker, farmer Nic Rennison, has planted 2m wide hedges for shelter and replaced ancient hedgerows on old boundaries to create 28 small fields. The farm uses a grazing rotation system for 80 beef cattle, moved every day into a new field and followed by hens sheltering in wheeled hen-houses, towed at night into the field vacated by the cattle. They use no feedstuffs, grains or fertilisers and their animals are kept indoors for a maximum 6 weeks each year. They have joined a collective of over 200 'Regenerative Farming' businesses and are supported by Countryside Stewardship payments and the Woodland Trust.

We discussed 'Good News' items that had cheered us:

Baby kangaroo 'poo' added into animal feeds is being demonstrated to reduce cows' methane emissions;

Humpback whales are adapting to diminishing fish stocks by excreting nutrients that feed mackerel shoals;

Acoustic monitoring suggests that numbers of the largest and one of the most endangered species on earth, the Blue Whale, may be increasing in the Indian Ocean;

University researchers will spend 20 years monitoring climate adaptation and habitat restoration in North Yorkshire's largest broadleaf forest being planted in Snaizeholme near Hawes;

Discoveries of unknown species and others thought to be extinct include a 'Golden Mole', an octopus, the 'Sierra Nevada' Red Fox, types of lobster, medicinal fungi and previously unknown bacteria;



**Namib Desert Golden Mole**, *Eremitalpa granti namibensis*.  
Photo by G. Rathbun (IUCN)

A 2-day blockade of Australia's largest coal port attracted about 3000 activists including a 97-year old grandfather;

Tylos, the Greek island that became a conservation zone for wildlife in the 1980s, has become a 'zero-waste' community by recycling absolutely everything;

We were disappointed to learn that the group's 'Pollinator Park' proposed partners are now unable to support our project. Refusing to be daunted, we hope to recruit more u3a members in 2024 to help us. Anyone who is interested should contact Kate Bailey, the group convenor. You will be very welcome to join our 1st February meeting!

## CRYPTIC CROSSWORD GROUP - Reports by Sue Overton

### November

Phew, what awesome concentration! Eleven brains worked hard in our fifth session to work through a warm up consisting of 5 anagram, 5 hidden, 5 sandwich/container and 5 takeaway clues before progressing to a new clue type – **reversals**. In reversal clues, the whole of a solution can sometimes be reversed to form another entirely different word e.g. Knock back beer like a king (5)

‘Back’ indicates this is a reversal clue. The wordplay and what to do = ‘knock back beer’ while the definition = ‘like a king’

So the solution is REGAL i.e. reverse ‘BEER=LAGER’

Some reversal indicators apply to down clues only e.g. ‘turned up’, ‘raised’, ‘served up’.

After our essential caffeine break we finished as usual with the Times quick cryptic crossword.

### December

Lured by mince pies, nine members met to continue working through the different clue types – this month’s clue type being **‘letter switch clues’**.

We commenced with a warm-up of 14 not so easy anagrams and 6 hidden clues including a couple of hidden with reversal thrown in for good measure! The warm-ups have become progressively more difficult – all of today’s clues were taken from crosswords in the Sunday Times – and took over half an hour to complete.

We then moved on to letter switch clues where 2 words differ from each other by one or more letters – moving one or more letters produces another word, the SOLUTION.

e.g. Fish move south along the coast (3,5)

Definition = FISH

Indicator = move...along

S (south) is moved to the right in THE COAST = SEASHORE

Solution = SEA HORSE

After working our way through 10 more letter switch clues, we broke for refreshments before tackling another Times quick cryptic crossword provided by Tim.

The above might sound like hard work but it is also fun and everyone agrees their crossword solving skills have improved. So if you would like to give your brain a good workout, you are welcome to join us.

We meet at 2pm in the Guide HQ Birch Road.

Contact: Sue Overton 07512 368884

## DISCUSSION GROUP - Reports by Glen Howard

### November

There was a lot of discussion about Suella Braverman and her comments on a number of subjects; we also discussed the covid enquiry; plane arm rests; Elon Musk and robots / AI; local speeding tickets; the Bowes museum; and hospitals, especially those that are failing (not local).

### December

This was our last meeting for the year but we were able to forget our Christmas preparations for a couple of hours. Not sure it was relaxing but it made a change and we all enjoyed our discussions. Subjects covered included the luggage limitations being imposed on trains; the switching off of street lights at midnight; Rule of Law re government and judges; covid enquiry; football referees; and Christmas traditions.

Our next meeting in the New Year will be on 9th February. If you would like to join us please give Glen Howard a ring on 01833 631639.

## FRENCH CONVERSATION GROUP - Report by Sue Overton

Our group could be described as few in number but with lots of enthusiasm! We spent a pleasant hour reading and translating (with the assistance of Google) poems about cats with beautiful illustrations from 'Chats – Poèmes et tableaux'. These short poems stretched from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Here is an example:-

### À une chatte

Chatte blanche, chatte sans tache,  
Je te demand, dans ces vers,  
Quel secret dort dans tes yeux verts,  
Quel sarcasme sous ta moustache.  
*CHARLES CROS extrait, in 'Le Coffret de santal' 1873*

Translation:- *An extract from 'The Sandalwood Box' 1873*

### To a pussy

White pussy, unblemished pussy,  
I ask you in these verses,  
What secret sleeps in your green eyes,  
What sarcasm under your moustache.

