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FORUM

JUNE 2025

No. 25/06



u3a

CHAIR'S LETTER

Dear Friends

Here I am again, another Sunday but the weather is a bit different, blustery but warm. The gardeners among us will have welcomed the rain we have had over the last week, while moaning it was not enough. The short sharp downpour yesterday afternoon nearly caught me out, no coat or umbrella and it was bouncing off the car roof tops.

Looking back over the last month makes me think how lucky we are living in this part of the country with all that is on offer. I have been enjoying the Swaledale Festival, and know others of you have been too, as I kept bumping into you. It has been a bumper month for hearing a wide range of music, from Classical to Jazz to Folk. I enjoyed an evening listening to the Strictly Smoking Big Band at the Witham and would guess at least a third of the audience was U3A members.

While looking at our very own U3A offerings, we had a fascinating Saturday morning learning all about the Classics from our very own Tim Meacham, and then a very pleasant afternoon at the Summer Picnic. I enjoyed meeting new and long-time members, chatting about what they enjoyed and what they would like us to offer. I was also sneaky and managed to sell some tickets for our next social event in October. An evening of music and food from the 60s and 70s, only £15 including a buffet supper and two local bands. You can dress for the decade (your choice according to your fancy, 60s or 70s) with a chance to win a prize for the best outfit.

I know the talk by our May speaker, Dr Patrick Eyres on 'Turner in the Pennines' was very well received by the number of you that have mentioned how much you enjoyed the presentation. One of the things I noted was how robust a landscape artist needed to be, trekking all over the place in all weathers, and Turner's business acumen when he sold his prints.

Looking forward to the June meeting, when Dave Palmer is giving us a talk on The Georgian Theatre in Richmond. Dave has been a volunteer theatre guide for 15 years. His talk covers the whole history of this theatre from the start to the restoration of the building as a working theatre again. I look forward to hearing yet more fascinating history of our region.

Bye for now, Julie

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: 14th July and next month's editor is Tony Seward. 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

“Turner in The Pennines” a talk by Dr Patrick Eyres

Joseph Mallord William Turner was born in 1775 and, despite becoming one of the superstars of his day, he was not fully recognised until after his death. During his life he tried to avoid the trappings of success and fame. He travelled widely throughout Europe, creating sketches and watercolours for subsequent publication. In 1816 he made a four-day visit to Richmondshire, North Yorkshire, which became one of the subjects of his artistic work. The year 1816 was known as ‘the year without a summer’ when, due to volcanic activity, there were extremely harsh weather conditions. Turner usually travelled alone, on horseback and, on the 1816 visit, he was often riding over boggy terrain, covering long distances, resulting in his sketches becoming soaked.

Turner had been commissioned by Dr Thomas Whittaker to create 120 drawings of the area, for which he was to be paid £3,000, the drawings were then to appear in a History of Richmondshire. In fact only 20 of these drawings were used, although the rest were available for subsequent engraving. This reflected Turner’s astute business head. He also planned his trips meticulously, documenting the likely costs of travel, accommodation and other expenses.

Patrick displayed some of Turner’s sketches and paintings of the Teesdale area, including High Force, Cauldron Snout, the Wynch Bridge, the Meeting of the Waters, Brignall Church and others. Turner usually travelled in the summer to make sketches which he then painted in the winter. He was moved by grand mountain scenery, lakes and waterfalls and was known for his expressive use of colour and imaginative landscapes. Local hills and valleys could be depicted as alpine mountains, with raging waterfalls.

Turner always painted “en plein air” which was unusual in his day. Also, in many of his paintings, he included small details of working people doing everyday tasks, eg a fisherman, a woodman or sometimes an animal. His sketches were passed on to engravers and the popular perception of his work is through his engravings. In 2005, his painting “The Fighting Temeraire” was voted Britain’s greatest painting and the image appears on the back of the current £20 note. Turner left his paintings to the nation on his death and his sketchbooks are kept in Tate Britain. This was an excellent talk delivered with humour and panache.

NEXT MEETINGS AT THE WITHAM

24th July 2025: Ripon Cathedral

The Speaker will be Godfrey Wilson, who is an experienced Guide at Ripon Cathedral. Godfrey will talk about the 1350 years of history embedded in this memorable building, including its rebuilding and renovation through the centuries.

28th August 2025: Peru: Inca and Pre-Hispanic Cultures

Jane Harrison, who is an active member of the Teesdale u3a Geography Group, will talk about her travels and experiences in Peru, including her exploration of early, pre-Conquest, cultures.

MAY WORKSHOP – Report by Annie Clouston

Tim Meacham – *Classics in a Nutshell*

There was a splendid turnout for this fascinating whistle-stop tour around ancient Greece, Rome and a bit of Egypt on the side. Who knew that bikinis were worn in 1st century Rome, and that the Minoans (3000BC) had flushing toilets? (What did the ancients ever do for us?)

Tim opened with a quiz of ten questions that was tough. The most correctly answered question was probably: "Who was the Macedonian king who took over most of Greece, Asia and Africa in the 3rd century BC?" The answer is Alexander the Great, whose tomb was discovered just 15 years ago in Thessalonica.

Tim took us on a journey through these marvellous civilisations in 20 iconic pictures, flavouring his talk with his personal experiences of the archaeological sites he has visited, along the way giving explanations of the origins of some key terms in our political lexicography – democracy, tyranny and law – draconian after Draco who developed the first code of law as a foundation for civil society in 621BC.

This was a brilliantly put together presentation that only skimmed the surface of Tim's deep knowledge of the Classics and in particular, Greek Theatre. It left us wanting more and the workshop group will be pestering Tim for a future session.

FUTURE WORKSHOPS

Saturday 5 July: Trip to Tynemouth, if you want to put your name on the waiting list please contact Sue Overton.

Saturday 27 September, 10-12am: Groups Showcase, Guide HQ, Birch Road, Barnard Castle. A sociable event to enable members to see the range of groups on offer and chat to fellow members about their experiences of the groups to which they belong.

FUTURE DAY AND LONGER TRIPS

Wales, England and Scotland – Report by Dorothy Jameson

By the time you read this, 30 of us will have travelled to Wales, and hopefully 30 of us will have returned. There are 21 of us going to the Cotswolds from September 22nd to 26th. There are good reports about the hotel, but unfortunately no more single rooms available. Bookings are being taken at Kyle Travel, [tel: 01833 690303](tel:01833690303).

Following our very successful visit to Scotland in March with Cairngorm Travel, 23 of us have booked for April 16th 2026, at the same hotel but a different itinerary. There are still rooms available, with a supplement for single occupancy in a double room. Contact Cairngorm Travel, [tel: 01405 761 334](tel:01405761334) and please mention the Barnard Castle pick up point.

Saturday 6th December – Theatre by the Lake – The Wizard of Oz -- possible booking by Diana Marks

I know it's very early to be thinking about the December trip to the lakeside theatre but at this stage I'm gauging interest.

This year it's The Wizard of Oz with a difference! Dorothy dreams of leaving Aunty Em's Cumbrian cottage and returning to her old life in London. On the way she meets a very brave lion, a big-hearted tin woman and a super smart scarecrow and brings Oz right up to date with original pop songs.

Please register your interest by emailing Diana Marks - dianamarks813@gmail.com

GROUP REPORTS

Editor's Note: A few reports cover more than one month so there's no need for protests from other reporters about any that exceed the 400 word limit !

