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FORUM

FEBRUARY 2024

No. 24/02



u3a

Chairwoman's Letter February 2024

Dear Friends

It is a very splendid happening for me that as I take up my quarter of Co-Chairing in 2023-24 our membership is at its very peak – 420 and, I hope, rising. This means new stocks of experience, knowledge and joie de vivre – how good is that? Really, truly, Teesdale u3a is where you get the best bang for your bucks.

The Guardian Letters page, to which I am an occasional contributor, (but sadly I'm rarely published – a shocking lack of editorial discernment I think) on 7 February had a letter from Keith Richards (not the most raddled one of the Stones), a former chair of the Third Age Trust, our over-arching organisation, in which he corrects a previous letter-writer. He writes that she “deftly characterises the peer-to-peer learning model of u3a groups. However, the ‘third age’ is not limited to ‘retired people’ – founders characterised it as a time in life when education is for its own sake, not for qualifications.” I really warm to that characterisation. Personally, my gains have been huge in terms of companionship, stimulation and inspiration. My education, though thorough and largely academic, and work experience, though happily varied and satisfying, left great gaps in my learning. A lifetime won't fill those gaps, but the u3a gives me my best chance of making a start.

Hopefully, we will go forward into our new year on a progressive trajectory with new members bringing their skills, idiosyncrasies and energy to our lavish table. As we approach the AGM us old lags on the committee would welcome an injection of new life and ideas to join us to help us to continue to thrive. If this appeals to you contact me and we can arrange for you to observe before you commit – no obligation.

It's all onwards and upwards from now on – lighter nights, snowdrops and aconites, even a glimpse of sun, so CARPE DIEM!

Warmest wishes

Annie

It's Your Forum

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Cover: Elvet Bridge, Durham at night by Ian Royston

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 only to the Forum Editor at: forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

DEADLINE for the next edition: Tuesday 12 March 2024

Next month's editor is Ian

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.

www.teesdaleu3a.org

TEESDALE u3a Officers 2024

Chair: Annie Clouston chair@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

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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 1st 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. 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 or by phone at **07847 182554**

JANUARY'S MONTHLY MEETING AT THE WITHAM

Report by Ian Reid

Rare Earth Metals by Les Knight

Are we really aware of the implications of moving to a green economy? Les Knight, our speaker described how the rare earth metals have become essential elements in the move away from fossil fuels.

Over a period, Britain has moved from a post-industrial economy of manufacturing towards one where service industries are increasingly important. In this move, rare earth metals, previously of little commercial value, have become vital as we replace carbon fuels with electricity. These metals are needed for the production of highly powerful magnets, necessary for the manufacture of modern electronic equipment, including wind turbines, high speed internet, electric vehicles, aircraft and many other products. There are limited supplies of the ores containing rare earths and their extraction and separation into pure form is a difficult process. To obtain the metals requires the mining of an enormous amount of ore to obtain just a small amount of the metal. Under the Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping, China had prioritised manufacturing over farming, particularly targeting metals, including the rare earths. By 2000, China had a virtual monopoly over the rare earth production, and was also able to corner the market for the manufacture of batteries. Since then, the situation has improved globally but China still has 60% of the rare earth market and 95% of the battery market. Recycling waste from earlier mining processes has been suggested as a possible alternative source of rare earths but it is not yet clear how we do it. The Parliamentary Select Committee has advised that the UK needs to take a much more active role and there have been several schemes proposed for battery manufacture but investment is required, including from government.

This was a very powerful and thought provoking presentation, well illustrated with up to date material. Members felt that they were now much better informed but were left hoping that politicians also understood how important this issue is and accepted the need to become more actively involved.

Future meetings

Thursday 28 March - Speaker: Neil Hanson, an Oxford graduate who has worked in a variety of jobs. He is also a prolific author. His jobs include plasterer's mate, ice cream salesman, art critic and rugby league commentator. He entertains audiences with his stories one of which was running to Britain's highest inn: our familiar Tan Hill where you may have walked, cycled driven or even been marooned in testing weather! Whatever our experience we are in for a fascinating talk.

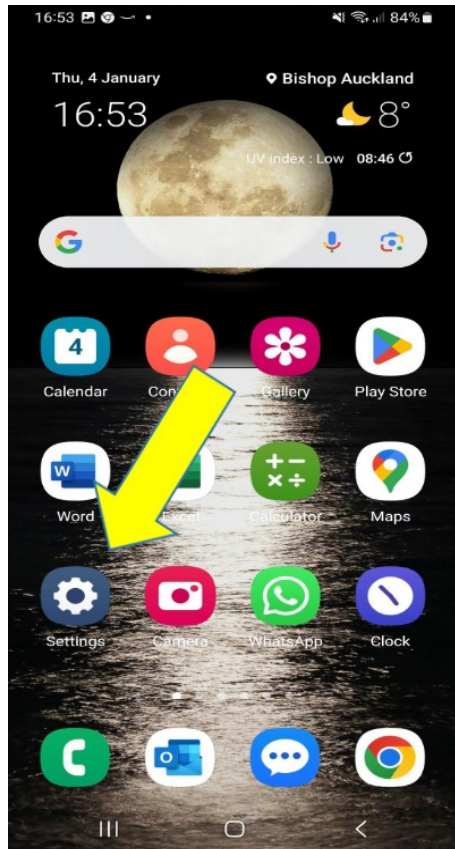
INTEREST GROUP REPORTS

Android Phone Group - Report by Martyn Radcliffe

The group met for the first time at the Guide HQ and 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. The process was run through to place this on the phones. Please see the instructions outlined below which were sent as a PDF after the meeting.

