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FORUM

JULY 2025

No. 25/07

u3a

CHAIR'S LETTER

Dear Friends

Here I am again, another sunny Sunday afternoon, with temperatures returning to the low 20s rather than the high 20s! The weather forecasters are predicting rain and thunderstorms for tomorrow as well as cooler temperatures. Personally, I will welcome the cooler temperatures but I can live without the thunderstorms. No doubt the gardeners among us will be thinking about the threat of hosepipe bans, will they, won't they?

As I look back at the month, I have lovely memories of U3A events, both general and specific group activities. I was intrigued by Dave Palmer's history of the Georgian Theatre in Richmond. What a fascinating place, with its ups and downs, and I plan to visit it again sometime soon. While the U3A trip to Tynemouth was thoroughly enjoyable and was a trip down memory lane for me. I used to visit it frequently with friends, but have not been there for several years. I managed to visit the Station Market, and snapped up a lovely glass vase I spotted on a 'flea market' stall, a bargain at £10. There was lunch with fellow U3A members, and of course an ice cream in the afternoon before returning back to Barney. Some plucky U3A members swam and paddled in the sea, but I was a wimp.

In addition, as a member of both the Gardening Group and the Lunch group I had two more treats this month. A trip to Newby Hall on the first Friday of the month, where they have a sculpture trail to follow through the woods. Unfortunately, these lovely works were out of my price range, being in the thousands!!! Now I am looking forward to lunch on Wednesday at Coghlan's with my fellow Lunch Group members, delicious no doubt.

Looking forward to the July meeting and catching up with friends and members.

Bye for now,

Julie

Cover picture: Chillingham Castle gardens (photo by Tony Seward)

It's Your Forum

Editors: Kate Bailey, Annie Clouston, Jane Kenwright, Alyson Kuby and Tony Seward

This month's editor is: Tony: Issue No: 25/07

e-mail: forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

Phone: Annie **07988 625738** Kate **07867 683195**

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 issue: 18th August, and next month's editor is Annie. 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 will 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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TEESDALE u3a Officers

Chair: Julie Archer chair@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

Membership Secretary: Ian Royston memsec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

Business Secretary: Liz Colley bissec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

Treasurer: Jane Mathieson treasurer@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

MONTHLY MEETING – Report by Celia Chapple

Dave Palmer gave a light-hearted, informative talk on the history of the oldest working theatre in its original form, the Georgian Theatre, Richmond.

In the early years of canny businesswoman Tryphosa's marriage to Samuel Butler, all performances still had to be licensed by the Lord Chamberlain in London, a practical impossibility for small, remote theatre companies. But when the Theatrical Representations Act 1788 gave local magistrates the permission to grant licences for 60 days, this encouraged such theatres to seek stability and recognition. Samuel obtained a 20-year lease on a property on the corner of Friars Wynd and Victoria Road, where you find the theatre today. No outline exists of the original building but early playbills remain, advertising both traditional and modern plays.

After World War II, David Brooks started fundraising for the theatre's restoration. 90% of the original structure remained although the internal stalls were found to be made of painted carboard. Floor supports were rotten, possibly with insect infestation, and public access was restricted to one Georgian entrance door. The fundraising was later taken over by Lady Nancy Crathorne, wife of the local MP, who started a Charitable Trust.

The restoration has continued over the years, and the theatre expanded to the building next door, adding a first floor to this new building. When it was re-opened in 1973 by the Duchess of Kent, Katharine Worsley, the theatre continued with a varied traditional and modern programme, and the big names of theatre came - Timothy West, Yehudi Menuhin, Ken Dodd and Val Doonican all trod the Richmond boards.

The years from 2000 to 2019 saw further restoration necessary to meet modern fire and public access regulations, install economical lighting and air systems, and even the repainting of the internal structure with the original shade of pale green. After the interruption of the COVID epidemic, funds came largely from the National Lottery Fund and performances from the likes of Ian McKellen (on his Birthday Tour). The Hamish Ogden Foundation and other Funds made this restoration possible too. It re-opened in 2021 with a reduced but more comfortable seating capacity of 154. The tradition of music and theatre continue today, from Shakespeare and Nell Gwynn, to Fleetwood Mac and a popular annual pantomime.

NEXT MEETINGS AT THE WITHAM

28th August 2025 Jane Harrison - Peru Inca and Pre-Hispanic Cultures

Jane Harrison, an active u3a member who has recently visited Peru, will look at highlights from the archaeological record that are evidence of the flourishing societies that existed before the Spanish conquest.