ART APPRECIATION GROUP – Reports by Pamela Moody and Tony Seward

On 7 May the group gathered in the ceramics gallery of the Bowes Museum, where curator Howard Coutts gave us a whistle-stop history of the development of chinaware, porcelain, stoneware et al! Howard referred to the significant contributions made by women collectors, especially Josephine Bowes and Susan Davidson in the nineteenth century, before explaining the origins of pottery, and its development.



[image: *Faience plate from Nevers, 1757, depicting a game of tennis.*]

The Chinese had collected their own specialist clays from riverbanks which they fused to make porcelain, which was vitrified, translucent and white. European clay, on the other hand, was usually red, but an application of tin oxide (a tin glaze with lead) turns white when fired in a kiln. This was known as 'Faience' in France, 'Delftware' in Holland, and 'Maiolica' in Italy. The

stronger salt-glazed stoneware was developed for everyday use, for example tankards and other items in pubs and taverns, as well as durable sewer pipes and garden plant pots.

The new fashion of tea drinking required prestigious china with special decoration, and the Elector of Saxony led the way. Europeans copied Chinese patterns but without any awareness of the original Chinese reference points (white Chinese bowls were decorated in Holland with a westernised version of the willow pattern).

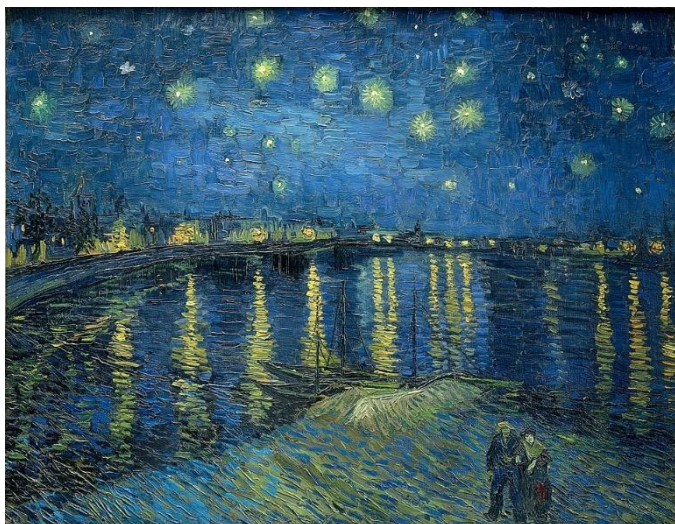
The British lagged far behind, until the aristocracy began to finance private enterprise. Belgian workers from Sevres were recruited to work in Chelsea, while blue and white porcelain was made in Bow. Derby figures and Worcester tea wares were more robust and were bought by the middle classes. By 1740, Stoke-on-Trent had a ready source of coal for its kilns and became a major centre for pottery production. A new English technique involving a copper plate and tissue paper which burned off in the kiln, known as transfer printing or 'jet-enamelling'. Copies of Delftware with its distinctive blue and white colouring were produced in London, Lambeth and Bristol, while Stoke-on-Trent produced coloured glazes and even a tortoiseshell pattern.

The biggest innovator was Josiah Wedgwood I, whose pottery swept through the world's markets, putting many factories out of business. Ceramics featured strongly in the exhibitions of 1867 and 1871 – John Bowes purchased quality items, including the large vases and monkey figure still viewable today. We were also shown items of a more modern, mid-twentieth century design which had been used by the Schools Museum Service in the 1950s. This was a very interesting and informative visit – Howard is a walking encyclopaedia on the development of ceramics and the items to be seen in the museum's collection!

At the June meeting we viewed the 90-minute film on the National Gallery's recent exhibition 'Van Gogh: Poets and Lovers', as trailed in the May issue (credit for the review quoted, to Laura Freeman, *The Times* art critic, was unfortunately omitted from the printed version). We greatly enjoyed this

detailed and sensitive exploration of the two years in Provence which came to define his art for posterity.

The film took us through the exhibition room by room, with a team of experts analysing each painting and its place in the development of Van Gogh's art. It enabled us to linger on significant detail and to understand the purpose of each carefully placed brushstroke. We were taken through his arrival in Arles and renting of the famous yellow house, his ambition to create an artists' colony, ending abruptly with the ill-fated visit of Paul Gauguin, and



his stays at the asylum in San Remy. The exhibition's subtitle, 'Poets and Lovers', referred to his dream of painting scenes reflecting lovers' moods, beautifully exemplified in the first of his 'Starry Night' canvases.

Image: Starry Night over the Rhône, September 1888, Musée d'Orsay]

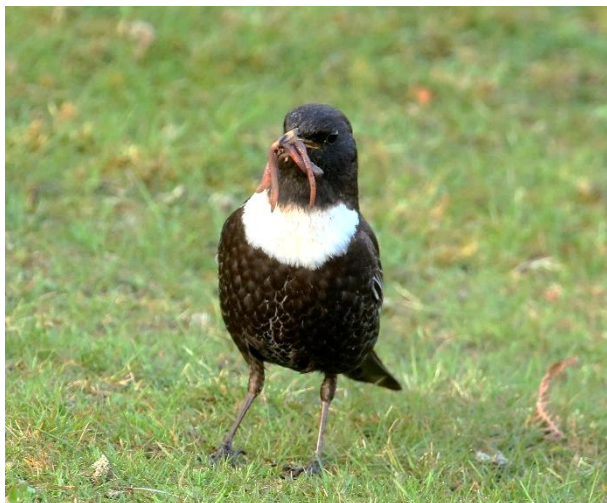
Even the scruffy park opposite the yellow house included a pair of lovers and became a scene of romance. One major theme was his concern with decoration – the juxtaposition of paintings on the wall of a specific room - a telling example being the triptych of 'La Berceuse' placed between two strongly contrasting studies of sunflowers, resulting in a complex interweaving of colour and form.

At July's meeting we will look at the Glasgow Boys and the Scottish Colourists, themselves strongly influenced by the revolution Van Gogh pioneered in Provence.

Tony Seward

BIRDWATCHING – Report and Photo by Andrew Lapworth

For our field trips in May in recent years we've tried to find one of the dale upland's special breeding birds: the **Ring Ouzel** (*Turdus torquatus* ~ collared thrush). To the untrained eye it looks like a Blackbird but look closely and (with binoculars) the male's bright white-crescent gorget stands out, as do their silvery underwings in flight.



These are the only summer migrant thrushes to visit the UK; males return to breed in the UK from their wintering areas around the Mediterranean basin in mid to late March and start returning in late August through to October.

Image: Male Ring Ouzel gathering earth-worms (Bolihope, May 2017)

Widdybank Farm has been a reliable site to find them in past years but none were found on 2 earlier recces; so instead, this May, six of us walked along Bolihope Burn (another known site) looking for them: but also alas to no avail. On several visits there were climbers on the quarry rock faces practising their skills and maybe this was too disturbing on the territories of these especially shy birds.

Blackbirds breed there too, so we couldn't be certain if we'd seen a Ring Ouzel when a bird flew rapidly away from us and vanished. The burn was exceedingly short of flowing water but we did get good views of a Common Sandpiper and Dipper, as well as a smart Wheatear around the car park. Along our short walk there were lots of Willow Warbler singing their cascading songs, and we also got to see Mistle Thrushes and a Buzzard chased off by Oystercatchers and Lapwings; Curlews and Meadow Pipits called all around. We wondered if the bone dry and rock-hard ground was making it hard for birds to find worms for their chicks.

To conclude our morning we stocked-up on coffees and scones at the excellent Bowlees cafe and then did a bird-safari from the cars in the upper Dale around the Langdon Beck area. The expected birds were conspicuous by their absence: some birdwatching days are just not as good as others.