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



Setting up a password or PIN on your Android phone.

Find the "Settings App" - this will look like a cog and have will normally have "settings" below the icon. If the icon app is not on your home screen (this is the screen that opens when you activate your phone or on the screens you access by swiping left or right). If settings is not on the home screens then swipe up to gain access to the App pages. Please note that the screen shots are from a Samsung Galaxy A13.

Art Appreciation Group – Report by Tony Seward

At the start of our November meeting we looked at two major painters of the Counter Reformation, the period stretching roughly from the Council of Trent, starting in 1545, to the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648. In art, the Catholic Church encouraged a much more personal approach to religious experience, emphasising the humanity of the actors in the sacred drama. To achieve this, artists developed new forms of composition, with striking use of colour and chiaroscuro.

El Greco took the spirituality of personal religious experience to new extremes. His 'Burial of the Count of Orgaz' (picture 1) in Toledo attempts to link heaven and earth by bringing the divine and human figures almost – but not quite – within touching distance, while the soul of the deceased count rises heavenwards in a kind of amniotic sac.



(1)



(2)

Caravaggio was the most daring and innovative artist of his time, the excitement of his canvases reflecting his own adventurous life. His characters are mostly based on people he knew, using them as models in scenes of unprecedented psychological insight. He is a master of light and shade, often using a deep black background to focus our attention on the action before us. Professor Kloss chose to analyse 'The Entombment', which draws on treatments of the subject by other masters (notably his contemporary Michelangelo's 'Pieta') while making it entirely his own – as for example in his portrayal of the Virgin as a sorrowing old woman. A National Gallery talk then outlined his career in more detail, including his sensuous and often startling secular paintings, such as 'Boy bitten by a Lizard' (picture 2).

After the break, we watched the first episode of John Berger's groundbreaking 1972 TV series 'Ways of Seeing'. We were struck by how it is even more relevant today, in this age of incessant



manipulation of images in advertising, propaganda, etc. He ended with an entertaining demonstration of his thesis by inviting a group of London schoolchildren to give their interpretation of what is going on in Caravaggio's 'Supper at Emmaus'. With their 'innocent eye' they

saw what few adults would, notably the androgynous nature of Jesus (no beard, no bristles!).

December's meeting had a seasonal flavour – Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 'Hunters in the Snow' and a snow scene by Monet ('The Magpie') followed by Botticelli's 'Mystic Nativity' from the National Gallery. The Bruegel, so often reproduced, gained new life from Professor Kloss's detailed analysis, while Monet's uncannily real evocation of winter light raised some debate as to why the crow's shadow doesn't seem to match the bird itself, and why the artist painted it this way.



The 'Mystic Nativity', at first sight a joyous celebration of Christ's birth, with heavenly angels singing and dancing and resurrected souls embracing on earth, turns out to be something much darker. It shows Botticelli's influence by the puritanical friar Savonarola, who sparked a religious frenzy in Florence, burning books, paintings, and other 'vanities' and instilling fears of imminent apocalypse in the population.

Room to Read Book Group ***Black Cake* by Charmaine Wilkerson - Report by Kate and Annie**

Opinions were divided on this novel, a creative, engaging, entertaining but over-long novel, skipping in very short chapters from one character to another. Set in the Caribbean initially the island people are larger than life and not entirely believable but Covey's neighbourhood and friends, the food, the colours and the culture are vividly described. Admittedly it reads like a TV screenplay, but the idea of a young woman reinventing herself and keeping multiple secrets from everyone all her life is an entertaining fictional theme.

Characters include Chinese father Johnny Lincook, cake-making (*the Black Cake* of the title – an iconic cultural artefact) mother Mathilda who disappears, a housekeeper called Pearl and a child called Covey/Coventina who is in her element swimming and surfing with her girlfriend Bunny and her boyfriend Gibbs. Covey's hapless debt-ridden father forces her to marry a local gangster, who is killed on their wedding day. She is the chief suspect and flees – by swimming out to sea - and the plot then moves to the UK.

Covey, in fear of recognition within the Jamaican community, switches identity and miraculously finds her childhood sweetheart, Gibbs. They move to US have two children; a son Byron becomes a famous marine biologist; a daughter Bunny becomes a college dropout and an unsuccessful artist who dreams of opening a coffee shop. Both have unhappy relationships, no children of their own and become resentful, self-centred adults who haven't communicated for many years.

In amongst all the plot twists, the author introduces, but skims over, lots of social issues which are a distraction from the main theme of secrets, lies and misunderstandings between parents and children and siblings. In places there's too much going on and it needed better editing. The thread running through the novel seems to be about the redemptive power of full disclosure, albeit posthumously. Our overall feeling about the book was that there was too much flitting about and because of that serious themes were dealt with in a superficial way.