25th September 2025 Susan Parry - Forensics to Crime Fiction

Swaledale crime writer Susan Parry is an analytical chemist whose research career has involved forensic investigations, including some high profile murder cases. Susan is the author of the 'Yorkshire Dales Mystery' series.

A DAY OUT IN TYNEMOUTH – Report by Annie Clouston

Whose brainwave was this? And how did we command the weather? In a change to our usual weekend workshop programme we happened upon this jolly good jaunt. The further we got from Barney, the bluer the sky, the higher the spirits. It was a bit blowy with a brisk offshore wind that put sand in the sandwiches and blasted the legs of the beachbums (of which I was one). What a super beach and, despite the wind, the sea was flat-calm with a few hardy souls (of which I was one) braving the nerve-nipping 13C of the North Sea. Those who did at around 11.45 am were joined by three dolphins, truth to tell, a long way off, but strutting their playful stuff about 300 metres from the shore.

People-watching is always a treat at the seaside and Tynemouth offers much to entertain, not least at the station, where an extensive market besieges the platforms, selling everything from junk to rather classy plants, military memorabilia to crocheted crinoline ladies for those Victorians amongst us who just cannot cope with the sight of a naked toilet roll. Food is always good in Tynemouth. There's the Fish Shack on the beach that gets plaudits in the Sundays, but most of us (perhaps all those steps up from the beach threatened good digestion?) stayed topside. Some visited the Lifeboat Station, the Collingwood statue and the Priors, gun batteries and graveyard - haunted by the ravages of war. Yet others (of which I was one) frequented the coffee shops and bars.

A great day out. Sue did all the legwork, for which we are all very grateful.

DAY TRIPS 2025

I have organised the following trip for September. If you want to put your name down for it please email janem1947@hotmail.com, or phone 07591095765, or sign up at monthly meetings. Payments can be made by Cash, or Cheque made out to 'Teesdale U3A' or BACS, 'The Teesdale U3A, 20-83-73, 03778576', please identify which trip the money is for. Coach costs are non-refundable.

Friday September 19th, 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 & known shops & cafes. Walks along the Leeds Liverpool Canal. Leaving at 9am outside Addisons, return before 6pm. Coach price £18.00. Payment as above.

Historic Houses Association

I have recently taken out membership of the Historic Houses Association (HHA). Although it costs £68.00 a year, I have already got my money back by visiting Chillingham Castle, Ushaw, Kiplin Hall, Auckland Palace and Newby Hall, with Alnwick, Bamburgh and Raby Castles and Rokeby still to visit. There are over 300 houses to visit throughout the UK, at some of which you can stay overnight. In their quarterly magazine there are also guided holidays viewing Historic Houses in the area. I shall be adding two more houses to visit next year. Contact Jane Mathieson **07951 095765**

LONGER TRIPS 2025-6

The trip to Tenby was a success. The weather was kind. The hotel was in a prime location on the sea front, and the food was good. The one disappointment was the trip to St David's. It had been scheduled for a Sunday morning and as there was a service in progress we were unable to spend time looking round the Cathedral. The travel company lost a lot of Brownie points and have been told.

Next on the agenda is **Steaming through the Cotswolds and Cruising the River Avon.** There are 20 of us booked for 5 days, starting on Monday, 22nd September. There may be some single rooms available: contact Kyle Travel on 01833 690303. Maudes coaches will collect us in Barney and take us to the Darlington pick up point.

Looking ahead to the Spring, there are 29 of us going on the **Cairngorm Travel holiday to Scotland**, staying at The Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie. There are still a few places left at the hotel. We leave on 16th April, for 4 nights dinner, bed and breakfast. The holiday will start and end in Barnard Castle. Bookings have to be made direct to Cairngorm Travel, **01405 761334**.

Dorothy Jameson
01833 637957



The Teesdale u3a Committee

(left to right) Ian Royston, Sue Overton, Julie Archer, Hazel McCallum, Kate Bailey, Liz Colley, Annie Clouston, Sheila Kilgarrieff, Jane Mathieson (hidden), Mike Sweeting, Tim Meacham

GROUP REPORTS

For general enquiries the Teesdale u3a Groups Coordinator is Hazel McCallum hmmccallum2@gmail.com tel: 01833 316484

ANDROID PHONE GROUP - Report by Martyn Radcliffe

The group met again at the Guide HQ and there were a number of issues raised.