Contact Stella Kirton 01388 488919 for further details

## GARDENING GROUP - Report by Julie Archer and Kate Keen

In December the gardening group enjoyed the final trip of the year. The trip was to Wallington Hall, a National Trust property in Northumberland, to see the Christmas decorations in and around the hall.

The journey to the hall took a little longer than expected as we had an early snow fall in the week. The National Trust team were pleased to see us as they had thought we may cancel due to the weather. On arrival most of us went straight to the courtyard café for welcome refreshments and we had the café to ourselves.

Outside the main hall there was a reindeer towing Santa's sled. Inside the hall all the rooms were decorated with Christmas themes. There were lots of Christmas trees, all beautifully decorated, lots of wreathes, a magnificent Christmas lunch set out in the dining room.



In the main central hall there was a huge tree. We were taken back in time with the 70s theme with paper streamers and concertina-folded decorations.

We saw Santa's office with toys packed ready for Christmas and masses of letters tumbling down from the chimney, Santa had a giant list of all the children he was taking presents to and a basket of snacks for the reindeer. Even the large doll's house had tiny paper chains hung from the ceiling, presents ready for the children and stockings hung in the bedrooms.

It had taken the National Trust team 2 weeks to put up all the decorations, a commendable job and they had boards in each room explaining more about each theme.

Then it was back to the courtyard café for a seasonal lunch then a walk around the grounds for some fresh air. As we returned to the coach we were greeted by the line of reindeer getting ready for Christmas Eve. All in all a very enjoyable and worthwhile day out.



Wallington Hall's frozen pond

In 2024 Kate will be taking a step back from the gardening group and we are delighted to welcome Fran who will be helping Julie. The gardening group will resume in February with a talk at Stainton Village Hall at 2pm on Friday 2nd February.

### **GEOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Jane Harrison**

Our speaker for November had to postpone, so Annie, Gerald and Jane stepped into the breach.

Annie has been a keen wild water swimmer for many years, and we discovered that she had swum in lakes, rivers, and seas all over the world. As a geography group we enjoyed trying to guess the locations of her slides. Most were beautiful places, such as Lake Bohinj, in Slovenia, but others had less to recommend them, such as Odense harbour, in Denmark, which was full of jellyfish! Wild water swimming is not without its hazards. Once a dog ran off with her underwear and an over-enthusiastic Labrador dive-bombed her from a pier!

Jane talked about the fascinating Dutch system of water defence lines, which she discovered by chance in an historical geography atlas about Utrecht. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch have used geography and their hydraulic engineering expertise to their advantage and deliberately flooded low-lying land to hinder the advance of invading armies. Carefully regulated water levels deterred foot soldiers whilst at the same time prevented the use of boats. The 96 forts of the New Dutch Waterline and the Defence Line of Amsterdam, together with the system of dikes, sluices, pumping stations, canals, and inundation polders, became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2021.

Gerald spoke about the complicated political geography of the Gaza Strip. This tiny, narrow territory is about the size of the Isle of Wight and was once economically influential on ancient trade routes. Today it has an agreed international border with Egypt and a 60-kilometre armistice line with Israel. It is a low-lying, semi-arid coastal area, which relies heavily on groundwater, desalination, and piped water from Israel. Hamas has taken advantage of the underlying sandstones to construct its extensive tunnel systems.

Gerald outlined the political background leading to Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip in 1967, and its eventual military withdrawal and the dismantling of its settlements, following the rise of Hamas in 2005. A temporary blockade became permanent in 2007 and crossing points and buffer zones were created along the border. This has impacted on Gaza's fragile economy, as well as restricting the movement of people. Israel also controls maritime resources including recent gas fields discovered offshore. Population densities are high and increasing, particularly in the refugee camps. We all came away understanding more about this complex region.

Next meeting: Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2pm in The Witham.  
Andrew Griffiths founder and director of local company Droneflight Ltd.  
"Drones – aerial-borne cameras and other sensors in the examination of landscapes and structures"

## **GENEALOGY GROUP - Report by Alan Swindale**

Very regrettably there will be no meetings of the Family History Group in February and subsequent months due to the ill-health of the current convenor. The membership of the group has been a steady dozen and it is to be hoped that a member of the Teesdale u3a will come forward to reactivate the group before too long.

## **GEOLOGY GROUP - Reports by Bob Tuddenham**

We had two very interesting meetings at the end of 2023, one at The Witham in November and one on Zoom in December.

Our guest speaker at the November meeting was John Watkinson, Professor Emeritus of Geology at Washington State University. He gave a fascinating account of some research he and a couple of research friends undertook in 2006 at the Theban Necropolis at Luxor

in Egypt to investigate the geology of where the Pharaohs were buried. The research team even went up in a balloon at dawn to see the area from above! The geology is Eocene Limestone; there are faults and the limestone is sensitive to moisture. It appears that the builders did take account of the faults that were present in some of the tombs but they may have overestimated the stability of the area. The full details can be found in a research paper in 'Geoscience' online.

In the second half of the meeting, David Saville continued his series of most useful talks on the 'Introduction to Geology'. In this presentation, David covered the basics of metamorphism and a helpful information sheet was distributed after the meeting.