BOARD GAMES – Reports by Kate Bailey and Hazel McCallum

In May we played 'Ticket to Ride' again with two boards and 10 players. It's been a while since we last played this game so reading the instructions and setting up the boards and cards took some time. But, once we were ready to start, both teams began claiming the tracks with our carriages. We always enjoy this well-designed game and soon work out where the various destinations, in Europe or America, are located.

We have to admit that the exclamations when someone blocks another person's route tend to increase in volume towards the end of the game. As



Image: Kate Bailey

usual, we were in the Old Well breakfast room and were amused when a staff member, showing a B+B customer around, said to the bemused young man "I promise these ladies won't still be here when you come down for your breakfast in the morning" !

The winner of 'Ticket to Ride' is often hard to predict, as the player whose counter has moved furthest round the board may be overtaken by others who have successfully completed the routes on the destination cards they were dealt. Another bonus goes to the player who adds the longest continuous line of carriages to their score. At the final count, Sue and Annie were the winners.

Annie's table completed the US 'Ticket to Ride' with time to spare so their table then played several games of 'Bananagrams'. This is something like

'Scrabble' though each player lays down their own letter tiles to make an individual crossword pattern. It's another favourite with the group and gives rise to much hilarity, as well as heated debates about acceptable words.

In June, eight of us met for a fun afternoon of board game playing. We decided to play Ticket to Ride again, this time on two boards, the original USA version and a Europe version. The game involves collecting cards of various colours to swap for tracks on the board of the same colour. The aim is to complete longer train routes between two destinations selected from another set of cards! Laying of tracks and completion of longer routes scores points.

Game play is a steady jog, as folk vie for the crucial routes. Was the blocking of another player's track inadvertent or deliberate? You'll need to join us to find out!! Annie and Jane won Ticket to Ride, and then we 'relaxed' with a few games of Bananagrams. These games were won by Annie, Sue, Hilary and Hazel.

If you'd like to join us, our next meeting is on Monday 14th July, from 2pm at The Old Well Inn. You don't need to know how to play the games, as many games are new to some of us.

BOOK GROUP - ROOM TO READ - Review by Celia Chapple

Small Bomb at Dimperley by Lissa Evans

The book is set in 1945, in a dilapidated 16th century enormous house, full of fly-ridden taxidermy, and relatives who sponge off this debt-ridden sinking ship. Corporal Valentine returns from the war to find that he is now 'Sir Valentine' (his older brother is a casualty of the war) and he feels shackled by this wreck of a place. In contrast, Zena and her young daughter, evacuees from London, find refuge and sanctity in the house. The story is one of loss, love, and post-war social change.

Two members out of the six attending did not enjoy this book. They found it trite and predictable with a weak storyline and unlovable characters. They had no interest in aristocratic dilemmas. Other members liked its candid and curt humour, with some surprising metaphors. 'The Vere-Thissett mausoleum looked as if Dracula had commissioned a public convenience.'

For those relatives clinging to life as it was before the war, the narrator (Lady Vere-Thissett) states 'it was all part of a gradual descent into careless informality that had begun well before the war – she could almost have drawn a graph charting the slow decrease in the depth of curtsseys she's received over the years.'

The group agreed this book is a lite read, a feel-good book with a happy ending. They scored 4/5 as a suitable reading group book, and 4.5/5 to recommend to a friend.

MEN'S BOOK GROUP (WOMEN WELCOME) - Report by David Pennington

The new Men's Book Group meets at 11am once a month on Thursdays at a cafe in Barnard Castle to discuss literary fiction, modern classics, science fiction, military history and history.

We discuss the merits of books that members have enjoyed and want to recommend to the group. There are 8 members but attendance is sporadic and we are keen to invite others who share our passion for books and reading.

The meetings are relaxed and convivial over coffee and cake and last about an hour and a half depending on attendance. If you would like to join please let the convenor know through the normal u3a channels and we will get back to you.

CHESS GROUP – Report by Diana Marks

Ten of us turned up in June to tax our grey matter, and we welcomed yet another new member. All was quiet as we concentrated, with only a couple of heartfelt expletives puncturing the air when one of us made a silly mistake and lost the queen! (Ok I admit it).

It's very relaxed in The Old Well with most of us enjoying a drink, either alcoholic or not. As games finish we see how other people are progressing and offer advice, whether welcomed or not. It's all good fun! We next meet on Thursday 3rd July.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GROUP – Report by Kate Bailey

Members will be aware that Teesdale u3a has adopted an Environmental Policy that includes the aim to "*encourage members to consider ways in which they can minimise their own adverse and/or unintended impacts on the environment*".

Over past months we have used these Forum reports to raise awareness of the wider impacts of our lifestyle choices. And we've presented positive news items to reassure members that we can all make a difference, both individually and collectively. The u3a Subject Adviser on Climate and Environment has recently written about studies of behaviours in groups that are directly relevant to climate awareness. It seems that our friends and neighbours have the most power to change our beliefs and behaviours, not by arguing with us, but by showing us how they themselves are changing their attitudes towards the planet.

For example, an issue that is important to all of us is waste reduction and sustainable recycling; our group is planning to focus on finding ways to recycle rather than dump all those pill 'popper' packets - we'll let you know what happens.

Climate-friendly actions and conversations about, for example, the links between climate and local weather events, can help people to connect their own experiences to the issue of climate change far better than arguing with them. Even in Teesdale the seasons are changing. Many UK bird species are nesting and breeding up to a month earlier so taking care not to disturb their nests needs to start in January in some cases (see RSPB website for more information).

Mowing lawns less often and not until June saves time and energy and you'll be surprised how many colourful native plants (such as self-heal, speedwell and cowslip) will pop up amongst the grasses. Looking around at neighbours' gardens can help us decide how to transform small patches into mini wildflower meadows to benefit pollinating insects (see RHS and Wildlife Trust websites for ideas). Look out for hedgehogs and provide fresh water for them if they've been spotted in your area (they are a gardener's friend as they will eat slugs, baby rodents, caterpillars and insects such as earwigs). Some may like to seek inspiration from the 'Springwatch' cameras tracking wildlife in a Sheffield suburban street (BBC i-Player).

And our 'Good News' this month is that the University of Sussex has announced a new degree course focused on climate, sustainability and development. They say this will be combined with the practical green skills needed to drive change, after a Future Forum survey found 72% of 14-18-year-olds want more relevant and rigorous climate change education.

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP – Report by Martyn Radcliffe

The group of aspiring authors and poets gathered on Wednesday evening armed with notebooks and pens in anticipation of getting some writing done. Introductions were made, getting an idea what individuals wanted to gain from the group as well as what they were looking to write.

An exercise was then set. Using the random function on Wikipedia a number of unrelated topics were generated, then a short piece written to include at least one of the subjects. The subjects generated were - Samsung Galaxy, Primrose Lake, Tunisian Birds, Cardiff School District, Spirit of Christmas and Babysitters. The writing was entertaining and varied with a couple of people successfully able to include all of them.

There was an opportunity to share previously written work which some members had brought along. The evening was concluded with us looking at the first lines of a number of famous novels and considering their importance in engaging the reader and drawing them in to read further. The group was then encouraged to write the first line or paragraph of their book, poem or piece for the next meeting.

POSSIBLE NEW GROUP FOR CROCHET ?

Hazel McCallum (our former Treasurer) is enquiring if any members would be interested in joining a group to learn and develop their crochet skills. She is a keen crocheter who enjoys helping others dust off their hooks to get back into crocheting. She has also taught a few novices from scratch.