Firstly, some members were struggling to get a positive result from touching the smart phone screen. It was identified that this was due to too much of the finger print being applied rather than the tip of the finger using it more like a stylus.

We ran through left and right swiping and what they do depending on which screen you start from as well as swiping up and down.

A reminder was given to schedule the latest UI (user interface) update and ensure that the settings for the update had auto download when there was access to Wi-Fi.

Next time we will be looking at Photo curation – deletion, sorting transferring etc, Facebook and other social media privacy settings, and hopefully either removing or disabling AI within programmes like Office and Google.

ART APPRECIATION GROUP – Report by Tony Seward

On 2 July we were introduced by Dr Anne Anderson to the Glasgow Boys and by Michael Palin to one of his personal passions, the Scottish Colourists. We had already heard Dr Anderson on Scandinavian art of the same period, which shared many of the same characteristics, being on the northern periphery of Europe, influenced strongly by French Realism and Impressionism, and determined to create a strong national identity.

These young painters were in revolt against the stuffy conventionality of the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh. They turned away from conversation pieces, often with a moral message, to concentrate on light,

colour and form rather than the subject. Instead of meticulously painted interiors, often with a darkening varnish (which they scornfully labelled 'gluepots') they sought inspiration in rural landscapes and occupations. Like their French and Scandinavian counterparts, they established small artists' colonies, notably in Cockburnspath, Berwickshire, and Kirkcudbright in Galloway. They were especially influenced by Jules Bastien-Lepage and his realistic depictions of rural poverty. Cabbages featured largely, so much so that they were sometimes referred to derisively as the 'cabbage' school.



They painted generally 'en plein air', often in oils instead of watercolour, a recent development made possible by ready mixed paints supplied in metal tubes.

The leading Glasgow Boys were James Guthrie, EA Walton, John Lavery, Joseph Crawhall, EA Hornel and George Henry. There were 23 in all, not all originally from Glasgow, but the label became established when their work was shown together at a major exhibition in 1885 at the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts.

A Hind's Daughter, by Sir James Guthrie, 1883, National Galleries of Scotland

Michael Palin gave an hour-long introduction, in his own inimitable style, to the now extremely popular Scottish Colourists group. Although they are now so famous and much reproduced, it is not all that easy to see the original paintings as they are mostly held in Scottish collections or by Flemings Bank. Fortunately, the latter hold frequent exhibitions, so you can experience the paintings up close if you catch one of those. They were before all else enchanted by the bright colours of Southern France and North Africa, and the exciting experiments in light, form and colour of

Monet and Cezanne. While they travelled to such places as often as they could, they did not neglect their home turf, and applied the same principles to landscapes, interiors and still lifes at home. The leading Colourists were SJ Peploe, JD Fergusson, FC Cadell and GL Hunter.

Next month we will move on from the Scots to explore Irish art.



*Tulips – the Blue Vase, by SJ Peploe, c. 1919,
National Galleries of Scotland*

BOOK GROUP (ROOM TO READ) - Report by Ann Whitfield

***Long Island* by Colm Tóibín**

This recently published sequel to Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* was much enjoyed by the members of our group. The dramatic opening when a stranger knocks at the door and demands to speak to Eilis (now Eilis Fiorello) informs the whole novel, leading Eilis to question the choices she has made. Tóibín expertly explores the themes of emigration, small town life and a clash of cultures, deepening our understanding of what it means to uproot your life in search of a better one. There is a strong feeling of

place: although the title is *Long Island* most of the novel is set in a small town in Ireland in the 1970s.

Tóibín's writing is clear and succinct. The female characters are especially well drawn, dreaming of escape and with regret for how things might have been. The story is told with a light touch and subtle humour. The prose is easy to read as the social pressures arising from gossip and social expectations are exposed. Eilis and Tony's children too are well portrayed, emerging confidently and charmingly from the traditional Italian and Irish families of their heritage and dealing with the various expectations and secrets of their elders.

We talked about the ending to the book. The narrative is left hanging and it is not clear which way the story will end. Some expressed the view that Tóibín was setting the scene for another sequel. This may be the case and if so the sequel will be a welcome addition.

Others were not so sure that this was the author's intention. Told from three perspectives, *Long Island* leaves us invested in the fate of all three characters, but also with the clear understanding that there cannot be a neat happy ending. The ambiguity of the ending deepens this.