Scores: 2.5 stars for Book Groups and 1.5 for recommending to friends.

Chess Group - Report by Diana Marks

Our first group meeting got off to an interesting start as there were just three of us present! Undaunted, we set up two boards and the most experienced player took on two of us. Having squarely beaten both of us we then joined forces and played against him. After a battle royal we did manage a victory. There is definitely room for improvement from a couple of players!

We're back to normal, the second Thursday in the month, from March.

Climate Solutions - Report by Kate Bailey

This month the group discussed ways we could encourage others to support the idea of a "Park for Pollinators" in Barnard Castle. We talked about landowners we could approach, in partnership with other organisations that are properly constituted bodies and therefore eligible to apply for funding for wildlife projects. If any u3a member knows of an organisation that may be interested in supporting this wildflower planting project, please let Jane know - janemardon@yahoo.co.uk

The Big Plastic Count is being organised again, between 11th and 17th March. *"Nearly 100 billion pieces of plastic packaging are thrown away by UK households every year, and just 12% is recycled in the UK. It's time we got serious about tackling the plastic crisis. You can help by taking part in The Big Plastic Count!"*

See the website - <https://thebigplasticcount.com/> for information on how to register and take part.

Following on from our discussions about regenerative farming practices, our main topic was around the global loss of soil fertility and the alarming implications for future food production. David brought an interesting article that suggested traditional upland farmers know more about land management on the Teesdale peatlands than many well-meaning but inexperienced 'experts' from Natural England. Gerald sent a 'doom and gloom' report about the tiny proportion (around 3%) of the earth's surface that is available for food production and the many threats to soil health that farmers and land managers face.

Being the climate 'Solutions' group we decided to start collating positive and practical responses to the major challenges faced by UK farmers. These include soil erosion by water and wind including floods and landslides; soil compaction by vehicles and/or livestock; loss of organic matter and soil biodiversity; soil contamination and pollution. We won't have a meeting in March and several members agreed instead to gather information about one of these soil topics that interests them.

Good news reported this month - two new energy-efficient houses have been built in a laboratory at Salford University and their energy use and carbon outputs are being monitored to inform future construction practices;

A Gateshead housing development, being heated by hot mine-water, and a housing project in Nevada USA, using super-heated steam pumped from deep granite rocks, are demonstrating the benefits of using 'free' geo-thermal energy;

Sea otters are stopping the erosion of a Californian estuary because of their appetite for the shore crabs that eat salt marsh roots, dig into salt marsh soil, and over time can cause a salt marsh to erode and collapse. "*Erosion of creekbanks and marsh edges in areas with large otter populations has slowed by up to 90%*" (Nature 2024 - Duke University Wetland and Coasts Center).



Image: Sea Otter eating a crab (screenshot)

Cryptic Crossword Group – Report by Sue Overton

The elite eleven completed a warmup of anagrams, hidden and homophone clue types before tackling the new clue type – the **All-in-One Clue**. Here, the definition and wordplay are always combined into one, often shortish sentence which, when decoded, leads to a description of the solution. It can take the form of an **anagram**, **additive** or any other sort of clue type. Simple, no?!

Example: Heads of the several amalgamated Russian States (5)

Definition = Heads of the several amalgamated Russian States

Indicator = Heads

Wordplay and what to do : Take HEADS i.e. the first letter of the last five words. Solution = TSARS

We finished as usual with coffee and bics and the Times daily quick cryptic crossword.

If you would like to join us and keep the old grey matter working, come along to our next session in the Guide HQ, Birch Road Barnard Castle where we meet on the second Wednesday of the month at 2pm. For further information contact me on **07512 368884** or email: sueoverton@hotmail.com

Discussion Group - Report by Glen Howard

We started this new year with most group members able to attend our meeting this month. Topics discussed included: cursive writing; the loss of free afternoon parking in Barney car parks; the forthcoming closure of Blagraves; the 'Welsh Tidy Mouse'; the Post Office scandal; Baroness Mone; local authority childcare provision; supermarkets taking advantage of dry January by increasing prices on non-alcoholic drinks; cuckooing; and proposed Scottish law re: gender identity.

Our next meetings will be on Fridays, 9th February and 8th March. If you would like to join us please give me a ring on **01833 631639**.

Geology Group - Report by Bob Tuddenham Meetings on 8th January and 22nd January

We have had a good start to 2024 with two very interesting and varied meetings on Zoom.

On Jan 8th, Bob Tuddenham gave a talk about the 'Geology of the Pembrokeshire Coast'. Having walked the coast national trail himself, he gave an introduction to the geology with extensive photos of this wonderful coastline in South West Wales. In the second half of the meeting, Trevor Morse gave a talk to explain the many colours of hydrogen in the contemporary sense. The colours are applied to the potential sources of this gas for use as a fuel to reduce our dependence on carbon fossil fuels. There was a useful discussion at the end where the feasibility of some of this technology was questioned.

