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FORUM

MAY 2025

No. 25/05



u3a

CHAIR'S LETTER

Dear Friends

I sit here on this sunny Sunday evening looking over the hills towards Richmond writing my first letter to you in my role as your Chair for 2025. It is my deadline for getting this letter in the May Forum, and typical of my guilty last-minute characteristic. Thank you for all your kind words on my taking up this role. Even from my friends who take great delight in reminding me that I was not going to volunteer or be on committees when I retired.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those generous people who have put themselves forward for roles on our committee to continue the work of making our u3a group a vibrant and very active one. We now have 12 committee members, details circulated by Liz Colley in an email to yourselves. Our membership remains high with 423 members, and our interest groups number 40. I would like to think that we will continue to provide 'added value' to your lives in and around Teesdale.

On Thursday 8 May, Annie and I welcomed members to a lively coffee and chat at Winters, in Middleton-in-Tees. Most of us indulged in large slices of chocolate cake and other sweet treats besides coffees and teas. The group was the usual mix of new and existing members, and we had a pleasant afternoon putting the world to rights and discussing forth coming Teesdale u3a activities.

Talking of social events, can I remind you of our Summer Picnic, Thursday 12 June, 12 noon to 2.00pm at the Cricket Club in Barnard Castle. It is a bargain at £2.00, which includes your raffle entry. There is a bar for drinks and you bring your own picnic, so no worries about if there will be anything you can eat.

I am a member of the Community Choir and it was lovely to see familiar faces from Teesdale u3a at our concert on Saturday evening. Please feel free to stop me and speak if you see me around and about in Barnard Castle, I am fairly good with faces but alas not so good at names. I am happy to chat. On which note I am looking forward to seeing members at the May meeting, when Dr Patrick Eyres will be giving a talk on Turner in The Pennines.

Bye for now. Julie

Cover picture: Pete Redgrave

It's *Your* Forum

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All editors receive all contributions and share the email account.

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! Photos should be credited, of high resolution in jpg format and sent separately. Please limit submissions to 1 page or 400 words, and 1 photo, and send them to the Forum Editor at:

forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

DEADLINE for the next edition: 16 June and next month's editor is Kate. 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: www.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 Ian **07818 046938**
- Back copies are in the u3a file in the Library or in The Witham Shop.

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MONTHLY MEETING – Report by Ian Reid

Professor Alec Ryrie gave an inspirational talk at the April meeting, entitled 'Protestantism: A History in Seven Characters'.

Martin Luther was a 16th Century German priest, who challenged the authority of the Pope and preached that the bible is the only source of divine knowledge on the gospel. He was accused of heresy and excommunicated. He is considered to be one of the most influential figures in Western and Christian history.

Mary Pennington (née Proud) lived during the time of the English Civil War. Her husband was killed fighting on the side of the Parliamentarians when she was aged 18. She was a very independent and capable young woman who rejected the established Church although she had a deep interest in spiritual affairs. She later married again to Sir Isaac Pennington, Lord Mayor of London and they both embraced Quakerism. She wrote a spiritual autobiography describing her own beliefs and the Quakerism that she had found.

Rebecca Freundlich Protten (also Shelley) was an 18th Century former slave in the Caribbean who bridged Christianity in the West Indies, Europe and West Africa, regions where she had lived. She became one of the first ordained Afro-Caribbean women in Western Christianity. She became a spiritual leader whose teachings were often challenged by enslavers. These teachings gave spiritual sustenance to millions and were a tool for the emancipation of African women.

During the war of 1812, William Miller was a captain in the American army. He became convinced that God influences human history. After a detailed study of the bible, he concluded that Christ would soon return to earth. He provided a date although he had to recalculate this several times. Millerism spread quickly and became a mass movement. Christ's return did not happen which was a great disappointment to him, but the movement survives today through the 7th Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Hong Xiuquan was a revolutionary and religious Chinese leader who led a major rebellion against the Qing dynasty in the 1850s. Following mystical visions, he declared himself Heavenly King of the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace. He travelled widely propagating his form of Christianity.

In the war that ensued, millions were killed. In 2018, the number of Protestants in China was estimated at 38 million.

Walter Grundmann was a German Protestant theologian during the third Reich who helped set up the Institute for the Study and Elimination of Jewish Influence on German Church Life. The Institute produced a revised edition of the bible and hymn book. Grundmann was also a secret informer for the Stasi (State Security).

Willie Jonker was an Afrikaner theologian and Dutch Reformed Church minister. He made a public confession identifying the sins caused by the policy of apartheid. This confession was accepted by the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, which was a significant step towards reconciliation.

NEXT MEETINGS AT THE WITHAM

26 June 2025: Dave Palmer – The Georgian Theatre, Richmond

Dave is a retired IT consultant and one of his interests is Georgian Theatre. He has been a volunteer Theatre guide for 15 years and has developed an interest in Georgian society and the influence of theatre on it, and vice versa. His talk starts with the founding of the theatre, the background of the founders and the social environment through its first period of life. He then goes on to cover its long period of dormancy as a theatre and its many other uses. Finally, he covers the restoration of the building as a working theatre again, leading to its current uses and future.

24 July 2025: Geoffrey Wilson – Ripon Cathedral – The Story

Godfrey Wilson, retired school teacher and volunteer guide of Ripon Cathedral will give an illustrated talk on the cathedral's fourteen centuries of history.

WORKSHOP – Report by Hilary Dunningham

Richard III Walk and Talk

In glorious weather we met our guide - Kim Harding, Chair of the Northern Dales Richard III Society – on Scar Top. We learnt that the Castle had been inherited by Richard of Gloucester following his marriage to the daughter of Warwick the Kingmaker. In the 1470s and 80s, Richard spent a lot of time in the town – visiting for the last time in 1484, one year after becoming King. Richard made considerable improvements to the living quarters in the Brackenbury Tower of the Castle and adorned the oriel window with his white boar motif. The original medieval main door to the Castle would have been where the Kings Court Care Home now stands leading to a farm and small chapel within the walls. The present entrance to the Castle was the North door which opened on to a flat area used for military training.