Rounded up, the scores were a perfect five out of five for discussion and five for recommendation to a friend.

CHESS GROUP – Report by Diana Marks

We met as usual in The Old Well. Eight of us again, all willing to tax our brains. It's really great that our numbers have increased lately, and gone are the days of just three people turning up! My partner for the afternoon hadn't challenged me for many weeks and we had a fabulous game. Hopefully everyone else in the group was just as happy 😊

We meet again on Thursday 7th August, brains sharpened and ready to do battle.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GROUP – Report by Kate Bailey

This month we discussed ways of working to protect the environment and wildlife. Sue has planted part of her garden with wildflowers, experimenting with seeds, on bare ground or grassed areas, and with plug plants - the latter have been very successful. Jane is making a new garden and intends to write a Forum article about her progress in future months. Kate has had great success this year with cowslips, red campion and ox-eye daisies in different 'wild' bits of her garden and her lawn has been full of colour.



Kate's 'no-mow March-June' lawn - after a couple of years small wildflowers just appeared.

Liz raised the issue of the increasing demand for energy and water for data centres (millions of computers in huge sheds that would cover multiple football pitches) and global networks that store, process and deliver online data 24/7. According to the International Energy Agency, global internet traffic has grown by more than 40% since early 2020.

The 'Which?' website offers several ways to reduce these energy demands as well as 'digitally decluttering' our lives:

- Cut down on social media use - video based platforms, including Zoom, exchange huge amounts of data over their networks in order to display content;
- Reduce streaming and video calls - switch to lower resolution settings and/or turn off your camera display;
- Manage and delete emails - check the mailing lists you subscribe to and unsubscribe senders you don't want to receive messages from.
- Avoid large attachments, particularly photographs, and delete old emails when they're no longer needed - even storing them takes energy;
- Organise your data storage - media files such as videos and high-resolution photos take up the most space. Delete things you no longer need, remove your data, particularly photos, from the cloud and use an external hard drive for secure storage;
- Opt out of AI services - every ChatGPT query uses around 10 times more energy than a standard search query and needs a pint of water to cool the servers. Google has around 90% of the UK's online search market, and its AI Overview is now a permanent feature of its search function. You could switch to a different search engine (e.g. Ecosia, DuckDuckGo, Startpage) that doesn't store your personal data or generate AI results, or at least allows you to switch off the AI function.

Briefly, Good News: There are hopes that new ash tree seedlings are becoming resistant to dieback. The Dogger Bank Wind Farm Hub on Teesside is working with schools to promote STEM subjects and providing scholarships for students studying for STEM university degrees. In Singapore, a new way of generating electricity using raindrops falling into narrow tubes is being explored. And the UK government is, at last, going to ban destructive 'bottom trawling' fishing practices within Marine Protected Areas around our coasts.

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP – Report by Martyn Radcliffe

A small group met up on the Wednesday evening, clasping notebooks and pens (or pencils). Armed with the results of their scribbles from the past four weeks.

Each person read their 'homework'. This was to write the first line or paragraph of a piece to fully engage and attract a reader in. These were highly successful and from very different genres but each was entertaining and engaging.

We discussed how to build worlds and about being subtle about how much information needs to be given - the adage 'Show not tell' is very true - and making sure that checkable facts are accurate. Like not having a mobile phone in 1960 (unless of course it is science fiction).

Dialects were also considered and how difficult it can be to be faithful without falling into parody.

The exercise for next time (an idea I unashamedly plagiarised from another group I go to) was to reimagine a famous scene in a book or film and write an alternative.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD GROUP - Report by Sue Overton

Nine members met on July 9th in the Guide HQ and split into two separate groups. Three crosswords of increasing difficulty were completed by the end of the afternoon session, the final one being the most taxing.

Here are the answers for previous clues published in the Forum in May:

BUSHBABY – Cute animal but, mostly, shabby mongrel (8)

LAMPREYS – Chopped parsley smothering minute fish (8)

And in June:

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

Did you manage to work them out?

Now try this one:

Tool for bridge? (7)

Hint – it's a double definition.

If you enjoyed solving the above, come and join us at our next session in the Guide HQ, Birch Road on Wednesday 13th August 2-4 pm.

Contact Sue Overton 07512 368884 for more information.