In the meeting on Jan 22nd, Trevor Morse first took us through the geology of the recent fissure eruption in Grindnavik in Iceland. Trevor then showed some maps of the volcanic island of La Gomera before we were treated to a talk by Dr Paul Williams of the Open University - 'The Geology of La Gomera, Canary Islands – a Tourist's Perspective'.

The presentation was straightforward and geared towards the amateur geologist and this was much appreciated by a number of the audience. Our next meeting will be on Zoom on Monday morning February 26th at 10.30 am. All are welcome to join us; please contact the convenor for the Zoom joining details. Thereafter we return to face to face meetings and we meet at The Witham on Monday March 25th at 10 am.

iPad and iPhone Group Report – January 2024

We welcomed two new members of the Group, Sue and Steven.

Three main topics were covered this month, the first of which was AI (Artificial Intelligence) in the form of ChatGPT. We had already looked at Google Bard and we compared the two, then we demonstrated how they could be used to make web searches that could be made more comprehensive. We looked at using supplementary questions and asking for comments on statements to expand on the results of the initial enquiry. However, it is always important to fact check the results before making any decisions that depend on their accuracy.

We went on to look at enjoying music via the iPad and iPhone. We looked at how Apple Music works and compared it to its main competition, Spotify. For those of us who have bought music through Amazon, we looked at how electronic versions could be downloaded to our devices. Lastly, we looked at Shazam, an app owned by Apple that can be used to identify the music we are hearing on the TV, radio, films etc. telling us who the artist, group or even the orchestra are.

There will be no meeting in February as I have a conflicting hospital appointment. Our next meeting will be on 26 March 2024 at 1:30pm at Enterprise House.

Historic Environment

Unfortunately, our member Bill Bartle was unable to give his talk on the Durham coal mining industry, so Tim Meacham brought forward his proposed talk setting in context our visit to the Brigantian tribe fortress at Stanwick which we are planning to make later this summer.

We started with some slides of the site today which revealed the survival almost to full height of the great ramparts which enclose an area of some 750 acres (including a smaller central area which was itself further fortified). Here, outside the later church, an aged notice board informs visitors that we are in Stanwick Camp, probably the centre of power for Cartimandua, Queen of the Brigantes tribe at the time of the Roman invasion of 43 AD.

We then set the scene by looking at the Romans' motivation for this invasion which came some 100 years after Julius Caesar's unsuccessful attempt to conquer Britain. To cut a long story short, the period after Caesar's death was a stormy one in Rome, with one Emperor after another suffering an early, violent death. In 43 Claudius, needing a triumph to establish his power (as well as money, slaves and other resources to replenish the imperial finances) sent an invading army to Britain. The Brigantes were far enough north to strike an uneasy peace with the invaders but the southern tribes resisted fiercely. The war leader Caratacus threatened to defeat the Romans but was defeated and fled for sanctuary to Stanwick.

So our local site became crucial to the outcome of the invasion. Cartimandua lost favour with her people by handing over Caratacus in chains to the Romans. Had she acted more defiantly (like her fellow Queen Boudicca shortly afterwards) the history of Britain might have taken a different path. For ten years, however, she held on to power with Roman support and by the time she was ousted the Roman conquest of Britain was all but complete. The great fortress of Stanwick fell into disuse and it was left to 20th century archaeologists to bring the remains to light.

Our March meeting will be at Enterprise house on Thursday March 14th when **Christine Price** will speak on '**Compulsory Smallpox Vaccination: A mixed response in 19th Century Keighley, Ripon and Teesdale**'. Further details available from Tim Meacham.

Lunch Club Report by Christine Watkinson

Ten members of the U3A Lunch Club met at a new venue, the recently refurbished "The Spotted Dog" at High Coniscliffe on Wednesday 17th January. It was a bitterly cold day, but despite that we were given a very warm welcome by the staff and we were shown to their small private function table. Quite nice to have room to ourselves but the staff made sure we were not forgotten. The Spotted Dog is comfortable and tastefully decorated and has plenty of choice on their menus. They have 2 menus their "Lunchtime Set Menu", 2 courses for £20 & 3 courses for £25, then their "Winter Menu" with individually priced meals and snacks.

Six members went for their set menu and five started with a very tasty & well presented Pheasant, Bacon & Apricot Terrine, served with Winter Chutney & toasted sourdough. There was also a Smoked Mackerel Pate & a tasty White Onion Soup, which one member really enjoyed. We then went to the main courses and the majority decided on the Fish Pie, with Salmon, Smoked Haddock, Cod & Prawns served with Winter Greens. The remaining four had Sausage & Mash, Steak & Mushroom

Pie, Slow Roasted Belly Pork all served with roasted carrots & some with Winter Greens. A Chicken Schnitzel with Pickled Red Cabbage, capers, parsley, lemon butter and fries.

The food we decided was delicious, good portion size, well presented but unfortunately the Winter Greens were “too al dente”! The staff did say we could be offered some that would be recooked but in the end we decided it would just take too long.

Four of us decided we did have room for a pudding, so we had a very good Lemon Posset, Traditional Creme Brûlée with shortbread and lastly Sticky Toffee Pudding. Those that had “no room” had a coffee served with a little lemon cake on the side.