From December to February the Geology group is meeting on Zoom with two one-hour meetings a month. In the first meeting on December 18th, Les Knight gave an excellent talk on the different approaches to Stratigraphy from using types of rocks to zone fossils to radio-dating. In the second half, Trevor Morse showed a useful revision video on the basics of climate change which covered the role of the atmosphere and Milankovitch cycles.

Our next meeting will be on Zoom on Monday February 12th at 10.30 am. All are welcome. Please contact the convenor for the programme and the Zoom joining details.

## **iPAD and iPHONE Group - Report by Mike Sweeting**

We had a good attendance this month and some useful discussions.

We had a look at how to store and use credit cards and loyalty cards on iPhone. The iPhone can be used to access these cards when shopping or paying for services and it saves carrying a lot of plastic cards with you; the loyalty cards can be shared more easily as well.

Many organisations offer services via their web sites and we looked at online services such as Age UK, AbilityNet, and Durham CC.

Apple Maps introduced significant improvements in September and we went through the features and benefits of using the app for local information, routing both by car and public transport, avoiding hold-ups, etc. We will have a demonstration and practical exercise in a future session.

## ANDROID PHONE GROUP - Report by Martyn Radcliffe

This new group met for the first time at the Guide HQ and the meeting was well attended, with 17 people making the effort to come along.

It became very clear just how many different handsets were represented, both manufacturers and models. Another issue was that there were different software update versions as well. This proved not to be an insurmountable problem and the group muddled through.

The initial session was looking at security on the phone and some discussion was had about having antivirus software uploaded to protect during internet browsing. However, it became evident that most did not have even the basic security of a PIN or password on the handset itself.

Instructions for placing password security on the phones were sent as a PDF after the meeting (available from Martyn on request - [martynradcliffe@hotmail.com](mailto:martynradcliffe@hotmail.com) )

In view of the number of different phones a questionnaire was sent to the attendees to understand which phones were being used, as well as what areas of interest they would like to cover. It is hoped to look at antivirus software next time as a starting point.

## LUNCH GROUP - Report by Jane Mathieson

### November

We met at The Foxhole, Piercebridge, where 12 of us enjoyed a marvellous meal, choosing from Duck, Fish Pie, Fish and Chips, and Pork, some had a Soufflé to start, some had Apple Tart or Crumble for pudding. We all had a very good time, with good service and attentive staff. We shall be returning in 2024.

### December

We met for a festive meal at The Three Horseshoes, Barnard Castle. 12 of us enjoyed a noisy festive gathering choosing from Turkey with all the bits, Pork or Salmon, some managing Calamari or Pigs in Blankets for starters, and finishing with Lemon Tart, Chocolate Torte, Xmas Pudd or Sticky Toffee Pudd. It was a pity that the sprouts and carrots were so hard a fork could not get into them.

## NEEDLECRAFT GROUP - Reports by Glen Howard

### December

We had a very jolly meeting for the last one this year even though we talked about various 'house' subjects. No-one knew how we were going to get our freezers etc repaired now that Mr Nicholson had suddenly died. We also decided where and when we would go for our Christmas lunch in January, so our next meeting will be on 5th February 2024.

### January

For our first meeting of the New Year we forgot all about our projects and instead went out for lunch at the Raby Arms. Good range of choices and we all thoroughly enjoyed getting together and chatting over our food. Our next meetings will be on Monday 5th February and 4th March. We meet in each others houses and if you would like to join us you would be very welcome. Just give me a ring to arrange the details.  
Glen Howard tel: 01833 631639

## PAINTING GROUP - Report by Val Hobbs

On November 10th, a bitterly cold and damp day, we assembled for a winter painting session, swaddled in layers of winter apparel. Anne introduced a very apt theme for this time of year...sketching and then painting a snow covered landscape featuring trees.



She illustrated how we could achieve snowy effects with the use of white gouache, which has a distinctive matte finish and is easily blended with watercolours.

We sketched our snowscapes and using the mixed medium, we created the atmospheric, washed out colours of a bleak, English countryside in winter.



After tea and biscuits, Anne then showed us how to add finer detail by using water soluble ink pens, whereby we could leave the detail showing, or blend it in to achieve a blurred effect. We all agreed we could utilise these techniques to possibly create our own Christmas cards! Maybe next year!

The December meeting began as we all waddled in like penguins, wrapped in a multitude of layers to stave off the biting cold. Anne had prepared a very festive task for us...which was to draw and paint a fox in watercolour. Not many of us had attempted to draw or paint any animal before, so again...another steep learning curve. However, Anne had brought a tracing of the fox, should we need to use it.

The bravest of us attempted the drawing without it, but I'm afraid I succumbed and utilised the tracing and, I must admit, I did understand the scale of the head to body better by doing this. We became so engrossed in our task, that the tea, coffee and mince pies were served much later than half way, and clasping our hot mugs in both hands, we relished the heat and sustenance.

We continued, using a cool colour palette for the winter landscape and a contrasting warmer one for the fox itself, and, ultimately, we all created a piece that we felt might be worth using for next year's Christmas card!

Painting Group continued ...



The next meeting will be on 9th February, at Startforth Community Centre 10-12 am. Please contact Val Hobbs on 07900497503 for more details.

### **PHILOSOPHY GROUP - Report by Mike Gilsenan**

Our Philosophy Group topic for the month of November was 'Meta Ethics'. Meta-ethics is a major field of inquiry in philosophy. The 'meta' in 'meta-ethics' signifies 'above' or 'beyond'. Meta-ethics is the attempt to answer questions about ethics. Philosophers working in this area are not so much concerned with whether specific acts are ethical. Those questions are the domain of an allied field of enquiry known as

Ethics' and 'Applied Ethics'.