DISCUSSION GROUP – Report by Glen Howard

On a beautiful summer's day seven of us met up to discuss topics of interest in the news, including: the increase of sales of non-alcoholic drinks; Salt Path; Women suffering workplace harassment; ID cards; Just Stop Oil/demos; unpaid council tax; Social Providers; Tortoise found after 7 years on the run; and older workers urged to delay retirement to save the economy.

Our next meetings will be on Fridays 8th August and 12th September. If you would like to join us please give me a ring on 07975 705816.

FAMILY HISTORY INTEREST GROUP – Report by Alan Swindale

Thirteen members of the Family History Interest Group attended the first part of two presentations on Irish Roots: 'Why researching Irish Family History can be so difficult.'

English family historians have become lazy. They are used to a (nearly) complete set of civil birth, marriage and death records from 1837, census records every ten years from 1841, church registers going back to the 17th or even 16th century. Wills readily available. Place names are familiar which helps to link these records together.

This is not the case for Ireland. Ireland's violent past has destroyed most of these records. The official language is different (Gaelic, pronounced Gay-Lik). The official Church of Ireland was Protestant but the vast majority of Irish were Roman Catholics and parish registers for Roman Catholics are scarce before the middle of the 19th century. The geography is unfamiliar; parish names change with time and boundaries are

inconsistent. A key reference is the 'townland', somewhat similar to an English manor but smaller.

A key historical event was the civil war between the Irish Free State and Sinn Fein which broke out in June 1922 and led to the destruction of the Public Record Office in Dublin in June 1922; this meant the loss of

- 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851 census
- Over 50% of Church of Ireland parish registers
- Wills and court records.

To compound the disaster a bureaucratic mistake destroyed the 1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891 census records.

The next meeting will discuss where information on Irish ancestry can be still found, with examples and a hands-on session. It will be held on the second Thursday of August, August 14th, at 13:30 in Enterprise House.

GARDENING GROUP – Report by Julie, Fran and Kate

In July the gardening group travelled to Newby Hall and Gardens near Ripon, North Yorkshire. The house is Grade 1 listed and includes some fine furnishings. Some members took a guided tour around the house. There are numerous examples of Chippendale furnishings and joinery work throughout the house.

The gardens are extensive and were originally designed in the early 1920s. The double herbaceous border at 170 metres is one of the longest



Newby Hall from the border (photo Julie Archer)

in the country. It is on a north-south axis and runs up to the house at the top and the River Ure below. The gardens also feature the Rose Pergola, Summer House, Laburnum Pergola, Rose Garden, Rock Garden, Water Garden, White Garden and Woodland Garden.

Some members enjoyed a trip along the river in a boat and others had a



ride on the miniature railway, or spent a fascinating hour looking at the intricate designs and tiny details of the Dollhouse Exhibition. The Teddy Bear Exhibition was equally fascinating with the original Paddington Bear on display. The 19th Newby Hall Sculpture Trail displayed 50 sculptures throughout the garden, made from a mix of bronze, stone resins and glass. All were available for purchase with the highest price for both the Spring and the Ammonite Jurassic sculptures being £36,000 each.

Eye Spy (photo Julie Archer)

The café was well stocked with cakes, pastries, drinks and sandwiches. There was also a gift shop including plant sales.

This was another wonderful day out with lots to do and was enjoyed by all.

On Friday 1st August we will return to Breezy Knees Garden in Yorkshire.

On Friday 5th September we will be travelling to Sizergh Castle in the Lake District.

GEOGRAPHY REPORT by Jane Harrison

In June our speaker was Phil Ramsden, a Durham University geography graduate, who works in Cumbria for the Environment Agency. He is a Fisheries Technical Specialist and spoke about his research into salmon management on the River Derwent.

Young salmon, or smolts, are very vulnerable when they migrate downstream. Phil described them as 'Nature's Mars Bars', because at 6 inches long they make a very tasty snack for larger predators. Man-made structures, such as weirs and hydro-electric power dams, also create major obstacles to their movement. Climate change is increasing water temperatures, and floods, as well as periods of exceptionally low flow, are more frequent.

Adult salmon, which need minimum depths, clean gravel and well-oxygenated water in which to spawn, face changes to their habitats. Silt, sediments, fertilisers, and pollutants all have a detrimental effect on fish populations. Salmon catches on the River Derwent, as measured by rod fishing, have plummeted since 1993. Returning salmon are now smaller in size, which may reflect changes in marine environments as well.