I can safely say we all agreed we would go back & definitely recommend “The Spotted Dog” to our friends & family. Just remember to ask for the vegetables to be “tender”. The Spotted Dog is only open Wednesday through to Sunday at the moment. Website, the-spotteddog.co.uk

Pictorial Report from the Painting Group by Martin Page Seashells from the sea shore





Pickleball Group - Report by Ruth Lapworth

Pickleball which originated in the US in 1965 has finally arrived in Teesdale! The game combines features of tennis, table tennis and badminton and is played on a badminton - sized court using racquets called paddles and a plastic ball with holes in. It is reported to be one of the fastest growing sports in the UK and is increasingly popular in the u3a.

Thanks to the persistent work of the Teesdale u3a committee, particularly Peter Singer and the u3a Pickleball Subject Advisor, David Pechey, we are now the first group to start playing in a Durham Leisure Centre.

In January we had 2 introductory/taster sessions with 20 individuals attending each one with a final one on 5 February. These sessions were designed to let as many people as possible have a go ie. trying to hit the ball over the net using one of the paddles from the pickleball set purchased by u3a to get the group started. The hope is that having got a feel for the game individuals can decide whether they want to continue and, if so, will invest in their own paddle. Members can then start to play games of doubles and get to grips with the rules and scoring which are unique to pickleball.

We have been fortunate to find an alternative location to continue playing during the temporary closure of Teesdale Leisure Centre for refurbishment. From 19 February the group will be playing at Shildon Sunnydale Leisure centre on the first and third Mondays of each month (excluding bank holidays) from 2 -4pm.

If you would like to join our group to learn the game, please contact the group convenor, Ruth Lapworth ruth.lapworth@hotmail.co.uk **07787978696**. All are welcome, but please note a reasonable level of fitness is required as the game, although not as demanding as tennis, does involve physical movement, good hand - eye coordination and ball skills.

Poetry Group - Report by Elizabeth Long

After last month's session on 'Loss', we turned our attention to the more cheerful theme of 'Joy'. The poems chosen were varied, covering joy and happiness, as well as simply appreciating the transitory moments of joy in our life.

We began by being entertained by a folk song / poem, sung by Richard Thompson. Sumer Is Icumen In ('Summer Is a-Coming In' / 'Summer Has Arrived') is a mediaeval English song dating from at least the 13th century, said to be one of the oldest folk songs. Fortunately, we were provided with a modern English translation.

We all enjoyed 'Joy of Socks' by Wendy Cope, a cheerful poem celebrating the warmth and importance of socks, as the following lines explain:

“Nice warm socks,
Nice warm socks –
We should celebrate them
Ask a toe!
Toes all know”

A companion piece, ‘The Sorrow of Socks’ had to follow.
We all know how socks disappear!

“Some socks are loners –
They can’t live in pairs.”

Later on in the session we heard ‘Swim Right Up to Me’ by Katherine Pierpoint, another fun poem beginning,

“I first learnt to swim at home in my father’s study
On the piano stool, planted on the middle of the rug.”

Poems by Khalil Gibran, W.B. Yeats, Emily Brontë, Seamus Heaney, and Christina Rossetti all proved fascinating and insightful about our topic. Mary Oliver’s ‘Wild Geese’, chosen by two of our group, made the point that no matter what you are going through in life there is always something, particularly in nature, that makes you stop and think, accepting your place in the “family of things”.

We finished with an apt choice, reflecting on the nature of happiness. ‘Happiness’ by Jane Kenyon, an American poet who fought depression and illness for much of her life. Observing and absorbing small miracles in everyday life, her poems grapple with fundamental questions of human existence. This was a particularly thoughtful, reflective, poem on the nature of happiness.

“There’s just no accounting for happiness,
or the way it turns up like a prodigal
who comes back to the dust at your feet
having squandered a fortune far away.”

We all felt that this was a good collection of poems, covering many aspects of joy and happiness, while giving us pause for thought, reflection and memories of happy times.

Poetry Group Meeting - Report by Mike Catling

The concise Oxford Dictionary defines a ‘garment’ as ‘an article of dress, the outward and visible covering of anything.’ The January meeting of the Poetry Group chose ‘Garments’ as its theme that led to a broad spectrum of poems from the clergy surplice to hats via Dacca Gauzes! The readings took us from the outward and the visible into the inner meanings and implications of why we wear what we wear.

Robert Herrick's poem 'Delight in Disorder' invited us to consider 'A careless shoe-string, in whose tie / I see a wild civility.' This led to a discussion ranging from how many ways you can wear a school uniform to the confrontational, aggressive dress-uniform of the punk.

In contrast, David Scott reminds us that the clergy surplice is 'by law / decent and comely . . . we have put these garments on for centuries,' he writes. However, there is a darker element in this poem written from a personal perspective in which the surplice is 'put on often in dread,' and whilst such garments persist 'we wither and crease inside them.' What is outward and visible may belie the feelings underneath this garment of some who wear them.