We then walked to the County Bridge, built in 1569, where Kim informed us that it used to have 3 arches and a small chapel in the centre. This was used for marriages, where the bride and groom jumped over the broom. The bridge was damaged during the great flood of 1771. Walking along Bridgegate - one of the 4 gates into town along with Galgate, Thorngate and Broadgate – we reached The Bank where there used to be a monks' priory at the bottom and a steward's house for replenishing victuals at the castle about halfway up. Many of the houses on the Bank had (and still have) tunnels under the road going to the castle! Blagraves, the oldest house in town, was given by Richard III to the widow of Miles Forrest, Keeper of the Kings Wardrobe, as thanks for his services. The building has the white boar motif on one of its back windows and one tunnel in the cellar that goes 50m under the Demesnes and another that goes to the Castle.

At the Market place, we were told there would have been a Shambles area, a toll booth and a gallows. The toll booth bell would ring to notify stallholders they could start selling and inside the booth were kept standard weights and measures to ensure all the sellers complied with the rules.



Constables were in town to keep the peace. Richard III instituted the town's Wednesday market. Outside St Mary's Church, Kim told us there had been a Guild Hall where the Black Horse pub now stands, and, where the Capri restaurant is now, was St John's Hospital which had a chapel and rooms for 13 patients. Richard III was going to build a Collegiate Church at Amen Corner and the original buildings in front of the church may have been houses for priests as the foundations were



medieval with wattle and daub walls. The only way up to the church was the little cobbled lane from the Bank and the alleyway leading to the vestry. Richard's boar motif was found on a building at the end of this alley and is now in the Bowes Museum. On entering the church, Kim told us about the improvements instigated by Richard III. Inside, he widened the aisle, built a two-storey vestry, opened up the North door, raised the nave and put windows at the top. On the outside of the window above the maze there can be seen his white boar motif and on the chancel arch there are two faces – his brother on the left and Richard on the right. We had refreshments in the church and Kim happily answered the many questions from our group. We all agreed that she had given us a fascinating insight into the connection between Richard III and the town of Barnard Castle.

DAY TRIPS

I have organised the following trips for this year. If you want to put your name down for any of them, please email, janem1947@hotmail.com, or Phone **07591095765**, or sign up at monthly meetings. Payments can be made by Cash, Cheque made out to ‘**Teesdale u3a**’ or Bank Transfer: ‘**The Teesdale u3a, 20-83-73, 03778576**’, please identify for which trip the money is. Coach and castle tour costs are non-refundable.

Friday 20 June 20 Ushaw Chapel, House & Gardens

9.30 leave outside Addisons, return before 6pm. Entry to Chapel, House & Gardens £9.00, Historic Houses members free, please remember your card. Coach price £12.00. There are permanent exhibitions about Pugin; Life at Ushaw, and a Display of books showing Bird art through the centuries. Most of the areas are accessible, with ramps where there are a few steps, some of the outside areas can be uneven.

Payment can be taken at monthly meetings or as above. There are still some seats available.

Friday 18 July, Helmsley Walled Gardens am

The gardens are a few minutes-walk from the carpark, they are flat with seating and a cafe, Afternoon in the town. Helmsley has many shops, cafes, galleries; Friday is market day, the Castle is English Heritage if you want to visit, costing £8.10 if not a member. There is a small Brewery with shop or there are tours around it. Leaving at 9am outside Addisons, return before 6pm. Cost £25.50 includes Gardens and coach. Payments as above.

Friday 19 September, A DAY in SKIPTON.

Free to look round this lovely market town with lots of shops, galleries, eateries and walks. Impressive Castle, £11.40, Hour-long boat trip from £9.50, Friday is Market day. Craven Court off the main street has many independent and known shops and cafés. Walks along the Leeds Liverpool Canal.

Leaving at 9am outside Addisons return before 6pm. Coach price £18.00. Payment as above.

Hope to see some of you

Jane Mathieson

FUTURE DAY AND LONGER TRIPS – Dorothy Jameson

Time seems to pass much more quickly these days and I can hardly believe that 30 of us are off to Tenby next month. There are now 20 of us going to the Cotswolds in September, but with single rooms being charged double there is no great rush for them! By contrast, and thinking about next spring I recently spoke to Cairngorm Travel and they don't disappoint. They can offer a trip starting in Barnard Castle on 16 April 2026 and confirm that we would be the last pick up. The prices are going up in October, however if we are prepared to book now the cost for a double or twin is £259 per person. We are being offered 10 single rooms at £331 per room. They are happy to reserve 20 seats at the front of the coach for us. They ask for a deposit of £50 and that we mention Barnard Castle when booking. The balance is due in February. At this stage they are unable to confirm the exact itinerary. It will include 4 nights, dinner, bed and breakfast and two included day trips, not the ones that we did this year. The bookings are made direct to **Cairngorm Travel** at **01405 761 334**. **Dorothy Jameson 01833 637957**

ROGER STANYON

We are sorry to announce the death on 11 April of Roger Stanyon (87).

Roger was a long-standing and active member of u3a and will probably be best remembered as Convenor of the Art Appreciation Group for 12 years, until the break occasioned by Covid. Ill health prevented his resuming after the pandemic, but the Group was relaunched in Spring 2023 with his enthusiastic support, and he regularly attended until recently. Those who were members during his tenure have fond memories of his time at the helm, and of the art-related trips he organised with Elizabeth Formstone.

Following retirement from a career in quarry management he settled in Barnard Castle, where, amongst many other activities, he volunteered for CAB, served as Treasurer of Rotary, played golf, squash and a member of u3a groups including Geology, Poetry, Music and Wine Tasting.

His love of art stemmed from his family, several of whom were talented practitioners.

He grew up in North London close to his grandfather, a successful artist, much in demand for illustrative work, including portraits of the Royal Family for use in many different contexts. With his friend Peter Norton (also a member of the Group) he co-authored a tribute to him entitled Charles Willis: Biography of a Royal Portrait Painter, published in 2020.

GROUP REPORTS

ANDROID PHONE GROUP - Report by Martyn Radcliffe

After a few missed months the group met once again at the Guide HQ. The subject for the meeting was housekeeping of files on mobiles. Starting with email we ran through setting up sub folders within the application of choice so that important emails can be stored more efficiently. Deleting emails that do not need to be kept.