Please let us know if you'd be interested in joining this new group by contacting Hazel McCallum by phone 01833 316484 or email hmmccallum2@gmail.com.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS GROUP – Report by Sue Overton

Ten cruciverbalists met in the Guide HQ in May and split into two small groups. We completed two quite difficult cryptic crosswords provided by group members and enjoyed a good old natter with our coffee and biscuits. We are all improving our solving skills as evidenced by the increased number of eureka moments when a solution becomes obvious!

Here are a couple of clues for you to try from the Sunday Times:-

Cute animal but, mostly, shabby mongrel (8)

Chopped parsley smothering minute fish (8)

I particularly like the above clues as they involve, in part, my favourite clue type – anagrams.

Answer to April's clue:- RICE BEER (A pint courtesy of Paddy? 4,4)

In June eight members split into two groups and worked through The Times Quick Cryptic Crossword.... I think 'quick' is the wrong descriptor as both groups took 45mins to complete it!

After the usual break for sustenance and chat, both groups attempted a Sunday Times crossword set by Tim Moorey. Neither group was able to finish this quite difficult crossword before the end of our session and therefore we had to consult the answers in the back of the book ('How to Crack Cryptic Crosswords' by Tim Moorey).

Here's one for you to try:-

Absurd but clear aims I put out as a writer (6,5)

(Answers for May and June clues will be in next month's Forum)

We discussed the option of including information from our initial sessions when we worked through all the different clue types so that new members with little experience of cryptic crosswords could join us. If this is you, please contact me on 07512 368884 or email sueoverton@hotmail.com

Our next meeting at 2pm in the Guide HQ, Birch Road, Barnard Castle will be on Wednesday 9th July.

DISCUSSION GROUP – Report by Glen Howard

On a beautiful, sunny day we were all in a very happy mood and our discussions seemed to reflect this. Subjects discussed included: Is Israel a pariah state? Donald Trump; a contraceptive for men; traveller's horses; driverless taxis; ash tree dieback and the lack of wildlife and habitat protection for new developments; the noise of mowers in France (and church bells in this country); champing; a dedicated police officer for Barney; NHS letters and HMRC (lack of).

Our next meetings will be on Fridays 11th July and 8th August. If you would like to join us please give Glen Howard a ring on 07975 705816.

FAMILY HISTORY INTEREST GROUP – Report by Alan Swindale

Ten members of the Family History Interest Group attended a presentation on Domestic Service in the context of Family History. It is a fair bet that a number of your female ancestors were 'In Service' for at least part of their lifetime. Men would normally seek better paid work that called upon their strength.

In 1899 Seebohm Rowntree carried out a survey of poverty in York. Amongst other things he concluded that domestic service represented 'the dividing line between the working and middle classes' and that servant keeping classes in York amounted to 30% of the population. On top of that many artisans and other members of the working classes employed domestic help (to act as child minders, wash clothes or do 'the rough') and some even lived in. A shepherd in a remote two room cottage on the moors above Hamsterley in 1881 employed a 15 year old female servant born in Sunderland.

The expected working day would start at 6:30 a.m. and finish at 10:00 p.m. or 10:30 pm with an hour for midday dinner. A larger domestic staff would give more opportunity for spare time. The wages could range between £5 for a scullery maid up to £45 for a housekeeper (per year!) so there was a possibility for a career. But in general women would remain in service only till they could find a husband – only to do the same work for their own family – or obtain work in a factory; domestic service could be considered training to be a housewife. Shop work was a sought-after escape route.

The next meeting of the group will be held on the second Thursday of July, July 10th, at 13:30 in Enterprise House when the topic will be "IRISH ROOTS: Researching Irish Ancestry – Part 1" (Part 2 in August).

GARDENING GROUP – Report by Kate Keen

In June the gardening group travelled the short distance to Wynyard Hall in the Tees Valley. The hall is a popular venue for weddings and is set in a scenic location. The gardens at Wynyard were originally developed in 1822 during the Londonderry family's residence. The gardens formed a beautiful visitor attraction until they closed just before the war. In 1987 Sir John Hall purchased the hall with a view to developing a rose garden. At this time the garden had been derelict for decades.



We were given a tour of the garden by the Head Gardener Mark. He was very knowledgeable and guided us through the rose garden stopping to emphasise particular plants.

Image: Julie Archer

The walled garden has 3,000 David Austin roses in 135 different species. Every year a senior rose expert from David Austin visits the garden to check on progress and the performance of various rose species. Mark explained how to plant and care for various types of roses. He recommended the Kew Gardens variety as having white flowers, no thorns and a long flowering period and another Olivia Rose Austin as having pink flowers and also flowering for a long time, as does The Generous Gardener rose.

The garden has a woodland walk leading towards the lake, with temples, ornamental gates, obelisks and a dog graveyard. Next to the Edible Garden there is a wire sculpture of Hambletonian, Sir Henry Vane Tempest's famous

racehorse. The café was excellent with excellent service and a delicious range of drinks, sandwiches, pies and cakes. There is also a gift shop including plant sales. This was another wonderful day out and was enjoyed by all, with the Head Gardener's talk being a highlight of the day.

On Friday 4th July the group will visit Newby Hall and Gardens in Yorkshire. On Friday 1st August we will return to Breezy Knees Garden, also in Yorkshire.

GEOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Jane Harrison

Our speaker, Richard Witham (no relation to Henry Witham), spoke about his research into Georgian Barnard Castle. His starting point was a town map surveyed by John Wood in 1827. The map is one of the earliest large-scale maps of the town and predates the first Ordnance Survey town plan surveyed in the 1850s. John Wood, who produced over 150 town plans, was educated in North Yorkshire and later lived in Edinburgh. He possibly owned or rented a house off the road to Bowes, which he called 'Paradise'.

When the map is superimposed a modern satellite image of the town it is remarkably accurate. It shows how crowded the town was in the early 19th century. In 1831, when the population was 4,640, it was confined within a much smaller area than in 2021 when the population was only 1,144 larger. Infant mortality was high in 1827, with children under one accounting for 25% of burials recorded in the parish records of St. Mary's Church. It wasn't surprising that cholera decimated the population in both 1847 and 1849.

The map provides a snapshot of the Georgian town and surrounding area, showing land ownership as well as the location of industries, shops and services. Richard used the map evidence, together with a directory and gazetteer of the time, to tell us more about the town. He introduced some of the inhabitants who included William Prattman, an Independent Methodist minister, whose over-ambitious coal mining ventures made him bankrupt, and Captain Robert Kipling, of the 43rd Regiment of Foot, who fought during the American War of Independence and helped create a dubious sounding 'Association for Prosecution of Felons' in Barnard Castle.

A wide range of manufacturers were based in the town. Carpet and leather manufacturers and their associated industries dominated. In 1827 25% of

baptisms were into the families of weavers and cordwainers (shoe-makers). The list of industries also included straw hat manufacturers, tallow chandlers, rope and twine manufacturers and whitesmiths who worked with non-precious metals such as tin and pewter.

Food shops were predominantly concentrated in the lower part of the town in contrast to those selling household items and services. There were also 24 taverns, public houses or inns. Inns were important for stabling horses. Stagecoaches ran regularly towards Bishop Auckland and Kirby Stephen before being superseded by the train in the 1850s. Richard hopes the bicentennial anniversary of this special map will be celebrated in 2027.

Next meeting: Thursday 17th July. Meet Jane Harrison in Richmond Market Place at 2pm for a guided walk to explore the town's historical geography.