This darker element is also in evidence in the poem 'The Dacca Gauzes' by Agha Shahid Ali. The gauzes were the finest cloth used in making wedding saris as part of the bride's dowry. His mother had such a one, now only a memory. Coupled to this memory is another in which the poet tells us the British colonialists systematically amputated the hands of the local weavers and 'the looms of Bengal [were] silenced // and the cotton shipped raw / by the British to England.' Something my history teacher never told us about in school!

There is space to give only reference to one other poem shared with the group, namely Stevie Smith's 'My Hat'. This is a complex poem in which parental control appears to be uppermost in the opening lines. 'Mother said if I wore this hat / I should be certain to get off with the right sort of chap.' Mother's intentions backfire and the poet ends up on a (metaphorical?) desert island with her hat as accomplice. 'Am I glad to be here?' she asks. Her answer is 'Yes, well, I am / it's nice to be rid of Father, Mother and the young man.' Maybe this is a salutary tale for those parents who wish to push their children into particular life choices without considering the desires of their children.



Editor's note: Stevie Smith was an idiosyncratic poet and illustrator, so this is an image which she drew to accompany her poem.

Needlecraft Group - Report by Glen Howard

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 5 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, Glen Howard, a ring to arrange the details. **01833 631639**

WALKING GROUPS

Shorter Walks Group - Report by Liz Colley

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

The group were fortunate that the walk fell on the Monday between Storm Isha and Storm Jocelyn. Our intrepid group gathered to complete a circuit of Barnard Castle and Startforth. despite the still strong winds and the threat of rain.

Fifteen of us met in the Garden of Remembrance on Galgate for a walk taking in the local memorials, starting with The Boer War memorial and the Teesdale Aviation Memorial Garden. Heading to the Bowes Museum we walked past the town cemeteries, unfortunately due to the high winds the Bowes Museum gardens were shut so we couldn't visit the town War Memorial or the Durham Light Infantry Memorial. Instead, we headed down Wilson Street where we took note of the entrance gate to what was the Durham Militia Barracks.



Picture - Ian Royston

We continued onto St Mary's Church to view the flags of the Durham Militia and 3rd/4th Battalion Durham Light Infantry. The church website has good information on local military history if you are interested. Outside in the graveyard we found the memorial to the cholera epidemic in which 143 people lost their lives in a few weeks in 1849. Godfrey was able to tell us about the siting of the memorial which is over the plague pit that was dug for the burials of the departed. Next to it is a tree which was planted to remember those who lost their lives to Covid.

Our route took us down to the river, swollen with the heavy rains from Storm Isha and across the green bridge. In Startforth we stopped at the Parish Church graveyard to view their memorial, interestingly the dates of the first world war on the memorial are 1914-1919. This being a u3a walk, Ian was able to tell us this is because although the Armistice was in 1918, the Treaty of Versailles which was the peace treaty which ended the state of war between Germany and the Allied Powers wasn't signed until 1919.

Our return to Barnard Castle was over the silver bridge and back up to the mini golf and our last memorial, a tree planted in memory of Princess Diane in 1998 by the town council.

Our next walk will be on February 26th.



Picture from the 4-6 mile Walking Group near Cotherstone - Ian Royston

Fellwalking Report January 2024 by Annie Clouston

It was a touch and go affair with conversations and emails flying faster than the wind that was threatening to scupper our walk. Eventually, we decided to go for it, and didn't regret it, though in the teeth of a south-westerly gale and plodging through copious amounts of sog and mud made 10.5 miles seem much further.



Five of us arrived in Leyburn ready for a challenging walk. Phil, our walk leader, had wisely adapted our route to make it doable. As we walked along the Shawl – so called because legend has it that when Mary Queen of Scots escaped from Castle Bolton, where she had been imprisoned, she dropped her shawl on this pathway – we were relatively sheltered. However, leaving the woodland to walk south-west to Preston-under-Scar it was full exposure to a mercifully mild but stop-you-in-your-tracks hoolie. The day was clear and the views across

the valley were delightful, though the ravages and deluges of Storms Isha and Jocelyn were laid out before us. The valley floor was significantly under water and the walk through the Bolton Estate found tree-fellers managing the fallen and injured.

Despite the impediments we managed a good time and returned to Leyburn via a stream that should have been a path to enjoy a very decent cuppa and cake (avoid the scones if you haven't got good teeth and some Rennies) at the pink café on the Square. Many thanks to my companions for a great walk and to Phil Clarke for leading it.



Devastation in Bolton Park following Storms Isha and Jocelyn

Wine Group Forum - Report by Tim Meacham

It has been a frustrating start to the year. Following our regular Christmas 'Bring a Bottle' session (interesting choices as ever) we were preparing to set off for the January meeting at John and Stella's when the snow set in. It was a shame as the occasion was to feature six heavily-reduced French wines from Majestic's New Year Sale. We have rearranged the session for February 27th, but of course the sale will be long finished by the time we make our judgements!

Our group has now been meeting since November 2015, so I calculate that we have tasted more than 600 wines featuring nearly 100 different grapes; we have 'visited' almost all wine-producing countries (yes, even China and India); members have endured over 100 quizzes. It has been a time of great change around the world, with global warming contributing to major opportunities for the 'English' wine movement (a term that is used to encompass all countries of the UK). We enter our tenth year of meeting with hopes for further discoveries and delights!