We then had a look at the Gallery and Camera. A regular culling of images was recommended with going through on a regular occasion to remove images that are not needed (including those stored from WhatsApp).

It was suggested that printing of images using websites like Snap Fish is a good way to have physical copies of pictures. Finally, we looked at “My Files” to get rid of downloads and any other files that were not required on the phone.

Discussion regarding that though cloud storage is currently free (or at a very low cost) it is likely over the coming months or years that companies will start to charge for the service, so storing files that you want to keep like photos might be better stored on an external drive.

Next Month: Moving Images from Phone to Computer, Removing AI from outlook and other applications.

ART APPRECIATION GROUP – Report by Tony Seward

For its May meeting, the group visited the Bowes Museum for a tour of the Ceramics galleries, led by the Curator, Howard Coutts. A report will follow in the June issue of Forum.

The next meeting, on Wednesday 4 June, will take place as usual at Enterprise House, when we will view a 90-minute film on the recent major exhibition at the National Gallery, ‘Van Gogh: Poets and Lovers’, covering the two astonishingly productive years the artist spent in Arles and Saint-Rémy.

‘A critic must stand by her hyperbole and I would not dock a single one of the five stars I gave the sold-out Van Gogh show at the National Gallery. But like all exhibitions, it is rather hard on the back and the feet, and the new no-liquids rule means that there is little opportunity for refreshment. Wouldn’t it be nice to experience such a stellar show from the comfort of a plush upholstered chair, perhaps with a salty snack and a glass of

something cool and clinking? Ready the popcorn — or possibly the sunflower seeds — for the film version by Exhibition on Screen.

Every brushstroke and ridge of impasto is reproduced with extraordinary fidelity. There are no crowds, no queues, no takers of selfies. This is an excellent, insightful, immaculately filmed documentary’.

AUTOMOTIVE GROUP – Report by David Yeadon

Whilst the Automotive Group focuses mainly on motor vehicles, we also take in any form of transport and this means by sea or air. This time it was a trip to the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington just outside York. The museum sits on what was a WW2 airfield which housed both British and French bomber squadrons. The specially constructed runway is two miles long!

Thirteen members enjoyed the trip in the new UTAS minibus, and were very impressed with the wide range of military aircraft on display - mainly early 1930s up to 1980s.

Indoor displays were superb, and, as is usually the case, demand a return visit to fully take in all of the information. One of the group's members - Roger Sunderland - had been a Royal Air Force pilot from 1970 to 1990, and had flown many types of aircraft, including the Blackburn Buccaneer, which can fly at 600mph at 50 feet! Exciting eh?

In the museum is the ACTUAL bit of kit that Barnes Wallis use to propel the balls to test his bouncing balls theory in the huge water tanks.



BIRDWATCHING – Report by Andrew Lapworth

Visit to RSPB St Aidan's Nature Park Monday 14 April: photo by Andrew Lapworth.

Black-necked Grebes are rare breeding birds in the UK and St Aidan's RSPB managed reserve near Leeds has a small but significant breeding population. As few as 50+ pairs breed in the UK and St Aidan's has perhaps a third of them. This was one of the reasons for 8 of us to go there (and a first time for the group).

As we parked, we heard the distinctive explosive song of a Cetti's Warbler in the bushes and while some of us were still parking, early arrivals found an obliging Little Owl sunning itself in full view on one of its favoured perches: a good start. After checking in with the very helpful RSPB volunteer we set off in the cool breeze on the ~3 mile circuit of the large lowland site in the flood plain of the River Aire. The wide and gravelly footpath network gives uninterrupted views over the fields and ditches and we soon added Canada and Greylag Geese and Lapwings to our list; newly arrived Willow Warblers sang from the hillside birches. A Kestrel gave great close views and Marsh Harriers showed distantly before we arrived in the main wetland complex, where a Cetti's Warbler seemed to sing every few hundred yards.

We soon saw a whole variety of ducks: Pochard and Tufted Ducks in good numbers and Mallard and Shovelers; before long we heard the subliminal call of a booming Bittern. Little Grebes were soon heard and seen and then Great-crested Grebes in their finery, but no Black-necked Grebes. All the while we had the cacophony of the large Black-headed Gull breeding colony. We were getting hungry for lunch and at our picnic spot we added a couple of lonely Redshanks and a welcome flock of Sand Martins. We continued our walk, but still no Black-necked Grebes. Overhead we saw a rather distant Red Kite, and then in the foreground we counted quite a few Grey Herons on their nests on a distant wooded island.

At the very farthest point of our walk from the reserve we were checking out the ducks when Linda spotted and asked me to check out a bird hidden behind some reeds: a Black-necked Grebe at long last! We soon realised we had struck lucky and in fact there were 2-3 pairs of the grebes showing remarkable breeding behaviours as they paired-up and jostled with each other.

They were fast movers and it was tricky to get them in the 'scopes for closer views but eventually we all had good views of them in their breeding finery. They're a little larger than a Little Grebe and from a distance look almost

black (like a Coot); but in close up they have coppery red sides and a drooping yellow-fan behind their vivid cherry-red eyes; quite stunning! The lower mandible of their black bills is slightly upturned. Checking in the literature afterwards I learned that they often choose to breed in Black-headed Gull colonies.

A week before our visit I had done a recce and saw a lone long-staying Slavonian Grebe that had wintered at the site (they don't breed there). We didn't get to see this bird but making our way back to the reserve centre another rare duck was pointed out to us: a drake Garganey with its lovely white crescent over its eye. Garganey are rare and shy summer visitors to the UK and favour freshwater wet meadows and areas of flooded vegetation.

Back at the on-site cafe we enjoyed warming hot drinks and cakes and checked our list of about 45 birds seen or heard during the day.



BOARD GAMES – Report by Hazel McCallum

Five of us met up in The Breakfast Room at the Old Well Inn to enjoy a fun afternoon of board game playing. We welcomed Carole, a new member, and then had our traditional warm up with a few rounds of Bananagrams. Annie and Hazel were winners of our Bananagrams games.