GEOLOGY GROUP – Report by Bob Tuddenham

We had two very interesting meetings in April and May, both of which were useful for those relatively new to the subject and there was some valuable revision for more experienced members of the group.

In our April meeting, Trevor Morse gave us a basic introduction to petrology - the structure and composition of rock. Trevor explained and illustrated the value of thin sections when viewed with a microscope under polarized and non-polarised light to establish the mineral composition of rocks.

We looked at a range of igneous rocks from granite to peridotite and were shown how to recognise the signature appearance of some common minerals in thin sections. We could also see the direction characteristic in metamorphic rocks as a result of changes under enormous pressure. Microfossils such as coccoliths in chalk could be seen in the thin sections

Trevor also briefly talked about some of the recent devastating earthquakes particularly in Myanmar and Istanbul and the recent volcanic activity on Etna and in Iceland.

In May, David Saville continued his excellent series on the introduction to Geology. In this meeting David gave a presentation on 'Life in the Silurian and Devonian' with a comprehensive overview of these two geological periods. Sometimes called the Silurian-Devonian Terrestrial Revolution,

there were major evolutionary changes in this time span including jawed fishes, the colonisation of the land by plants and animals and the rise of more complex ecosystems. In Britain, there was considerable igneous activity at the end of the Caledonian Orogeny and we can see this locally with the Lake District batholith, the Shap granite and the Weardale granite. David also provided a helpful information sheet which was sent out to members after the meeting.

Our next meeting will be at The Witham on Monday morning July 28th at 10 am. All are welcome to join us. Please contact the convenor for details.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT GROUP – Report by Rob Pearson

It was another well-attended meeting at Enterprise House to hear Christine Price speaking on “Richard Cobden, Bowes to Westminster: A murder trial and a radical politician”.

We started with an overview of the Yorkshire Schools, including those at Startforth, Woden Croft, Cotherstone, Lartington and Bowes. They were advertised as providing a “useful” education for young gentlemen, but often ended in neglect, starvation and early death. Naturally, mention was made of William Shaw’s Academy, the likely inspiration for Dickens’s “Nicholas Nickleby”, but the concentration was on George Clarkson’s Academy, in what is now Bowes Hall, which appears to have had higher standards, though still basic by those of today.

The spotlight of the day fell upon the 19 year old apprentice teacher, Samuel Wedgwood who was accused of murdering Eleanor Clarkson, the wife of the Principal. It was said that she had been tipsy and with candlestick in hand tried to intervene between Samuel and his employer, with the result that Samuel killed her with a blow to her head. Samuel was found not guilty after the surgeon testified that death was due not to a blow from the candlestick, but from a fall or some other object. In the trial, at York Assizes in July 1820, it was claimed as part of the prosecution that Samuel was a Radical who had objected to Mrs Clarkson complaining about him teaching radical notions. He subsequently moved to Burslem in Staffordshire, where he taught, drank and died in 1863.

This was a time of unrest, with a depression after the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Corn Laws. Radicals dared to discuss Parliamentary Reform, “universal” suffrage for men, secret ballots and repeal of the Corn Laws.

Richard Cobden, 1804-1865, attended Clarkson's Academy from 1814 until perhaps 1822, while Samuel Wedgwood was there. He was always studious and suffered terribly from chilblains, which limited his mobility. He wrote many letters home but received few in return. When his father was unable to pay his fees they were covered by an aunt and uncle. He recognised that a broad education would stand him in good stead and he certainly received a good grounding.

After leaving Bowes he worked as a commercial traveller for his uncle's warehouse business and in 1828 had his own calico warehouse, in 1831 going into partnership to print calico in North Lancashire. Between 1833 and 1837 he travelled to France, the United States and the Levant. In 1838 he became an alderman in the growing city of Manchester and with a fellow Radical, John Bright, seeing the hardship suffered by the poor as the result of high flour and bread prices, he led the Anti-Corn Laws League until they were finally repealed in 1846. He was Radical MP for Rochdale from 1841-7 and went on a Peace Tour of Europe in 1846-7. He co-founded the then pro-peace "Morning Star" in 1856 and in 1859 was Liberal MP for Rochdale.

"Cobdenism" was in favour of free trade, international peace and cooperation and his influence lasted until the beginning of the First World War. There are many statues to him, with Napoleon III the major contributor to the one in Manchester and there is a bust in Westminster Abbey. We will perhaps never know whether he was influenced by Samuel Wedgwood - maybe he was? Christine's excellent talk was much appreciated.

LUNCH GROUP – Report by Kate Keen

In May the lunch group returned to an old favourite, the Fox Hole at Piercebridge. It was a lovely day so we sat outside until the table was ready.

As usual the food at the Fox Hole was delicious. Some had starters, others went straight to the main course. Most of us managed to enjoy a desert too (no photos, we were too busy eating!). This is a very popular lunch venue and always supplies quality food using local suppliers where possible.

If anyone is interested in joining our friendly group then please contact me, Kate Keen.

NEEDLECRAFT – Report by Glen Howard

We all enjoyed our meeting this month on a sunny afternoon, catching up with our projects and news. We were joined by a lovely crochet Paddington Bear. Projects being worked on were in knitting, crochet and quilting. One of the great advantages of needlecraft as a hobby is that you are able to chat at the same time as working. A lot of our talk revolved around medical matters – cataracts, hospital appointments etc, as well as the joys (or otherwise) of satnavs, the banking hub and oceanography.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 7th July 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 Glen Howard a ring if you are interested – tel: 07975 705816

PAINTING GROUP – Report by Val Hobbs; Images by Martin Page

Five of us met in St Mary's Committee Room for the June Painting session. We welcomed our new member, Maureen Harding, who belongs to both the Darlington and Teesdale u3as.

Anne set us a task of completing a mini still life, using either red onions, pears or pomegranates. The idea was to complete three drawings, going through the stages from basic sketching and shading to using monochrome and then completing the final one using the actual colours of the object.



We all found it quite difficult ... again with the light and shade, but the task was successfully completed by all.

Contact Val Hobbs on valblackhobbs@gmail.com for further details.



URGENT APPEAL FOR NEW PAINTING GROUP CONVENOR

For personal reasons, Val Hobbs is looking to step down as Painting Group Convenor. We are urgently seeking a replacement for Val - you don't have to be an existing member of the group.

If you are interested, please contact the new Groups Coordinator Hazel McCallum 01833 316484 as soon as possible

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP – Report by Alan Kenwright Photographs by Andrew Lapworth, Pete Redgrave and Alan Kenwright.

In June the photography group went on a trip to the Farne Islands to photograph the fabulous wildlife.

We had put in a request for blue skies with fluffy white clouds, no wind, and a flat sea. What we got was a gusty “fresh breeze”, squally showers, and sea that was decidedly choppy between the islands.

The local wildlife didn't seem to mind too much and still provided some wonderful, if challenging, subjects. Having said that, the terns were not shy about letting you know if you got too close to their nests!



Image: Tern 'dive-bombing' a visitor

After our visit to Inner Farne and exposure to the weather out there we were glad to make our way back to the shelter of Seahouses where we could warm up, start to dry out, and enjoy some excellent Fish & Chips. Ah, the joys of living in the north of England!



Puffin 'Fly-by' with fish

POETRY GROUP – Report by Robert Alabaster

JUBILATE! Annie hosted a group of seven Poetry Lovers to share poems on the theme of Celebration.