One way to get a feel for what meta-ethics is about is to ask yourself five key questions about morality: **Where? What? Why? When? How?** Each of these questions uncovers important aspects of meta-ethical enquiry:

- Where do ethics come from?
- What do moral terms refer to when we make moral pronouncements?
- When are we engaging in moral deliberation and when are we not
- How do we justify our moral judgments?

Since the time of the ancient Greeks, moral philosophers have been grappling with these questions. Our group meeting considered some of the terminology in the framework of Meta Ethics beginning with the two main categories: **Cognitivism and Non-Cognitivism**.

Our group's cognition was certainly stretched, as we negotiated the definitions in various sub-groups of Meta Ethics! Nonetheless, a fascinating line of enquiry and worthy of further investigation in the New Year!

Do come and join us on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 10am at Enterprise House. The next meeting will be on 27th February – discussing the French philosopher, Michel Foucault.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Pete Redgrave and Alan Kenwright**

### **November trip to Durham at night**

The plans of rodents and humans don't always work out as expected. Our original intention was to go, in November, to The Glasshouse (erstwhile Sage) at Gateshead. The purpose was to take photographs of the city, bridges, and river, at night. However, on the night there was just one car full of intrepid photographers, and by the time we got to Staindrop the mood was that one city at night is much like another, and Durham was only half the distance. Upon arrival we quickly located a suitable bar/café and had a sustaining cuppa/glass before setting off into the night with an agreement to return to the café at 8.0pm, for more sustenance.

**Pete's photo-tip of the month:** When there's not much light one needs to be especially mindful of the three basic aspects of photography: (i) how much light you let into the camera (aperture); (ii) how long you let the light in (shutter speed); and (iii) how sensitive the camera is (ISO).

Durham at night offered many wonderful photo-opportunities and taxing challenges.

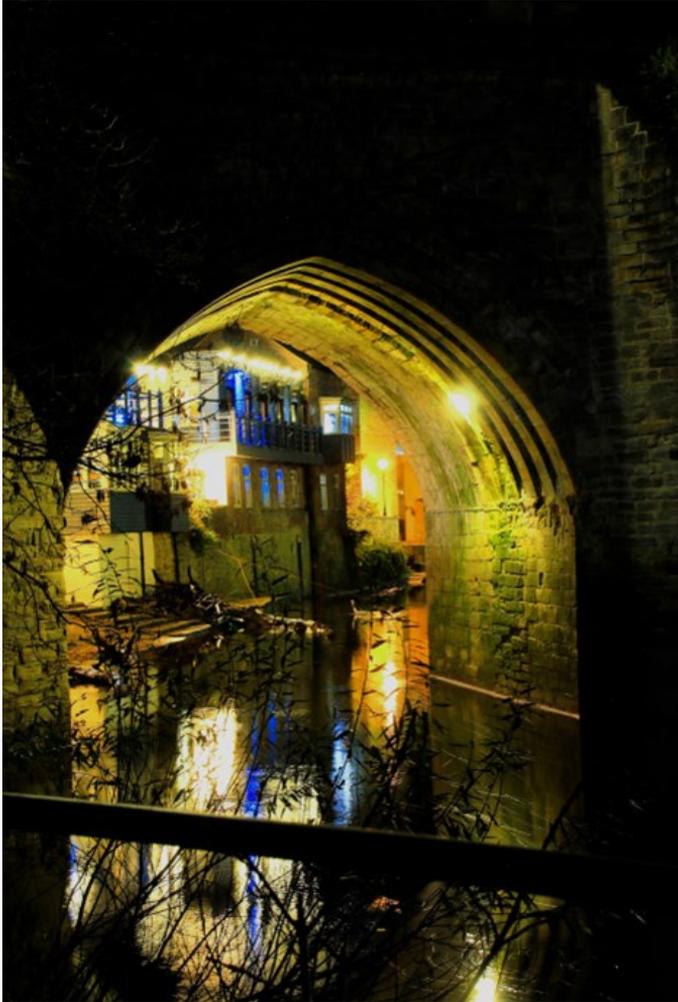


So, how can the likelihood of getting a ‘keeper’ when it’s dark be maximised? First, modern cameras are smart, so let it decide how sensitive it should be – set the ISO to automatic (it will be somewhere in the menu). The darker it is, the more sensitive the camera will set itself – but at the cost of more speckled noise in the picture. Don’t panic. You can fiddle with the other parameters, and modern image processing software (Lightroom, ON1) can de-noise images.

Second, because it’s dark, it’s generally good to have a wide-open aperture to let in as much light as possible (small f-stop). Lastly, the longer the exposure (shutter speed) the more light is allowed into the camera, which is all well and good if you keep the camera still – cue the tripod, or stabilising the camera on a solid object (wall, post, vehicle). At this point, it’s time to give it a go and learn by trial and error.....trust me, there will be lots of the latter.

We all had a great time, and the weather was kind. The only improvement would have been a picture of the cathedral with aurora borealis as a backdrop.