We then played Azul again, after last month's success. This was new to three of us with Annie and Jane having played it at last month's meeting. Azul is a tile-based game in two phases. The first phase involves selecting tiles to lay on the first half of the board, and the second phase involves building your tiled arrangement using the tiles you gathered in phase 1.

As you lay your tiles in Phase 2, you earn points. The game ends when one player completes a horizontal line of tiles, and the winner is the player with the most points. We had time to play two games with Sue winning both games.

Our next meeting will be from 2pm on Monday 9 June at The Old Well Inn.

ROOM TO READ BOOK GROUP- Review by Hilary Clarkson

The Lincoln Highway by Amor Towles

'The Lincoln Highway' is a 2021 novel set in 1954. It tells the story of three young men and a young boy on a road trip from Nebraska to New York City over 10 days. The highway itself is one of the first transcontinental highways to be built for motor vehicles in the USA.

In June, 1954, eighteen-year-old Emmett Watson is driven home to Nebraska by the warden of the juvenile work farm where he has just served a sentence for involuntary manslaughter. His mother left the family soon after Billy's birth, his father has recently died, and the family farm has been foreclosed by the bank. Emmett's intention is to pick up his eight-year-old brother, Billy, and head to Texas, where they can start new lives. He is persuaded by Billy to instead follow the highway to California in the hope of finding their long-lost mother.

When the warden drives away, Emmett discovers that Duchess and Woolly, two young men from the work farm, have stowed away in the boot of the warden's car. Together, they have hatched an altogether different plan for Emmett's future, one that will take the four of them on a fateful and entertaining journey in the opposite direction to the city of New York.

The story is told in chapters by the various protagonists who all have different ideas about their destination and how to get there. The twists and turns to the plot make the book a real page-turner. Most of our group enjoyed this rather long read and the variety that the different story tellers gave to the different scenarios.

The scores were 4 for discussion and 5 for recommending to a friend.

CHESS GROUP – Report by Diana Marks

We welcomed yet another newbie to the group in May. Great stuff! Since the weather was so glorious, we sat outside in the garden at The Old Well. There were six of us this time, all at different levels, but hopefully the pairings worked well. We had hoped to complete our games within the first hour so we could swap around but that didn't materialise. Perhaps we should start having strict time constraints although it would take away from the relaxed atmosphere. Some of us (well two actually) stayed for a drink afterwards and we encourage others to join in. We next meet on 5 June. Hope to see you!

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GROUP – Report by Kate Bailey

Our topic this month was alternative energy sources. However, we first enjoyed an energetic and, to some extent, enraging debate about sewage outfalls into our precious rivers and lakes. This is not just about algal blooms on Lake Windermere or floating excrement in the Tees. This issue has become a national scandal, to the extent that the government appears to be debating what to do about Ofwat and utilities companies such as Thames Water.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/water-supply-wastewater-and-water-quality> advises that & “The Water Environment Regulations 2017 set out requirements to prevent the deterioration of aquatic ecosystems; protect, enhance and restore water bodies to ‘good’ status; and achieve compliance with standards and objectives for protected areas.”

Since privatisation, the regional water companies have been funded by global investors who prioritise dividends for their shareholders rather than the wellbeing of consumers and the health of the water environment. UK Biodiversity Indicators for 2024 [<https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ukbi-surface-water-status/>] report that in 2022, in England, 0% surface water bodies

(none) were awarded high; water quality status; 16% rivers and canals, 14% lakes were awarded good; status.

In the same year, 64% of all water bodies in England were graded; moderate; 17%; poor; 3%; bad.



The Rivers Trust [<https://theriverstrust.org/key-issues/sewage-in-rivers>] advises us to check their interactive sewage spills maps, write to our elected representatives, and report date, time, location and appearance of any observed sewage spills to the authorities via the hotline: England, Scotland and Northern Ireland: **0800 80 70 60**.

Alternative energy sources - we discussed the pros and cons of hydro-tidal, geothermal, biomass, hydrogen, wind turbines, photovoltaics (both solar electric and thermal). The larger the turbine e.g. national scale tidal projects, the longer it will last; typically, a wind turbine lasts 10 years, requiring frequent maintenance. Less known projects are trialling bio-synthetic electricity generated by chlorophyll in wood pulp; wood-laminate blades for wind turbines; local community hydro-power schemes; housing estate sewage outfalls generating methane gas for heating; generation of electricity using the centripetal forces of the earth spin.

Overall hydrogen generated from water seems to offer the greatest potential. Liquid hydrogen stored in fuel cells and used to power road vehicles, planes and shipping is significantly safer than carrying fossil fuel in conventional tanks, as demonstrated by Honda in California, BMW, Boeing and the Torghatten Nord ferry company in Norway.

Good News; this month - 4 giant tortoise hatchlings born at Philadelphia Zoo made their 97-year old mother, the oldest recorded first-time mum. And a 12-year-old Glasgow schoolgirl has won a prestigious UK engineering award for her solar-powered heated blanket/backpack for homeless people, that also has great potential for use in disaster emergencies and refugee shelters.

DISCUSSION GROUP – Report by Glen Howard

Several people were missing at this meeting mainly because of holidays. Discussions included the cancellation of an exhibition of political cartoons on the grounds that some people might be offended; whether women should be able to have female staff to give them a mammogram; the problems caused by the current consumer driven world economy; the controversy caused when a man chooses to adopt his wife's surname on marriage; and the difficulties that may arise if a 'wild swimmer' insists on swimming nude in an area with public access.

Our next meetings will be on Fridays 13 June and 11 July. If you would like to join us, please give me a ring on **07975 705816**.

FAMILY HISTORY INTEREST GROUP – Report by Alan Swindale

There were just seven members present for the May meeting of the Family History Interest Group. FreeREG is an internet database comprising parish register entries which have been transcribed by volunteers – just like its stablemate FreeBMD. It is free to use and at present covers about 40% of parishes in England. New parishes are added every week. Most of the entries are prior to 1837 after when of course the civil registers can be used instead.

Pam Taylor guided the members on how to use FreeREG to push your family tree to earlier generations. The search facilities on FreeREG are in many respects more powerful than its competitors such as Family Search. After this introduction she passed out a worksheet with exercises for the members to practice on – the room went surprisingly quiet!