Christina Rosetti's heart eagerly anticipated the arrival of her love:

*"because the birthday of my life
is come, my love to me"*

In The Summer Day Mary Oliver derives joy from really paying attention to a small part of the glory of the Cosmos, in this moment, in this place
- a grasshopper

Nina Cassion bursts through the doors of perception as her senses explode with an abundance of stimuli...as if on a mescaline trip.

Not for Norman Rowland Gale the cheap baubles of Fame, Wealth and Success.

Our cleric has accomplished something truly transcendent: recorded forever in Wisden - a cricket match in which he bowled three curates with three balls!

Edward Thomas' train stops unwontedly at Adlestrop. He sees a myriad of wildflowers. A blackbird sings...and farther and farther all the birds of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Elaine Feinstein derives solace from getting older.

Things have turned out OK. She takes delight in freesia, hot coffee and winter sunlight...which temporarily dispel the underlying darkness.

A cherished and lovingly crafted poem recited by many school children Is The Charge of the Light Brigade:

Is it a preposterous jingoistic celebration of Honour and Noble Failure, that has no relevance today?

Or is it a more subtle and nuanced account of military discipline?

Lord Byron, the Rock Star of his day, certainly knew how to seduce women with his honeyed words:

*She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright*

*Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.*

...by which time they were putty in his hands!

Ted Hughes celebrates the beauty and promise in a new born calf, slowly but steadily gaining poise and confidence in the world.

*Everything else is in order, just as it is.
Let the summer skies hold off, for the moment.
This is just as he wants it.
A little at a time, of each new thing, is best*

And so to the highlight of our meeting:

William McGonagall -

Lines in praise of Mr Graham Henderson, Hawick.

My words would be insufficient in capturing the beauty, nobility and economy of language in this poem...

So I won't even try!!

SCRABBLE GROUP – Report by Ray Thompson

In May we met at Lillian's house, there were 6 of us and it was such a sunny afternoon we sat outside in the garden to play. In the first group of 3, Phil, Monica and Lillian, Phil won this game with a total score of 289, which included one 7 letter word SPITALS, with a score of 62. The second group comprised of Judith, Regina and Paula, which Judith won with a total of 205.

We stopped for refreshments of tea, coffee, and a lovely Victoria Sponge made by Lillian. The teams were made up of the 2 winners and next runner up, Phil, Judith and Regina, which Phil won. There were four 7 letter words, INTERNAL and HEALTHIER, from Phil, and ZIPPERED and DOTAGES from Judith. Lillian won the second game and Paula had a 7 letter word ROASTING.

In June, 6 of us met at Judith and Phil's house. We made 2 groups of 3. Jeanette, Lillian and Phil, and Ray, Paula and Judith.

Phil won his game with a score of 277, including 2 7-letter words, STRINGY for 73 and STRINGS for 78. Judith won her game with a score of 212 including a 7 letter word WHISHTS for 74. We stopped for tea, coffee and biscuits.

The two winners and the highest runner up played their second game, so Judith, Phil and Lillian played, and Jeanette, Paula and Ray played. Phil won his game with 318 including TINTERS for 86, Ray won his game with 234. Congrats to Phil with 3 7- letter words this month.

Thanks to Judith for refreshments. Please phone Judith for details of next month's meeting on 14th July on 01833 650150

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 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 (see image right). 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.



The following month we progressed to the fourth part of Howard Goodall's *Story of classical music* entitled "The Age of Tragedy" where we looked at music in the latter half of the 19th century.

This was an age when art was dominated by themes of Death, Immortality and Fate; Goodall contends that almost classical

music after 1850 had its roots in tragedy and destiny. Key amongst this was Hector Berlioz's 'Symphonie Fantastique', inspired by the Faust legend and full of dark themes. Against this the period was the heyday of Italian opera with Giuseppe Verdi alone producing 28 operas in 54 years but though much of his repertoire produced hummable tunes, his output became increasingly deeper, culminating in *La Traviata*, an opera based on the tragic tale of Alexandre Dumas's *La Dame aux Camellias*. Such sombre, foreboding themes remain with us today, reflected in the film tunes of the superhero genre.

Liszt provided many innovations of the era as well as incredible, virtually unplayable piano music and became probably classical music's first international star. Liszt's playing was said to be so frantic that it led to the development of the stronger, iron-framed piano. The biggest and undoubtedly the loudest noise of the period however was Richard Wagner. Grand, heavy music based on classical historic themes of ancient gods and

superheroes of an earlier age, played to large audiences and provided by imposing operatic stars.

In the second part of the meeting we joined Simon Callow exploring more recent music of England, focusing first on Elgar who found inspiration in Worcester and the Malvern Hills before moving on to the more challenging music of Benjamin Britten who was most at home with Peter Pears on the Suffolk Coast at Aldeburgh. For both, their landscape was an essential backdrop. We plan to continue with Howard Goodall and discover another musical destination next month.

WILDFLOWER GROUP – Report by Anne Thomson

Eleven of us visited Bowlees on a gloriously warm and sunny June day. We started by identifying flowers in the car park - a hybridised Avens, this is a mix of wood and water Avens! A few late flowering Bluebells hanging on, Cow Parsley, Dog Rose to name a few.

Next it was on to the Quarry where we found Twayblade, Common Spotted Orchid, Marsh Thistle, Thyme, Foxglove - the list goes on... We spotted Aquilegia and wondered how it got there as it's not a wild flower, deciding a bird must have dropped a seed! On the way to the Visitor Centre (which we by-passed) we came across Wood Sanicle which is a member of the Carrot family and flowers from May to September.

Onwards across the meadows where the sheep were grazing happily on the wild flowers. We crossed Wynch Bridge to Low Force which was raging from the recent rain. We were all intrigued by the 'cobwebs' on a Bird Cherry tree, this is caused by the Ermine Moth and, apparently, only affects that particular tree: poor tree.

We were rewarded on this stretch of the River Tees by more Common Spotted and Broad-leaved Marsh Orchids, Melancholy Thistle, Northern Bedstraw, Tormantil, Golden Rod and Meadow Vetchling. At this point time was running out and we were all in need of refreshment so we adjourned to the Visitor Centre cafe.

Coming up:-

Wednesday, 9th July: Augill Nature Reserve & Pasture near Brough

followed by ice cream or other refreshments at Brough Castle Ice Cream Parlour.

Friday, 25th July (an extra walk): Hayberries with refreshments afterwards at the Cotherstone Old Chapel Cafe and Shop.

For more details of these walks please contact the Convenor.

WIMMIN' SWIMMIN' GROUP - Report by Annie Clouston



Our intrepid women (not those sturdy creatures above) met at the end of May for a gentle swim at Teesdale Leisure Centre.

It is a joyous thing for a person to discover that with little effort, a lot of trust, and a burst of confidence, they can float! And what a glorious feeling it is to be weightless, relaxed and peaceful supported by the water and whatever flotation aid is helpful.

Sad to report that Crag Pond seems to have hit the buffers for open water swimmers already. It seems that a lack of planning permission has meant closure, hopefully temporary. My appetite for open water swimming has been well-sated in the Tees during this warm weather, so far without any

adverse side-effects (ie I haven't drowned, nor succumbed to a stomach bug, nor ear infection). If anyone wants to join me, please let me know – always on the look-out for a swim buddy. For a longer, probably wet-suited swim, Ellerton Lake at Scorton is brilliant.

Our next session is on Saturday 28th June 4-5pm. Cost £5. Swimmin' Wimmin' very welcome.