In January, the photography group met up at Enterprise House for an “indoor” meeting to discuss and share tips on lenses, lens hoods, and filters. Pete Redgrave gave a presentation and led a discussion on the use of filters in the digital age, focusing mainly on polarizing filters and neutral density filters as these are the only ones that are really still essential since most of the other effects previously achieved using filters can now be achieved in processing software such as Lightroom.



**Durham at night—photo by Pete Redgrave**

Alan Kenwright then gave a presentation and led a discussion about lenses— what do we want (everything!), what do we really need, and

and why are they so expensive? A good-natured meeting with plenty of questions and lively discussion.

The next group meeting will also be indoors on Tuesday, February 6th (venue tbc) when we will have a “hands-on” workshop on still-life photography, sharing tips and tricks for taking more interesting photos of static objects indoors. After that the weather will hopefully have improved and we can once again venture out into the wide world.

## **POETRY AND ROOM TO READ BOOK GROUP** **Joint meeting - Report by Annie Clouston**

We met, two groups together, in December, to share our favourite poems and books of the year. There was some book-sharing and stimulating discussion. This has been a great year in literature for us, the highlights being the sharing of mutual enjoyment of the written word across a wide range of genres and themes.

Book Group members have had enough of sad stuff and have determined to choose more uplifting material in this new year. So, we are kicking off with ***Black Cake*** by Charmaine Wilkerson in January and ***The Woman in Black*** by Madeleine St John in February.

Meanwhile, the poetry group, inspired by Wendy Cope’s poem ***The Sorrow of Socks***, has chosen 'Garments' as its theme for January.

## **ROOM TO READ BOOK GROUP - Report by Ruth Lapworth**

***‘Without Warning and Only Sometimes’*** by Kit de Waal

The strapline to the autobiography is “A story of hunger, hellfire and happiness”. This account of the author’s childhood growing up in a Birmingham suburb in the 1960s could have been a gruelling read. Instead we found it to be a well-written and often humorous memoir of a haphazard and extraordinary upbringing.

Kit de Waal (born Mandy O’Loughlin ) was one of 5 children with an Irish mother and a West Indian father. Her professional name, Kit, is the childhood nickname she was given after an accident left her with a lisp resulting in her mispronunciation of ‘kisses’. As a child of mixed heritage Kit faced prejudice and racism not only from people around her but also from both grandmothers who did not fully accept the children of the partnership.

We felt that descriptions of the way in which Kit and her siblings were regularly neglected by both parents and often went hungry, although painful to read, were written without blame. (The pre-retirement professions of some of the group led them to question why this neglect had not come to the attention of social services).

Kit's parents seem to lead separate existences. Her father worked as a bus driver and only helped with the children when his wife was away or in hospital. He spent all his time at home watching television or dreaming of his return to his native St Kitts. Any money he did not spend on fancy clothes was saved for this return. Meanwhile Kit's mother, Sheila, worked long hours juggling various jobs to make ends meet. On her return from work she did not think about cooking or feeding the children, which is why they were constantly hungry. Sheila's escape from this hard existence was to find comfort in the Jehovah's Witnesses. Consequently, Kit and her brothers and sisters were dragged to regular meetings to be indoctrinated as well as being denied the usual childhood pleasures, including celebrating Christmas and birthdays.

The last part of the book describes Kit's breakaway from home, her bohemian existence, downward spiral into poverty and drug dependency. We thought this final section to be rushed compared to the description of her earlier years. Eventually Kit returns home and surprisingly (to us) is accepted and rehabilitated by her mother. Kit's life is then literally transformed by the boss in her first job. He suggests she should read as a cure for her insomnia which leads to a passion for books and ultimately to her successful writing career.

We gave the book a score of 5 for a book group discussion and 4.5 for recommendation to a friend.

## **SCRABBLE GROUP - Reports by Ray Thompson**

### **November**

We met on 13th Nov. at Judith's, there were 7 of us and we split into 2 groups, Paula, Lillian and Judith were one and Hilary, Ray, Phil and Jeanette the other. Although Judith had a 7 letter word with (PLANNERS) worth 77 points, Paula won that game with a score of 220. Phil won their game with a score of 150.

We then had a refreshment break and Judith, our host, served us teas, coffees and some delicious homemade ginger biscuits and shortbread.

Hilary had to leave as she had an appointment so that just left the six of us. In the second half the two winners, Paula and Phil and the next highest scorer Judith played together while Jeanette, Ray and Lillian teamed up. In their game it was Paula who had a 7 letter this time, with (AIRLINE) for 63 points but Judith went on to win with a score of 248. Ray had two 7 letter words, (HOODIES) and (VAUNTER) with 103 and 64 points respectively, and went on to win with a score of 354.

## **December**

We met at Lillian's on the 11th December, there were seven of us. We split into two groups, Jeanette, Phil and Ray in one and Paula, Judith, Lillian and Hilary the other for the first two games. Jeanette won her game with a score of 217 and Hilary won hers with a score of 167. We then stopped for a tea break before continuing.

The next session started with the winners of the first games and the highest scorer runner-up playing together, so, Jeanette and Hilary and Ray made up one team whilst Paula, Phil, Judith and Lillian comprised the other. Hilary won her game with a score of 235 and Paula won hers with a 7 letter (BREATHS, 88 points) and a total score of 215.

Congratulations to our new member Hilary who won both her games and thanks to Lillian for the delicious home-made Victoria sponge cake and biscuits.