The next meeting of the group will be held on the second Thursday of June, 12 June, at 13:30 in Enterprise House when the topic will be the realities of Domestic Service for our ancestors. Unfortunately, if attendance does not improve the Family History Interest Group will sink beneath the waves. Use it or lose it!

GARDENING GROUP – Report by Fran Hindley

A jubilant gathering of 49 garden group members set off on an eagerly awaited first garden visit of the season on Friday 2 May 2025, to Burnby Hall Gardens and Museum, Pocklington. The weather was all we could wish for, being sunny and not too hot, hovering at a pleasant 18°C.

On arrival, we were greeted by a cheery avenue of Pretty Princess, Blushing Lady and Menton tulipa in vibrant hues of pink infused with yellow, and golden yellow infused with pink, all beautifully coordinated and planted up in giant containers for maximum impact.

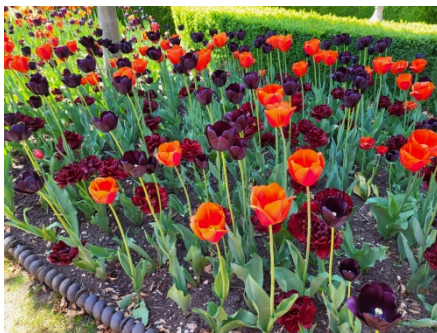
Our tour of the garden then took us to the enchanting & secluded Secret Garden, the Aviary Garden (listen to the canary song and the excited chatter of the various finches within) and Edwardian Summerhouse, with beautifully planted tulip beds in shades of reds, yellows, pinks and purples. Then on to the delightfully floriferous and quintessentially English Walled Garden, before moving on to the amazing rock garden where we discovered dwarf tulips, aubretia, sedum, euphorbia, heathers, hardy geraniums, rock roses, alpine and so much more. This led out to another, smaller lake, complete with pictureque bridge. However, rather than cross the bridge, we carried on forward to a large and impressive Stumpery so imaginatively constructed that it felt almost other-worldly and you wanted to linger in this leafy glade. Thoughts of A Midsummer Night's Dream came to my mind.

As we progressed through the garden we were treated to an abundance of tulip beds and planters throughout, all thoughtfully labelled. So you are introduced to Angel's Wish, Twilight Princess, Honky Tonk, Black Jack, Muscadet, Orange Angelique, Jimmy, Norah, Gabriella and many more. My overall favourite (if a favourite is allowed or indeed can be decided upon) would be Viridichic. There are also various sculptures thoughtfully sited around the garden ... spot the Lynx! And something about 'Saucy Beginnings'!

The museum, the entrance to which is located inside the café (I feel obliged to point this out as I spent an inordinate amount of time seeking it out), is well worth exploring for its intriguing glimpse of life in another era covering as it were the years between 1901-1926 when Major Percy Stewart, adventurer and traveller explored that world.

Dear reader, if you would like to visit this lovely venue (under your own steam as it were), then you will have an opportunity in July/August to make the acquaintance of Barbara Dobbins, Rosy Morn, Colonel AJ Welch, Marlicea Rosea et al., when these splendid waterlilies come into flower.

Maintaining my determination to be succinct, and this is me being succinct ... our next Garden Group Trip is on Friday 6 June 2025 to Wynyard Hall Gardens and Arboretum, and there are still **places available**.



GEOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Jane Harrison

Tim Meacham, a great railway enthusiast, came to talk about the Tees Valley line, which ran from Barnard Castle to Middleton-in-Teesdale between 1868 and 1965. He began by outlining how the town first became connected to the rail network. The opening of the Darlington and Stockton Railway, in 1825, was the beginning of passenger transport. However, local interest in freight transport predated that. In 1765, George Dixon, the brother of the more famous Jeremiah Dixon, proposed a scheme to link Cockfield Fell to the river Tees, using rail and canal but it never came to fruition.

There was great enthusiasm in the 1830s for establishing a rail link between Barnard Castle and Darlington but progress was slow as the Duke of Cleveland opposed the building of any line across his land. It wasn't until 1854 that two competing bills went before Parliament and the Darlington to Barnard Castle Railway, promoted by Joseph Pease, was approved. Tim showed us some fascinating old black and white photographs of the stations, including that at Broomielaw, which was originally privately owned

and had covered steps from the platform to the road where horse-drawn carriages could wait to take the gentry to Streatlam Castle.

The next line – the South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway – was opened in 1861. It ran westwards, until 1962, over the now demolished Tees Viaduct, towards Bowes and Kirkby Stephen. The existing station in Barnard Castle could not be reached because of the required tight curvature of the track, so a second station was built. This has long vanished beneath Glaxo's car park, but the first station building (see photograph) can still be seen off Montalbo Road.

Two years later the Stockton and Darlington Railway opened the line from Bishop Auckland to Barnard Castle, which ran through Evenwood and Cockfield. By then there was no longer opposition from the sitting Duke of Cleveland. The company took over full ownership of the other two lines that year and everything was merged into the North Eastern Railway.

Unfortunately, a technology malfunction at the start left Tim little time to talk about the Teesdale line, apart from the first section to Cotherstone.

The station there employed 15 staff in 1892 and was the destination of North Eastern Railway's Sunday excursion trains, earning it the nickname "Little Sunderland". We are looking forward to welcoming Tim back on a future occasion to hear the second part of his fascinating talk.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 19 June at 2pm in The Witham. Phil Ramsden from the Environment Agency will talk about work on rivers in Cumbria.



Photos: Tim Meacham

iPAD and iPHONE GROUP – Report by Mike Sweeting

Our opener normally has a security theme and this month it was online security with the emphasis on identity theft of which 74,000 cases were reported in 2024. The Group's attention was also drawn to a new area on their devices under iCloud in Settings entitled 'Learn more about online safety'. This is UK specific and links in the UK bodies that are supposed to offer some protection.

To finish of the topic of passwords started last month we discussed 'passkeys'. These are designed to replace passwords and will be introduced by the sites we interact with and will be much more secure. Existing examples include Amazon and PayPal.