January Workshop Report: How to use a Sketchbook . . .

. . . ‘and fill in boring winter evenings’ was the sub title Anne Lee, our tutor, wanted adding and the idea of the workshop was to entertain ourselves on a drear January morning shortly after Christmas, but actually it was a bright day with just the slightest frost. Eight of us arrived at the Guide HQ with a sketchbook and any art items we had, as requested, but Anne had provided a wonderful array of materials to use.

The morning was taken up with her showing various different techniques which we then ‘tried’ to copy. Never has a workshop been so silent with coffee being hurriedly taken back to our masterpieces? so we could continue. These consisted of a landscape using sponges and candle wax to give the effect of ruts in a field when coloured; taking a section of a larger picture using a card frame and reproducing this in watercolour crayons with detail added with a biro; and drawing our coffee mugs with a fine liner and blending this with a brush to show the shaded areas.

With time running out Anne gave a quick demonstration of using a Sharpie to draw something and showing how it will show on the back of the paper. This provides an instant tracing that can be outlined - something to do to entertain grandchildren. Being given lots of ideas

to think about Anne suggested that 30 minutes practise a day would improve technique, so maybe we will fill in boring winter evenings as she had suggested!

It was a thoroughly enjoyable morning and our tutor was greatly thanked for coming along to run this workshop. She reminded us that the u3a Painting Group meets on the second Friday each month in Startforth Community Centre.

Hazel Yeadon
The Workshop Committee



FUTURE WORKSHOPS

March 2024 - date to be fixed - the workshop will be on 'Handbells'.
Boldron Village Hall

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.

May 18th 2024 Cross stitch Sampler with Janet Sweeting and Elaine Hicks

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 and Wine tasting at Rydale Winery

Please let Jane know if you would like to come on any of these visits
01388 710741

February Quiz from Phil Clarke

Some more Ditloids; harder than last time

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. 12 = M of a | 11. 360 = D in a C |
| 2. 15 = M on a DMC | 12. 1000 = Y in a M |
| 3. 18 = H on a GC | 13. 2 = S to the W |
| 4. 20 = Q in a R | 14. 2 = H in a P of G |
| 5. 39 = B of the OT | 15. 3 = CR of TS |
| 6. 64 = S on a CB | 16. 4 = F on a P |
| 7. 66 = B of the B | 17. 4 = S on a DB |
| 8. 76 = TL the BP | 18. 4 = I in a H |
| 9. 118 = E in the PT | 19. 6 = D of C |
| 10. 180 = MS at D | 20. 8 = B in a B |

Another Month in The Archers

I used to give marks out of 10 for annoying residents in Ambridge. Always somewhere near the top would be the sanctimonious Peggy Archer, the profoundly OTT Linda Snell, the ultra- snobby Jennifah! Aldridge, the hideously shrill and Brummie- (or the BBC's version of it) accented Susan Carter. And I almost forgot, newcomer Harry The Unctuous, Equestrian and new boyfriend of Alice Aldridge. His patronising of Alice's ex-husband – a mere smithy – is enough to make the most robust stomach curdle. However, all of these pale into insignificance this month with an overwhelming 11 out of 10 for Mia Grundy. She first appeared as the soapy girlfriend of Brad (she of the "I just love pulling ragwort with you Brad") but has now become an eco-warrior and aggressor who makes Greta Thumberg look like Tinkerbell. In charge of the catwalk event at The Bull to encourage recycling clothes she has transmogrified into Linda Snell with knobs on.

But the big news in Ambridge has been soggy sheep feet; poor old ever-depressing with a-lot-to-be-depressed-about Ed Grundy has had a tough time with his Texels. Not only has the live birth rate been low, but he cannot put his sheep out onto his land because of its overwhelming sogginess. Aha! Where could they go? Well it turns out that there is better-drained pasture, but the mystery owner turns out to be none other than the Evil Rob Titchener's estate. And the ER's brother refused to allow it – of course he would, being of an Evil Dynasty. Pot-boiler coming up: the Evil Rob has left it in trust for his child, Jack, the younger of Helen Archer's boys. Not a scrap for his older half-brother poor old Henry. I can see where this is going; the sibling rivalry trope is twinkling in a future scriptwriter's eye.

Further big news: Kenton has been savaged by an uncontrolled dog whilst checking out goings on in the car park at The Bull at closing time (the XL Bully at the Bull?) He has survived, has discharged himself early from hospital, and as I write is busy dramatically relapsing. The back story seems to lie murkily in Jolene's somewhat mercurial past. This could be a pot-boiler almost to rival Evil Rob's shenanigans.

So - all life is here in Ambridge, Eco-fatigue (all down to Mia Grundy), Future Family Feuding, and unprovoked savagery. Tell me, where's the JOY?