Phil has been involved in a three-year study to tag smolt and record their movement past monitors placed at strategic points downstream. In 2020 only 8 of 100 fish tagged upstream reached the sea. This loss was much worse than expected so the team even experimented with releasing the smolts further downstream. There were better survival rates in 2022. The research highlighted some of the hurdles faced by the fish. Even navigating across Lake Bassenthwaite proved difficult, with one fish taking nearly 6 days and travelling 80 kilometres! One of the biggest problems however was the Yearl weir. There is a salmon leap for fish moving upstream but no provision for the smaller fish swimming downstream.

There is now an urgent need to act on the data collected. Fortunately, improvements are already proposed at the Yearl weir to make it easier and less stressful for the down-migrating fish.

Phil's team has also worked with other research projects collecting data at sea. It has been possible to trace the passage of tagged salmon on their journey towards Greenland. One was tracked as far away as the Outer Hebrides before its transmitter battery faded. Worryingly some salmon appeared to head towards the commercial fish farms off Carradale, Argyll.

Phil's talk gave rise to considerable discussion afterwards. Several people raised the issues facing fish on the River Tees. Gerald recommended reading *Is a River Alive?* by Robert Macfarlane.

Next meeting: Thursday 21st August. The Witham. 2 pm. Tim Meacham will continue his talk on Teesdale railways and Gerald Blake will talk about Teesdale maps.

GEOLOGY REPORT by Bob Tuddenham

We had two most interesting holiday geology talks at our meeting on June 23rd. The first was by Andrew Lapworth about his trip to Iceland in May 2024 and the other was about Gibraltar and Tangiers by Trevor Morse during his recent cruise in the Mediterranean.

Andrew gave a fascinating presentation of his trip to Iceland with many visually stunning slides of this area of tectonic activity. As many of you know, Andrew is an expert birdwatcher and he admitted his geology was limited to O level (in 1974!). Having said that, he included some very useful geology to set the context. Iceland is on the Mid Atlantic Ridge (MAR) but is also on a static hot spot so the rocks are mostly igneous and are no more than 16 million years old. Andrew showed us some magnificent photos of waterfalls, geysers, coastal settings and also evidence of the tectonic plates. In particular, he visited the Almannagjá Gorge where the Eurasian and the North American Plates are dividing with a rift valley. Some fine bird photos were also included in the presentation. The talk stimulated a discussion about whether the MAR and the hot spot were related or are independent of each other

Trevor had just returned from a Mediterranean cruise to celebrate his and his wife Lynn's 45th wedding anniversary. The ship had stopped at Gibraltar and Tangier and this provided an opportunity for a talk about the geology of the Pillars of Hercules. These are the promontories on each side of the narrow Strait of Gibraltar which separates Europe and Africa, the Rock of Gibraltar and Mount Itacho respectively.

The geology of both is from the Jurassic period and this is an area of tectonic activity where the African and Eurasian plates collide. 'The Rock' is made of limestone, the layers of which have been overturned by the tectonic collision so the oldest strata are on the top. The promontory in Morocco is made up of flysch deposits, sandstone and shale layers characteristic of orogenic/mountain building activity. There were also some interesting caves with extensive tufa deposits – dissolved and precipitated limestone.

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 Celia Chapple

Concealed by trees, the formidable Brancepeth Castle looms over you as you approach. Five miles west of Durham, 19 group members came to learn its history.



Our guide adequately summed up this settlement's history: 'Its history is largely the people', and we learned that its owners tossed it around through the centuries like a basketball; this has determined, in places, its current condition. The earliest recorded settlement is a

property owned by the Anglo-Saxon Bulmer family of Yorkshire. The rear angular medieval towers illustrate this period. Fortunately, they married into the Nevilles who owned it until C16. With its three defence towers in front, a moat and bridge, and its strategic position, it fell into the 'distant' hands of the Crown and loyal patriots after the Neville's participation in The Rising of the North (a movement to depose Queen Elizabeth I).

Very little care and upkeep was done until the Russell coalmining magnates took ownership in the 1820s. The Edinburgh architect, John Paterson, rebuilt and heightened two turret tops to prevent sinking, and followed interior Regency styling to blend in and bring continuity. The Army requisitioned it during WWII as a Regimental HQ. The property went into private hands in 1960s and the daughter and husband of that owner were our guides.