Finally we looked at iCloud.com and FindMy. The latter provides protection for lost and stolen devices and the ability to keep in contact with your nearest and dearest. FindMy links in with iCloud.com which mirrors online many of the apps and functions on the iPad and iPhone. It can also be used to access FindMy functions if you do not have access to an iPhone or iPad. We also had a play with an AirTag.

LUNCH CLUB – Photograph by Kate Keen

A trio of deserts at the Rose and Crown Romalldirk.



NEEDLECRAFT – Report by Glen Howard

Despite meeting on the Bank Holiday Monday, there was virtually a full complement of members for our May meeting. We were all busy with crochet or knitting. Items being made included a Paddington Bear, premature baby hat and a blanket. Despite the chilly day we were all very comfortable in a warm conservatory. We could all remember tales of knitted bathing costumes and the embarrassment they caused.

There were a number of members complaining about not being able to hear some of the speakers at the meetings in the Witham and the lack of a hearing loop. There were also moans about the mumbling of presenters on the TV.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 2 June 2025. New members are always welcome and you certainly don't need to be an expert to join us, just enjoy stitching with like-minded folk. Please give me a ring if you are interested.

PHILOSOPHY GROUP – Report by Ruth Sansom

Truth – what is it?

Our question for our meeting in April provoked good discussion.

‘We know truth, not only by reason, but also by the heart, and it is from this last that we know first principles; and reason, which has nothing to do with it, tries in vain to combat them. The sceptics who desire truth alone labour in vain.’

Blaise Pascal

‘You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.’

Jesus – John 8:32

We examined **Epistemology** - the study of truth, belief and knowledge – from the Greek:

- Episteme – knowledge
- Logos – reason
-

How do you decide on the truth??

Rationalists believe that knowledge is acquired through the use of reason, while empiricists assert that knowledge is gained through experiences.

Truth, in philosophy, is the **property of sentences, assertions, beliefs, thoughts, or propositions that are said, in ordinary discourse, to agree with the facts or to state what is the case.**

Major theories of truth include those based on:

Correspondence – do the facts correspond to the use of the senses in observation?

Coherence - how well it fits with an already established system of beliefs

Plato argued that knowledge of the truth is achieved through philosophical reasoning and the intellect, beyond the deceptive appearances of the physical world.

Buddha spoke of the 4 noble truths:

1. suffering
2. origin or cause of suffering
3. cessation of suffering
4. path to the cessation of suffering

Jesus said 'I am the Way, the **Truth** and the Life: he was saying that he is the embodiment and fulfilment of the Word of God, and that he is alétheia, reality, the opposite of what is false or illusion.

Friedrich Nietzsche argued that truth is impossible.

He believed that there can only be perspective and interpretation, driven by a person's interests or 'will to power'.



"The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in what sense?"

We may not have the answers in our group, but we can pursue the questions to very interesting possibilities!

Do come and join us to see what you think! We meet every 4th Tuesday in the month at 10am at Enterprise House.

Next meeting: 24 June – the use of animals in research

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP – Report by Alan Kenwright

Photographs by Pete Redgrave and Alan Kenwright.

In May the photography group visited the ruined castles at Church Brough and Bowes. Each is built on the site of a Roman fort on the main Roman road from York to Carlisle. Brough Castle is very picturesque and is adjacent to the ancient and interesting church after which the village is named. It is also adjacent to an excellent ice-cream parlour and tea room so we didn't have far to go for refreshment. After a quick lunch we made the hop back over Stainmore to Bowes for a wander around the castle there.

Our next outing will be to Seahouses and the Farne Islands, on 3 June.



POETRY GROUP – Report by Marilyn Normanton

April's theme was childhood, a universal experience engendering much discussion and reminiscence.

First comes babyhood with Sylvia Plath, in gentler mood as a new mother, writing in ***Morning Song***, "All night your moth breath/ Flickers among the flat pink roses". "Cow heavy" she answers the urgent summons of her baby as "now you try/Your handful of notes;/ The clear vowels rise like balloons."

George Mackay Brown's ***School***, suggests the lassitude of a classroom, where the children, "heads... like green sheaths that will open soon" chant their tables, while outside a "lark glitters out a song" and "the globe of the world/ In a dark corner, has a splash of light." Spirits lift, as reminded of the imminence of the Easter holidays "twenty one faces/ open like daffodils."

Walking Away by Cecil Day-Lewis beautifully evokes a parent's fears as they reflect on watching their growing child "walking away from me ... With the pathos of a half-fledged thing set free." A parting that "Gnaws at my mind still", yet recognising "How selfhood begins with a walking away/And love is proved in the letting go."

Charles Causley's ***Timothy Winters*** has no such fond parent nurturing him, since "old man Winters likes his beer" and his mother "ran off with a bombardier". While "Grandma sits in the grate with a gin... Timothy's dosed with Aspirin." Written in 1957 but, sadly, a scenario not unfamiliar to those of us who have worked with children.

Maya Angelou, victim of an abusive childhood, declares, ***Life Doesn't Frighten Me***. "Shadows on the wall/ Noises down the hall/ Life doesn't frighten me at all." Defiance of a frightened child or resilience of a survivor?

Seamus Heaney's ***Follower***, addresses role reversal as we age. The child looking back "was a nuisance" stumbling behind the plough in his father's "hobnailed wake." "But today/ It is my father who keeps stumbling/ Behind me, and will not go away."

To lighten the mood, we listened to ***Liverpool Lullaby***, sung appropriately by Cilla Black. "Oh, you are a mucky kid/ Mucky as a dustbin lid" but loved nonetheless. "There's no one can take your place/ Go fast asleep for your mummy."

This was a selection that stirred memories for us all. Both of our own childhoods, for better or worse and as parents, remembering the joys and occasional missteps we made as we raised our own children.

SCRABBLE GROUP – Report by Ray Thompson

Notes from the Scrabble Group Meeting held on Monday 14 April 2025

We met at Judith's house, there were 9 of us this month, so we split into 3 teams of 3: Ray, Monica and Liz, Judith, Lillian and Marilyn, Phil, Paula and Jeanette. Liz won the first game with a score of 204, Judith won with a score of 256, and Phil won his game with a score of 221 points.