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Twelve members of the jury
2. Fifteen men on a deadman's chest
3. 18 holes on a golf course
4. 20 quotes in a ream
5. 39 books of the Old Testament
6. 64 squares on a chess board
7. 66 books of the bible
8. 76 trombones lead the big parade
9. 118 elements in the periodic table
10. 180 maximum score at darts
11. 360 degrees in a circle
12. 1000 years in a Millennium
13. 2 sheets to the wind
14. 2 hands in a pair of gloves
15. Three- cube root of twenty-seven
16. 4 faces on a pyramid
17. 4 strings on a double bass
18. 4 inches in a hand
19. 6 days of the creation
20. 8 bits in a byte

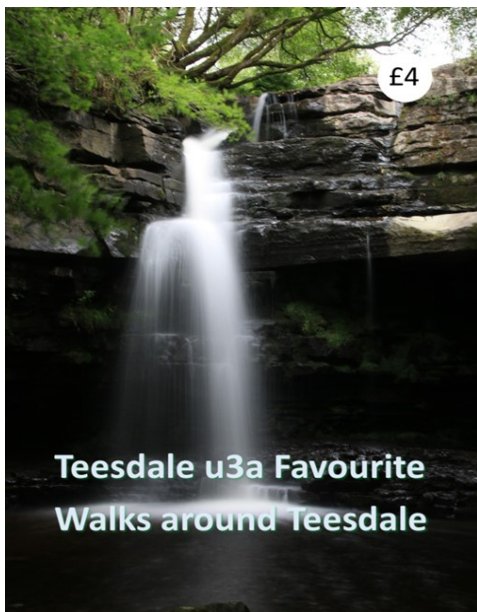
Rotary Barnard Castle

This year, the annual dinner will be held at the Runa Farm Hotel on Tuesday 23rd April, beginning at 6.15 pm.

There will be a welcome drink accompanied by the Teesdale a cappella singers. This will be followed by a 2 course meal and then live music to let your hair down.

Tickets are £32.50 per person and available from any Rotary member or contact Ian Reid: ianreid456@gmail.com

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.

Photo by Pete Redgrave: Do you know where this is?



Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Android Phone	1 st Thurs pm	Martyn Radcliffe 07975 970088
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 3 Room to Read	3 rd Wed am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Chess	2 nd Thurs pm	Diana Marks 07762 626912
Climate Solutions	1 st Thurs am	Kate Bailey 07867 683195
Cryptic Crossword	2 nd Wed 2pm	Sue Overton 07512 368884
Discussion	2 nd Fri am	Glen Howard 01833 631639
French Conversation	4th Thurs pm	Stella Kirton 01388 488919
Gardening	1 st Fri pm	Julie Archer 07774 903377 01833 637576
Genealogy	1 st Thurs pm	INACTIVE
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 Tue 1.30pm	Mike Sweeting 07565 925412
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
Pickleball	1 st & 3 rd Mon pm	Ruth Lapworth 07787 978696
Philosophy	4 th Tues 10am	Ruth Sansom 01325 401850
Photography	1 st Tues	Jane Mathieson 01388 710741
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/ Day trips		Jane Mathieson 01388 710741
Understanding Classical Music	4 th Friday 10am	Bill Heyes 01833 640885
Wildflower group	2nd Wed 2pm	Ann Thompson 07928 594404
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 th Monday pm	Liz Colley 01833 695197
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

Thurs 22 Feb 7.00pm	SCREENING – National Theatre Live: Vanya (15) Andrew Scott brings multiple characters to life in Simon Stephens' radical new version of Chekhov's Uncle Vanya.
Sat 24 Feb 7.30pm	MUSIC – Mark Harrison Band Original songwriter and guitarist, alongside the extraordinary musicianship of Charles Benfield (double bass) and Ben Welburn (drums/percussion).
Sun 25 Feb 2.00pm	FUNDRAISER – Barnard Castle Band: Live in Concert
Thurs 29 Feb 7.30pm	SPOKEN WORD – Teesdale Special Flora Trust – Fabulous Fungi: Science, Fiction, Facts, Forays & Fun!
Fri 1 Mar 7.30pm	MUSIC – Dave Kelly & Bob Hall with Hilary Blythe
Sat 2 Mar 8.00pm	MUSIC – Martin Simpson
Thurs 7 Mar 7.30pm	DANCE – AND: A Dance Poem by Charlotte McLean (Using honesty, charisma and humour, the Scottish dance artist weaves contemporary and highland dance with personal stories, political commentary and spoken word.
Sat 9 Mar 7.00pm	SCREENING – Titanic – The Musical (12A)
Sat 9 Mar 7.30pm	MUSIC – Ajay Srivastav Singer songwriter who plays a genre-bending mix of Indian Folk, Blues and Americana.
Tues 12 Mar 8.00pm	COMEDY – Rosie Jones: Triple Threat (14+)
Thurs 14 Mar 7.30pm	SPOKEN WORD: Teesdale Special Flora Trust – Long-term ecological experiments: Pioneering at Moor House
Fri 15 Mar 7.30pm	THEATRE – The Metamorphosis (10+)
Sat 16 Mar 7.30pm	MUSIC – Salt House "Wonderful... a trio of exceptional talent." – Folk Radio UK
Sat 23 Mar 7.30pm	MUSIC – Simply Dylan Led by front man John O'Connell, 4-piece tribute band del
Sun 24 Mar 2.00pm	CLASSICAL – Aquarius Quartet