## **SPANISH CONVERSATION GROUP**

### **Report by Michael Harris**

Our final meeting of 2023 was kindly hosted by Stella Kirton at Hamsterley. Our attendance was down to just three of us but that did not prevent the members from receiving their 'homework'. Roald Dahl's wonderful story of 'Matilda' is now completed and we will move to online learning for three months while I am in Spain and others are travelling.

Spanish spelling is easy compared to what any learners of English have to put up with. We have 600 spelling rules and probably as many exceptions. We have at least nine sounds for the letter 'a' while the Spanish have just one. All sounds easy until we come to conjugate verbs. Spanish is a 'drop pronoun' language. They don't use I, you, she, it, he, we or they. These are signified by verb endings but that also causes difficulties, especially when reading, trying to work out who

said what, when the same word can mean: I spoke, you spoke, he spoke, she spoke and it spoke (perhaps the parrot!). It all depends on the context say the Spanish teachers! But it doesn't stop us having all sorts of headaches!

### **TABLE TENNIS GROUP Report by Peter Singer**

The table tennis group continues to ping and pong regularly on a Friday afternoon - jousting, jeering and jabbering in equal measure and with great vigour (well, a bit of vigour occasionally, but mostly rather gently). During the main part of the holiday season, our numbers are inevitably reduced and some weeks we have had only two members turning out. This is great for practice at playing singles, but can be exhausting and exerts some strain on the finances as well as on the players.



Three of our members recently took advantage of an invitation from the Barnard Castle table tennis club to attend a free taster session at their regular Wednesday evening club night. How brave (or foolhardy) was that? BCTTC currently have two teams in Division 1 of the Darlington Table Tennis League, which is a highly commendable achievement for a relatively small club in a relatively small market town like Barney.

We were made very welcome by John Heaviside, the club organiser and the members who were there. Apparently, a number of their league players were on holiday, but those that we met were of a very high standard and it was fascinating to watch how they played. Not surprisingly, they were way better than us, so we mostly played between ourselves.

The couple of games we had with some of their players showed how important spin is in the game – all we have to do is work out how to return a serve that is shooting off the table at right angles (any geometry experts out there who might be able to advise?). It was, however, great to have several buckets full of table tennis balls available, so we could just carry on playing without having repeatedly to run the length of the hall to find our ball. Overall, it was enjoyable and instructive and we shall go along again to see if we can pick up a few pointers to improving our own games. Watch this space!

If you would like to join our group to learn the game, improve your skills or just enjoy playing and socialising, please contact Peter Singer ([pandjsinger@btinternet.com](mailto:pandjsinger@btinternet.com) 07508 663998). All are welcome, whether you play regularly, have not played for some time or have never played before.

## **UNDERSTANDING CLASSICAL MUSIC**

### **Report by William Hayes**

The first meeting of this new group will be Friday 26th January at Startforth School/Centre at 10.00.

The programme will consist of videos reviewing Minimalism, a modern form of Classical music, followed (after coffee) by a video review of Mendelssohn's Hebridean Overture. The meeting will also discuss a proposed programme for 2024.

If you like classical music or just want to know what it's all about, why not join us – you will be most welcome. We are a small but friendly group of about 12 members with varying degrees of knowledge of classical music.

### **WILDFLOWER GROUP - Report by Anne Thomson**

Our first walk of the year was the New Year Plant Hunt on 2nd January, a national event run by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI). Kate Keen led us from Parsons Lonnen down the Demesnes, along the Tees to Abbey Bridge, returning along the other side.

Last year we saw 16 plants in flower, this year we saw 18. Despite the rather muddy conditions by the sewage works along to the woods everyone enjoyed getting out into the fresh air.

Our next walk will be Deepdale on Wednesday 14th February when we shall be identifying trees in their winter state.

### **SHORTER WALKS GROUP- Photos by Ian Royston**



The most recent walk took us from Greta Bridge to Brignall via the ruins of the Medieval St. Mary's and current St. Mary's Churches at Brignall.



## 7– 9 MILE WALKING GROUP – Report by David Ramsay

### **On Safari in Weardale**

A group of thirteen gathered on Wearbank near Wolsingham Station, intent on investigating rumours of Elephant sightings on Pikestone Fells. Weather had been very inclement preceding the trip but due to a miracle of organisation the day of the walk was fine with some blue skies.

We headed along the Weardale Way, steadily ascending via Ashes and Towdy Potts Farms until the fabled herd of Elephants came into view on the distant skyline. The lower fields proved to be quite muddy but once we gained the track on the crest of the ridge conditions underfoot were good. Unfortunately, by the time we reached our objective the elephants had disappeared, but we were able to take some refreshment in the shelter of the wall surrounding a group of beech trees.

After a brief stop we carried on, descending to White Kirkley and began to head back following the line of Bollihope Burn. This section of the walk provided interest in the form of Industrial Remains. For more than a century, after they were built in 1847, fires burned day and night, turning limestone from the quarry over the hill into quicklime for cement to build cities and to sweeten acid soil. A little further on we passed Harehope Gill Lead Mine, which was worked between 1796 and 1890 by the Beaumont Company. Here we took a detour to view what is often an impressive exposure of Frosterley Marble in the burn, however the water levels and peat stained water prevented us from seeing much.

A lunch stop was taken on the slopes overlooking Harehope Quarry, this is a redundant Limestone Quarry which many years ago became an Environmental Study Centre.