WALKING GROUPS



SHORTER WALKS - Report by Carol Oliver

Bowlees Circular

A group of 12 walkers met at Bowlees on a beautiful Spring day. We crossed Bowlees Beck, went past the Visitor Centre then turned right onto the old Teesdale road which was used for traffic before the London Lead Company built the bottom road around 1840. Following the farm track uphill towards Ettersgill we gained magnificent views of Teesdale then came down to the tiny hamlet of Dirt Pit.



We went along a minor road until we reached a stile to go across a large field then bearing right, we went to the top of the hill and advanced down to the picnic area next to the High Force Hotel.

Image: Ian Royston

We then crossed the main road to take a steep path through trees using stone steps which lead to the River Tees. We tracked the riverbank to Holwick Head Bridge in order to pass to the other side of the Tees to access a 1.6 km walk which is a spectacular haven for both wildlife and plant species, 12 of which belong to the Teesdale Assemblage, a unique collection of plants for which Upper Teesdale is famous. Finally, we transversed the Tees at Wynch Bridge, which dates from 1830, to walk back to Bowlees.



Image: Ian Royston (approaching Dirt Pit)

4-6 MILE WALKING GROUP

MAY - Waskerley Way - Report by Liz and Pete Harding

Nine members of the 4–6-mile walking group gathered together at Parkhead Station on the Waskerley Way, ready for this month's 5.25-mile walk.

Beneath a clear blue sky, but still slightly chilly we went onto the Waskerley Way making our way towards Waskerley reservoir, taking time to admire the wonderful views. We took a short refreshment stop at the reservoir and noticed the low water level. Up a slight incline to reach Hawksburn car park

then back on the Waskerley Way to return through the Frosterley cutting to our cars at Parkhead Station.

We saw curlews, lapwings and lambs on the walk. Then a few of us



adjourned to the Dales Centre Café in Stanhope for refreshments. Everyone commented on how much they enjoyed such a beautiful area in Weardale.

A new member to the group joined us for her first walk and sent thanks for a most enjoyable day and for making her feel so welcome.

Image: Pete Harding

JUNE – Hury and Blackton Reservoirs – Report by Lynda Bares

As the 11 of us started out from the north side of Hury Reservoir the weather was a bit mizzly but soon cleared and we had lovely walking weather the rest of the day.

It was a leisurely circular walk along the north side of Hury and then Blackton reservoirs at the end of which, just below Hannah Hauxwell's Birk Hut, we stopped for a coffee break. Some stayed on the grass, others went into the hide.

After that we continued to the bridge at the end of the reservoir, along the Pennine Way for a few hundred yards before turning at the wall to keep within the reservoir's grounds. Then we continued above Blackton until we dropped down to cross a small footbridge over the overflow canal and then kept to the fields at the side of Hury. Finally at West Briscoe we passed some Alpacas and crossed the dam and back to the cars.

We had beautiful views of Shacklesborough and Goldsborough and saw Greylag and Canada geese, mallards, black headed gulls, oystercatchers and lapwings on the way.

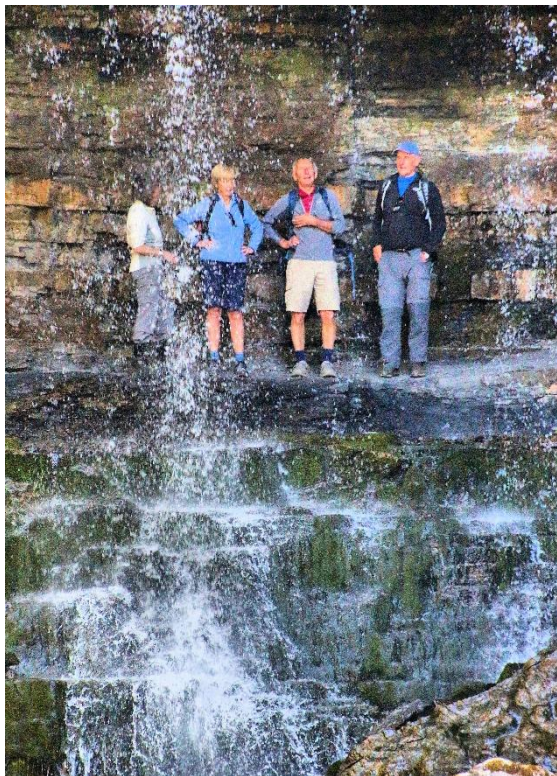


Image: Pete Harding

7-9 MILE WALKING GROUP – Report by Nicky Grace and photos by Ian Royston

Ten of us gathered in the centre of Garrigill, Cumbria on a day of fine walking weather. The area was new to several of the party whilst others had traversed the Pennine Way section, but the chosen route in South Tynedale was new to everyone. We set off on the first part of the figure of eight walk. After a short stretch on the road we crossed the south Tyne and headed towards Ashgill Force, passing a couple enjoying wild swimming in a pool by a cascade.

The Force was more of a weak shower than a torrent due to the dry spell but half the party took the opportunity to stand behind the waterfall. We then did a short loop to cross the incoming path and head uphill – one of only two steep stretches. The penalty of choosing a walk in pastureland rather than moorland was the number of stiles of different shapes and sizes. Most were robust and we coped.



We walked back to the centre of the village where a couple of the party picked up their rucksacks having sensibly walked the first 3.5 miles without them. Heading north west out of the village we joined the Pennine Way running beside the South Tyne. Crossing the river, we headed towards Bleagate and stopped for lunch, nearly at the top of the second steep stretch.

We heard curlew and oystercatchers as we rested. We then followed the river on the other side at a higher level enjoying “big moorland views featuring the vast, sprawling flanks of the Cross Fell massif”

(per the walks guide).

Passing Low Sillyhall, we walked through wood and fields to Thortergill and down the road to our cars. After c.9 miles many of us then took advantage of the newly opened Pennine pop up for well-earned refreshments.

Our next walk on July 16 will be led by Peter will be a second attempt at Herdship Fell hoping for better weather than in April. Please contact nicky.grace@gmail.com if you are interested in coming along



FELL WALKING GROUP - Report and images by Jane Johnstone

The Fell Walkers have covered several miles during our three walks in the Springtime. The weather has been kind, waterproofs only required for wind proofing, and suncream needed regular application. We've travelled across various terrain, had glorious views and encountered numerous stiles of various shapes, sizes and construction. 'Flying walking poles and bottoms' have had to be avoided whilst negotiating said stiles (see May Walk for further details)!

In March eleven of us set out on a 10-mile walk starting in Richmond, meandering initially through Round Howe Woods alongside the river. We then had the challenge of Hudswell steps. There was much debate regarding the number of steps climbed - over 200, nearer to 300, the argument proceeded - but all agreed it was a steep climb with several stopping to enjoy the view! We continued through the woods to join a permissive path (MoD), keeping a lookout for soldiers, or tanks, on manoeuvres. We crossed the moorland without incident and reached a limestone quarry where we stopped for lunch.



After our short break we moved on to the outskirts of Downholme village, visiting the small church for a moment of reflection and exploration.

From here we crossed over Downholme Bridge, walking was preferable to driving, and through the fields to Markse. We were now on the homeward journey so picked up our pace on the Coast-to-Coast path heading back to Richmond and enjoying the route along the north side of the Swale.

In April we had a moorland adventure, starting at the Tan Hill Pub (we didn't visit the establishment until the walk had been successfully completed). Ten of us set off heading south, briefly on the road, and then turned west, steadily climbing to Thomas Gill waterfalls. We subsequently proceeded along the eastern flank of Robert's Seat, before stopping for our mid-morning break. Our walk leader had promised pastries, which we all thoroughly enjoyed whilst reviewing the 'tractor art' on the fells.