We then stopped for refreshments of tea, coffee, chocolate biscuits and hot cross buns.

We started the second round of games, with the three winners playing each other, so Liz, Judith and Phil playing. Judith won this game with a score of 246 including an 8-letter word of PROULERS.

Jeanette, Ray and Paula played in the 2nd group, which Paula won with a score of 242 points.

Marilyn, Lillian and Monica played in the 3rd group, which Lillian won with a score of 162 points.

Please call Judith on **01833 650150** for details of our next meeting if you would like to attend.

UNDERSTANDING CLASSICAL MUSIC – Report by Ian Royston

The third part of Howard Goodall's Story of classical music entitled "Elegance and Sensibility" looked at music on the cusp of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Though the world was gripped by revolution and turbulence, composers such as Mozart and Beethoven continued to produce music for aristocratic patrons which sought to sooth and provide an idyllic backdrop to their privileged lives.

It was also a time when the complexities of the baroque style began to simplify into a smaller range of chords with the three favourites emerging and remaining the mainstay of many repertoires to this day including almost all of the output of legendary rock group Status Quo.

It is only well into the first quarter on the 19th century that music starts to better reflect the heroism and misery of the outside world and composers such as Mozart and Beethoven become freelance rather than relying on a rich patron. It is said that Mozart wrote the world's best-remembered tunes, very necessary when your livelihood depends on it.

It was into this world that Frederic Chopin, the main subject of the second part of the morning's programme was born. Warsaw was torn between Russia and Prussia so after realising the limitations of being able to thrive as a virtuoso pianist in Warsaw, Chopin moved to Paris where he became a popular salon performer and the lover of writer and influencer George Sand (Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin de Francueil). Simon Callow informed us that though we see Chopin as being prolific he set such high personal standards that only a fraction of his output has ever been heard. Nevertheless, the accessibility of factory-made pianos and cheap sheet music was key to the popularity of the pianoforte to aspirational, well-bred women and encouraged them to explore composition.

WILDFLOWER GROUP - Report by Anne Thomson

The glorious spell of good weather continued through Wednesday 9 April dawned cloudy with a cold wind but dry when 15 of us met at Egglestone Abbey.

We proceeded across and down to the meadow, upon ascending into the meadow we looked back at the embankment which was covered in Primroses. As we ambled along Thorsgill Beck we identified golden Saxifrage and Butterbur at the water's edge. Looking over at another embankment we saw more Primroses and to our right was Bow Bridge, a cobbled 17th Century packhorse bridge.

Leaving the meadow, we wandered down to the Tees riverside, then sauntering up the lane to Abbey Bridge we were delighted to find Moschatel (town hall clock) and yellow Dead Nettle (yellow archangel).

Dry conditions underfoot allowed us to wander quite far into the woods to see Bluebells dotted amongst a carpet of Wood Anemones with Wild Garlic and Early Dog Violet making an appearance.

A complete list of the 33 wild flowers identified was sent to the Group members.

WIMMIN' SWIMMIN' GROUP - Report by Annie Clouston

Everything is going well... swimmingly, in fact, at Teesdale Leisure Centre when we all get together for a gentle splash about, an elegant float, a quick stroke analysis, and record-breaking aquatic achievements (admittedly mostly the records are modest) of which our swimmers should be proud.

I thought it might be helpful if I shared a few things out there that are useful to swimmers of all genders if they have some worries about getting into the pool.

Get some good goggles – goggles are highly idiosyncratic, as our faces, so a good fit may be elusive. My advice would be to avoid the small piggy ones that tend to suck your eyeballs out, nip your nose, snag your hair (if you've got any) and leave you with a ten-rounds with Mike Tyson look about the cheekbones.

Once goggles are satisfactory, they can mist, a fine smidge of detergent – I use Johnson's Baby Shampoo – well wiped off will prevent you being rendered blind by goggle-fog.

Wetting your hair thoroughly before getting in the pool will protect against chlorine damage. This can be enhanced by wearing a swim-hat (silicone is best, the more flowery the better if you want to cut a dash).

Protecting yourself against foot hazards, verrucae and athlete's Foot is a good idea. A rub with tea tree oil after a swim is a good preventative and is particularly good for mouldy toe nails.

If you are prone to ear infections a drop of neat alcohol (I don't mean rocket-fuel grade vodka) in the ear before and after swimming is protective. I use Swim Ear which also dries out your ears post-swim and stops them gurgling.

You may have read in the TM about open water swimming at Crag Pond, just off the Cotherstone-Bowes Road. Our intrepid Shirley was one of the first in, and I aim to be in shortly. It is a beautiful venue. At present wet-suits make the prospect more palatable, but soon – given the shallowness of the water and our incredibly un-Barney weather – we may be able to do without. Please contact me if this floats your boat.

Please book with Sue Overton sueoverton@hotmail.com.

WALKING GROUPS



SHORTER WALKS - Report by Joan Rutherford and Liz Colley

Bowes and Gilmonby Circular

Thirteen walkers, twelve regular plus one new member, Mary met at Bowes Village Hall car park on a pleasant April afternoon. Our leader for the walk this afternoon was Joan. We set off towards Gilmonby over the Gilmonby bridge and up a short steep hill towards West Plantation. Taking the lane west towards Sleightholme, we passed a “Do Not Follow Sat Nav’ sign. Apparently, some people have been known to set off in their vehicles down here seeking the Tan Hill Inn. Although it was a tantalising prospect for us to head to the Inn, none of us fancied walking that far. We’ll leave that to the Fell Walkers.



The Group overlooking Bowes

Photo: Ian Royston

After passing the plantation which is very distinctive tree planting here on the moor, we continued along the road with fine views in all directions.

We stopped for the obligatory photo capturing Bowes Castle in the background. With the castle standing proud it was easy to orientate ourselves on this walk.



Curlew eggs - Photo: Ian Royston

We turned north through a gate to follow the Pennine Way down towards the River Greta. Crossing the moorland some of our walkers were delighted to come across a curlew nest containing three eggs. Having carefully avoided it we carried on through a series of tricky gates to reach the bridge over the Greta. Our walk continued up to a farm track taking us back into the village. We passed Dotheboys Hall, noting the blue plaque and around Bowes Castle back to the car park.