These days the scars of quarrying have been softened and absorbed by nature and it provides a centre for a variety of studies and activities. We completed the walk following the River Wear past sprawling chalet parks to glorious open fields for the final mile. With thanks to David for leading such an excellent walk.



Our walk on February 21 will be led by Chris in the Richmond area. Please let [nicky.grace729@gmail.com](mailto:nicky.grace729@gmail.com) if you would like to come along

### **FELL WALKING GROUP - Report by Judith Coleman**

In November, after gathering at the scout hut in Richmond, twelve of us set off to walk a nine and a half mile circuit in the countryside west of Richmond and north of the River Swale. The route took us up to and along the limestone cliff known as Whitcliffe Scar as far as Willance's Leap (more of that later), round by Clapgate and, joining the Coast to Coast path near Applegarth, returned through Billy Bank Wood. The Swale was in view for most of the walk, from above on the way out and from its wooded banks as we returned.

Much of the walking was on grassy paths and easy tracks, though the slippery, muddy paths along parts of the Whitcliffe Scar led to much merriment and talk of toboggans and skis! Actually, the weather was fine

all day - no snow in sight, mainly cloudy and surprisingly mild.

I promised you more about Willance's Leap. Did you know that you cannot save an injured leg from going gangrenous by tucking it into a dead horse's belly to slow down the process and so save your life? According to legend, this is what Robert Willance found out way back in 1606 when his horse bolted over the edge of Whitcliffe Scar and he knew he would have a long wait before anyone would rescue him.

The observant among you may have noticed that the walk was 'only' nine-and-a-half miles long. Don't be fooled – we were not let off lightly. When we returned to Richmond we were led, not to the cars but, oh so unwillingly, up the steep slopes of the town to The Little Drummer Boy Tearoom, where the staff did a wonderful job of keeping the rabble under control and serving exactly what was ordered in record time. This detour was bound to be at least half a mile! Many thanks to Gordon for stepping in (sorry!) at relatively short notice and leading a most enjoyable walk.

### **NEW YEAR QUIZ - Flowering plants**

1. Winter precipitation
2. She is close to her pupil
3. Cathedral chimes
4. Smart feline ?
5. Little Christine and her mother
6. Animal warmer
7. Got up
8. Capital group of lions
9. Equine's twelve inches
10. Stringed instrument
11. Won't somebody dance with me ?
12. Foggy romance
13. Alternative child
14. One revolution in a mixing bowl
15. Stand-offish bloom
16. Exhortation to memory
17. Evergreen wine
18. Unite with precious metal
19. With lock and barrel
20. Sounds as if it will turn you to ice

## ANOTHER TWO MONTHS IN AMBRIDGE Review by Annie Clouston

Dear Reader, you will not be at all surprised that not much has happened in the eight weeks since I last brought you up to speed with events in the everyday lives of countryfolk. This is largely due to the anodine and frankly predictably soapy Christmas celebrations that have dominated the airwaves in the infamous 19:04 hours spot each weekday and Sunday.

However, those of us who were a mite suspicious that the odious Rob, whose misogyny and villainy almost surpasses our GOP candidate across the Pond, was merely faking terminal illness have been proved a tad too cynical. He has indeed gone to the Fires of Hell, with a whimper rather than a haloo. Watch this space, for devious machinations are afoot even as he burns...

Meanwhile the Veterinarian's love life has indeed started to perk up, with Alistair having a romantic engagement with his veterinary nurse over an ailing creature – not a turkey – when Christmas dinner was abandoned by both to save the poor thing. Confidences have been shared of the “my husband no longer meets my needs” variety and happenstance has thrown Denise into a full-time position alongside Alistair, where no doubt more than a scalpel will eventually pass between them. This is a slow burn, again – watch this space!

Frankly there is so little action of any kind that I have found much more of interest in spin-off media. The Guardian Letters page (to which I am an occasional contributor – this will perhaps be of no surprise: I do like to get my opinions out there) has been somewhat taken up with correspondence on the subject of the turgid nature of many of the renditions of the National Anthem, with perhaps the exception of Brian May's rooftop offering.

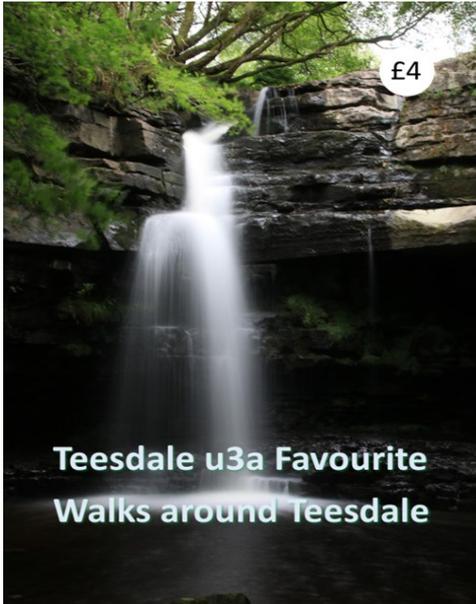
Several letters have been in support of the Archers theme as a replacement, some even suggesting possible lyrics. These have not been entirely to my taste, even though the sentiment behind them has my sympathy. I leave you then with an expurgated version, fill in the blanks as you see fit!

What a load of utter \*\*\* (Tum-te-tum-te-tum-te-tum)  
What a load of \*\*\*\* (Tum-te-tum-te-tum)

And so forth...