Following coffee, and pastries, we started our descent to Ravenseat Farm. We stopped at some delightful spot (not sure where) for lunch before continuing east towards West Stonesdale. Here we were met with a challenge 'to find the public footpath'. Our way was barred by a locked gate and a sign indicating a public footpath somewhere to the left! Fell walker determination sprang forth and we found a route to start the steady climb to join the Pennine Way. Returning to 'our stiles adventures', we met an interesting one in that it didn't exist. Where it should have been was a gap with wire across it. With a little limbo dancing we safely navigated the obstacle and continued along the crest returning to the pub, and the well-earned refreshment.



The day in May dawned cloudy and chilly but dry and eleven of us gathered at Grassholme Reservoir to tackle 'The Reservoirs Rectangle' - 11.5-mile route linking Lunedale and Baldersdale, giving views of each of the five reservoirs at some point along the way. The water

level in all five reservoirs was very low – and the ground under our feet was correspondingly dry (despite recent rain).

We started by walking along the north shore of Grassholme, across the dam and up through fields to a lane leading to Botany, (not Bay), encountering the first three stiles on the way. The many stiles became a recurring topic of interest and conversation during the walk (sad, these walkers!!). There were 'really good' ones, a ladder stile with no ladder (I exaggerate a little), one where the bar was set very high – literally – across the gap and one which was decidedly discriminatory against anyone other than Twiggy. We wished

we'd taken photos of them all so we could have written an article on 'Stiles on The Reservoirs Rectangle' for u3a!

From Botany we headed south towards Baldersdale as Hury and Blackton Reservoirs came into view. We descended to Hury and had a lunch break by the water – on picnic benches, no less – very up-market for a Fell Walk. A chilly wind encouraged us not to rest here too long but as we followed the grassy shore and then pastures above Blackton the sun came out and we were spurred on by the promise of 'the café in the barn' at Clove Lodge. Here we found an amazing assortment of hot and cold drinks and eatables, from ice cream to porridge and every kind of biscuit bar in between – all provided on a 'help-yourself-and-make-a-donation-if-you'd-like-to' basis.

Several of us had some kind of refreshment and then we set off along the Pennine Way northwards for the last three miles, passing Hannah's Meadow then up and over back into Lunedale. On the way we had views of Balderhead and Selset Reservoirs and their impressive dams. In conclusion, everyone seemed to enjoy our Springtime walks and, as always, each other's company along the way. We're now embarking on our summer expeditions!

COFFEE AND CHAT - coming up:

Coffee and Chat 2.30 - 3.30pm

Thursday 10th July at Cotherstone Community Café

Thursday 14th August at Andalusia, Galgate, Barnard Castle

u3a Members and non-Members are all welcome

ANOTHER MONTH IN AMBRIDGE – Report by Annie Clouston

Apologies to all my faithful readers for a gap in my rantings. It's unfortunate if you've had to listen because I suffered a dark night of the soul. Listening to, never mind, writing about Ambridge, sent me into a slough of despair, as deep as the Mariana Trench. However, the warmth of late Spring seems to have reawakened my Archers mojo, if not to cast a positive light but at least to listen with my critical/cynical ear.

Four things have made my pips squeak, so to speak. The first was a rather clever piece of writing (don't hold your breath) about giving feedback. Once upon a time, in a previous life, giving feedback was a professional necessity, so I was keen to see the technique employed in the village shop. The volunteers, with jobs endangered by the up-coming retail competition at the recharging station, decided they needed to up their game. First there was a customer questionnaire – relentlessly pursued by Susan in Bad Tigger mode – then there was a scene where Joy, Susan and Pompous Jim the Prof, agree to give each other feedback on their customer service. An object lesson in how not to give feedback ensued. Think Trump and Musk on (anti)-social media. The odd thing was that they all thought they were very insightful.

The second was Alice's appallingly self-indulgent breast-beating about her daughter, Martha's, "school report". When summoned in by the early years teacher to discuss some small hiccup in her social development – which was another object lesson in how not to give feedback – Alice chose to make it all about her and her former life as a hapless alcoholic. Foetal Alcohol Syndrome! I suppose we should give credit to the scriptwriters for their acuity in alerting us to yet another peril of the human condition.

The third was the conversion of Justin Elliot – previously written as a 21st century Sir Jasper, ruthless businessman with the social acumen of a dung beetle – to a fundamentalist tree-hugger. He has, with a flash of enlightenment, become aware of his almost certain condemnation to the Fires of Hell unless he changes his ways. "What's my legacy?" he

whimpers. A bit too late Justin. Your legacy, with thanks to the scriptwriters, is full-blown idiocy.

The fourth was Peggy Woolley's funeral. I'm afraid this was too much for me. The eulogy, or what I heard of it, didn't mention the bits I remember about this indomitable old curmudgeon (but are they ever truthful?) and as the Archers Clan repaired to the Bull for a stiff drink to recover from it, I too needed a potent glass of something to get over it. I hope my mojo will persist so I can continue my altruistic mission to listen so you don't have to.

.... And after all that, another endearing Puffin photo – courtesy of the Photography Group. Only one bird is posing for the camera !



Front Cover picture credit: Claude Peter Redgrave

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 am	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 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

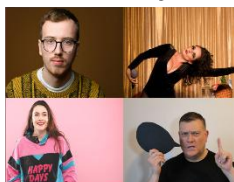
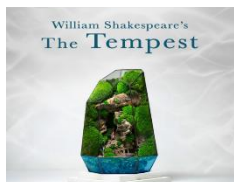
WHAT'S ON : 2025

19 JUNE - 23 AUG

the
witham
Culture • Community • Commerce

Barnard Castle's Community Arts Centre

www.thewitham.org.uk



LIVE AT THE WITHAM
28TH JUNE TO 30TH AUGUST 2025
SATURDAYS 12PM - 5PM

Witham Youth Theatre Juniors: The Tempest
Thurs 19 & Fri 20 June | **Theatre** | 7.30pm | £5

Edinburgh Previews: Joe Kent-Walters & Special Guest (14+)
Wed 25 June | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £14

Anora (18)
Thurs 26 June | **Film** | 7pm | £5 Shown with subtitles

Lachlan Werner: Edfringe Preview
"WonderTwunk" WIP (16+)
Fri 27 June | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £11

Noaddedsugar! Midsummer Melodies
Sat 28 June | **Community Choir** | 7pm | £10

St. Mary's Community Choir and Friends
Sat 5 July | **Community Choir** | 7pm | £5-£10

Scott Bennett: Blood Sugar Baby (14+)
Wed 16 July | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £18

Mark Thomas in Ordinary Decent Criminal:
Work in Progress (16+)
Fri 18 July | **Theatre** | 7.30pm | £14

Sneaky Peeks:
Craig Hill & Connor Burns (16+)
Sat 19 July | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £14.50

A Complete Unknown (15)
Thurs 24 July | **Film** | 7pm | £5 Shown with subtitles

Home Service
Fri 25 July | **Folk Music** | 7.30pm | £25-£26

Edinburgh Preview Day (16+) 4 shows
Sat 26 July | **Comedy** | From 5pm
Day Pass £30 | Individual Shows £9

Tony Christie & Ranagri
Sun 27 July | **Folk Music** | 12noon | £25-£28

Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy (15)
Sat 23 Aug | **Film** | 7pm | £5 Shown with subtitles



Box Office: 01833 631107

THE WITHAM, 3 HORSE MARKET, BARNARD CASTLE, DL12 8LY