7-9 MILE WALKING GROUP – Report by Peter Singer

April walk

It was not to be. We abandoned the Cow Green walk yesterday, because of the rain and very poor visibility, which was down to about 50 yards. We couldn't see the reservoir from the car park, nor the moor across which we were supposed to be walking.

We agreed it was too risky and unpleasant to try the walk, so retreated to the Teapot in Middleton, where it was a dry and much brighter day, for a coffee and then did the short, circular walk along the river to Mickleton, returning on the railway path. We all felt it would be disappointing just to go home without walking anywhere and I think everyone enjoyed the day in the end, so that



was ok. It just started to rain as we got back to the cars. Not quite what was planned, and Peter has offered to lead the walk in July.

The 18 June walk will be led by Judith and Jim in the Holbeck Area to Fox Tower and Mount Ida. Please contact Nicky Grace nickygrace729@gmail.com if you would like to come along.

COFFEE AND CHAT PICNIC

Coffee and Chat - Coming up –

Thursday 12 June Noon – 2.00pm:

At the Cricket Club, Barnard Castle

Tickets £2.

QUIZ – Created by Phil Clarke

Name the city/town from the Cryptic Clues- Abroad and UK

1. Increasing your score by 100%.
2. Is this the place to get plastered?
3. Put father in a paper receptacle.
4. Reserve a peaceful break.
5. Three times the 5th letter.
6. Incinerate something.
7. Sounds like the French think Miss Taylor's good.
8. A Cockney's little pet makes a water barrier.
9. Hades sounds very black.
10. The barefoot 1984 female Olympic distance runner sounds like a nuisance.
11. Eric at the seaside.
12. Ostrich stuck in rabbit warren.
13. Look for a bargain
14. Old car.
15. Bing's town.
16. Journey's end for Dr. Foster.
17. Modern fortress
18. Noah's home rebuilt.
19. Cattle
20. Part of a ship

Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Android Group	1 st Thurs pm	Martyn Radcliffe 07975 970088
Art Appreciation	1 st Wed pm	Tony Seward 01833 630050
Automotive	3 rd Tues am	Peter Colley 01833 695197
Birdwatching	3 rd Mon am	Andrew Lapworth 07962 038052
Board Games	2 nd Mon pm	Hazel McCallum 01833 316484
Book Group 2	2 nd Mon pm	Maggie Cleminson 01833 640801
Book Group 3	3 rd Wed pm	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Chess	1 st 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
Family History	2 nd Thurs pm	Alan Swindale 01388 488348
Gardening	1 st Fri pm	Julie Archer 07774 903377
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	Kate Keen 07880 741151
Needlecraft	1 st Mon pm	Glen Howard 01833 631639
Painting	2 nd Fri 10am	Val Hobbs 07900 497503
Philosophy	4 th Tues 10am	Ruth Sansom 01325 401850

Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Photography	1 st Tues am	Alan Kenwright 07731 122399
Pickleball	Every Mon pm	Ruth Lapworth 07787 978696
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	Judith Fanner 01833 650150
Spanish	3 rd Thurs 10am	Michael Harris 07799 051389
Table Tennis	Every Fri 3pm	Peter Singer 07508 663998
Theatre	Varies	Elizabeth Formstone 07979 204212
Travel & day trips	Varies	Jane Mathieson 07591 095765
Understanding Classical Music	4 th Fri 10am	Bill Heyes 01833 640885
Wildflower Group	2 nd Wed 2pm	Anne Thomson 07928 594404
Wimmin' Swimmin'	Saturdays Sue	Sue Overton 07512 368884
Wine Group	3 rd Tues pm	Tim Meacham 07847 182554
Walking Groups		
Shorter walks 3-4 miles	4 th Mon pm	Liz Colley 01833 695197
Walking 4-6 miles	2 nd Tues 10am	Janet Bayles 07887 834346 Patrick Neill 07881 811518
Walking 7-9 miles	3 rd Wed 10am	Nicky Grace nickygrace729@gmail.com
Fell Walking	4 th Wed	Jane Johnstone 07771 657440

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Dublin 2. Paris 3. Baghdad 4. Bucharest 5. Tripoli 6. Berne 7. Lisbon
8. Amsterdam 9. Helsinki 10. Budapest 11. Morecambe 12. Edinburgh
13. Bangor 14. Sale 15. Crosby 16. Gloucester 17. Newcastle 18. Newark
19. Cowes 20. Hull

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Community Arts Centre

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Fri 23 May 8.00pm	JAZZ & SWING – Strictly Smokin’ Big Band: Time After Time
Sat 24 May 7.30pm	TRIBUTE – The Everlys and Friends A spectacular and magical night of musical excellence and rock ‘n’ roll!
Mon 26 May 7.30pm	FILM – The Teesdale Way (12A) Filmmaker and former local Ron Yeadon. Premiere and exclusive footage.
Thurs 29 May 7.00pm	FILM – The Brutalist (18) Recent Oscar winner.
Thurs 29 May 7.30pm	COMEDY– Sam Nicoresti & James Trickey: Two Edinburgh Fringe Previews (16+)
Fri 30 & Sat 31 May 11.00	SCREENING – Peppa Meets the Baby Cinema Experience (U)
Thurs 5 June 7.30pm	COMEDY – Simon Evans: Have We Met (14+)
Fri 6 June 7.30pm	TRIBUTE – Bon Jovi Forever
Sat 7 June From 5.30pm	– Barnard Castle Soul Club – 60s/70s Crossover Modern Northern Soul Night
Tues 10 June 7.00pm	SCREENING – National Theatre Live: A Streetcar Named Desire (15)
Fri 13 June 7.30pm	TRIBUTE – The Specials Ltd The world’s most authentic and original tribute to 2-Tone Records Legends, The Specials.
Sat 14 June 8.00pm	COMEDY – Larry Dean: Dodger (16+)
Thurs 19 & Fri 20 June 7.30pm	THEATRE – The Witham Youth Theatre: The Tempest
Wed 25 June 7.30pm	COMEDY – Edinburgh Previews: Joe Kent Walters (14+)

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