## NEW YEAR QUIZ - Answers

1. Snowdrop
2. Iris
3. Canterbury bell
4. Dandelion
5. Chrysanthemum
6. Foxglove
7. Rose
8. London pride
9. Colt's foot
10. Viola
11. Wallflower
12. Love-in-a-mist
13. Orchid
14. Aster
15. Primrose
16. Forget-me-not!
17. Hollyhock
18. Marigold
19. Stock
20. Freesia



### For Sale: 'WALKS AROUND TEESDALE'

**Teesdale u3a Favourite Walks around Teesdale is now on sale.**

**A booklet of maps, guides and illustrations of 14 walks in and around Teesdale which are familiar to members of Teesdale u3a and which are written from first-hand experience.**

**The 2023 edition is available at Monthly Meetings for only £4.**

**Ideal as a present for visitors to the dale and for walkers of all ages and abilities.**

Thanks to all our Contributors and remember Wendy Cope's wise words as we stride (or stagger) into 2024:

We all have to be sensible sooner or later  
But let's not be sensible all the time!

Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Android Phone	1 <sup>st</sup> Thurs pm	Martyn Radcliffe 07975 970088
Art Appreciation	1 <sup>st</sup> Wed pm	Tony Seward 01833 630050
Automotive	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday am	Peter Colley 01833 695197
Birdwatching	3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday am	Andrew Lapworth 07962 038052
Board Games	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday pm	Hazel McCallum 01833 316484
Book Group 2	2 <sup>nd</sup> Mon pm	Maggie Cleminson 01833 640801
Book Group 3 Room to Read	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wed am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Chess	2 <sup>nd</sup> Thurs pm	Diana Marks 07762 626912
Climate Solutions	1 <sup>st</sup> Thurs am	Kate Bailey 07867 683195
Cryptic Crossword	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed 2pm	Sue Overton 07512 368884
Discussion	2 <sup>nd</sup> Fri am	Glen Howard 01833 631639
French Conversation	4th Thurs pm	Stella Kirton 01388 488919
Gardening	1 <sup>st</sup> Fri pm	Julie Archer 07774 903377 01833 637576
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> Tue 1.30pm	Mike Sweeting 07565 925412
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
Pickleball	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mon pm	Ruth Lapworth 07787 978696
Philosophy	4 <sup>th</sup> Tues 10am	Ruth Sansom 01325 401850
Photography	1 <sup>st</sup> Tues	Jane Mathieson 01388 710741
Poetry	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed am	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	Michael Harris 07799 051389
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
Wildflower group	2nd Wed 2pm	Kate Keen 07880 741151
Wine Group	3rd Tues pm	Tim Meacham 07847 182554
Yoga	Every Mon am	Angela Griffiths 01833 630170

### Walking Groups

Shorter walks 3-4 miles	4 <sup>th</sup> Monday pm	Sue Overton 07512 368884
Walking 4-6 miles	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tues 10am	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

## Coming up at your local Community Arts Centre



<b>Sat 27 Jan</b> 7.30pm	<b>THEATRE – The Castle Players: These Things Do Happen</b>
<b>Tues 30 Jan</b> 7.30pm	<b>MUSIC – Chris Difford: Not Only But Also</b> Playing songs from the Squeeze catalogue and solo albums
<b>Wed 31 Jan</b> 7.00pm	<b>SCREENING – National Theatre Live: Dear England (15)</b> A new play starring Joseph Fiennes as Gareth Southgate.
<b>Thurs 1 Feb</b> 7.00pm	<b>SCREENING – Kinky Boots: The Musical (12A)</b> Filmed live at the Adelphi Theatre in the West End
<b>Sat 3 Feb</b> 2.00pm	<b>FILM – The Miracle Club (12A)</b> with subtitles Starring Kathy Bates, Laura Linney, Maggie Smith
<b>Tues 6 Feb</b> 7.30pm	<b>COMEDY – Janey Godley ‘Not Dead Yet’ Tour (16+)</b>
<b>Wed 7 Feb</b> 7.15pm	<b>LIVE SCREENING – The Royal Opera House: Royal Ballet – Manon</b>
<b>Thurs 8 Feb</b> 7.30pm	<b>THEATRE – Where Is Mrs Christie?</b> Liz Grand stars as the author. .
<b>Fri 9 Feb</b> 7.30pm	<b>MUSIC &amp; DANCE – Roisin Ban Ceili Band</b> Yorkshire Ceili and Celtic Folk Band
<b>Sat 10 Feb</b> 7.30pm	<b>MUSIC &amp; DANCE – Soul Junction</b> 7-piece Soul and Motown Band
<b>Wed 14 Feb</b> 7.00pm	<b>SCREENING – Rodgers &amp; Hammerstein 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert</b> - Featuring a 40-piece orchestra and international stars of the stage and screen
<b>Thurs 15 Feb</b> 7.30pm	<b>SPOKEN WORD – Teesdale Special Flora Trust: The Ice Age Legacy of The North Pennines</b>
<b>Fri 16 Feb</b> 7.30pm	<b>MUSIC – Eddie &amp; The Hot Rods</b> With support act Blue Scarrow
<b>Sat 17 Feb</b> 7.30pm	<b>FOLK – Jez Lowe</b>

[www.thewitham.org.uk](http://www.thewitham.org.uk)      **Box office: 01833**