The owners were very generous with their detailed information as we had an external and internal walk around. The rooms are mostly plain now with some attempt to reconstruct vaulted ceilings, but it's really like painting the Forth Bridge..... There is an 1870s attractive Gothic-style chapel with an

ornate altar backdrop, that is still used for services. The castle's neighbour, St Brandon's Church, is airy and fresh, having been restored after a devastating fire in 1998.



There are many stories I could tell you, from the daughter with unrequited love, to Bobby Shafto, murder, an attempted development of coal pit houses, and the pillaging of a thousand trees. About a third of the castle is inhabited today. It is very much alive in the community, utilised for weddings, craft shows and retreats.

Before we left, we frequented their small café, run by the owner's German daughter-in-law, who knows how to cook a good soup and brownies!

(photos Ian Royston)



Next trip: Tuesday 19 August to Marrick Priory. Please contact Tim Meacham for details.

LUNCH CLUB – Report by Elizabeth Carrick

On the 14th June, the lunch club met at the Teesdale Hotel, Middleton in Teesdale. This was an evening meeting. The club sometimes meets in the evening, in the summer, as so many venues do not do lunches. We had not been to this venue before. The weather was beautiful and the drive there lovely. Nine people came and we were put in the dining room which was nice and quiet. There was a problem over starters and quite a long wait for the food despite us having ordered it in advance. Meal portions were large and not everyone could manage the excellent sweets. We all had a pleasant meal and it was a lovely opportunity to meet everyone again and have a great chat.

NEEDLECRAFT – Report by Glen Howard

There was a lot of laughter this month, possibly to the detriment of some people's projects! Most of us were knitting (or unpicking) but one person finished the knitting of her article, but still has all the ends of yarn to weave in. Not many enjoy that part. Talk was very varied, covering cruising on a plague ship, being sent home from a cruise as Covid had just struck, being winched off a ship into a helicopter, and elderly relatives being packed off for a cruise over the Christmas holidays so that family didn't have to entertain them. There were also many happy memories of holidays both on land and sea.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 4th August 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 on 07975 705816 if you are interested.

PAINTING GROUP – Report by Val Hobbs

Five of us met for the July meeting on Friday 11 June. Anne had sent her apologies, so I had an idea of putting together a task which encompassed the techniques we had recently learned.

I issued the group with a copy of a coastal scene with a lighthouse, and we all began by sketching it using rulers and freehand. We then used wet on wet for the sky and lifted out with tissues, before adding darker blues.

We then worked on the light and shade of the lighthouse itself before, using an indigo blue, painting the sea...again lifting out where needed with a dry brush. The rocks and grasses were painted using a variety of ochres and greens, and Martin photographed us all at work for the first time. We really enjoyed this session which was punctuated with the obligatory tea and biscuits.



(Photos - Martin Page)



PHILOSOPHY GROUP – Report by Pete Redgrave

'I experience, therefore I am....'

Following a previous introductory meeting about consciousness I led this month's group discussion for a second helping.

Since time was, and for all those who have thought about it, a fundamental problem is how can personal subjective experience (consciousness) possibly be generated by a physically constituted brain and body. This conundrum is known in philosophical, psychological, neuroscientific and machine intelligence circles as the 'hard consciousness problem'. Thinking about consciousness will be constrained by the individual ideas and examples we've been exposed to along the road. My road has been neuroscience where the strict modus operandi is having facts drive the quest for explanations, and explanations drive the search for facts.

At the outset, it's always good to have an agreed language so at least we know what the other guy is talking about. Philosophers use the term 'qualia' for our subjective experiences. For example, qualia refer to the subjective feeling of pain when stung by a bee, the sweet taste of a strawberry, the eye-watering smell of an onion, or the saturated blue of a Teesdale gentian. Consciousness, however, is not limited to our sensory-derived view of the external world, we can also introspect about our internal emotions, intentions, memories, and ideas. Presiding over our subjective experiences is the spotlight of selective attention. Volitionally, we can move the focus of our conscious awareness from one mental state to another, thus providing trains of thought and a subjective sense of self.

Increasingly, the investigation of consciousness has become a hot topic in contemporary neuroscience, evolutionary biology and machine intelligence. This interest is founded on the supposition that consciousness is physically based and can be legitimately investigated. Specifically, the assumption is that when computations of the right kind are performed in a physical system, like the brain, this will constitute both necessary and sufficient conditions for consciousness to emerge.

Supporting the assumption of physically-based consciousness is the tight, one-to-one correlation between brain neural activity and reported subjective experience (*see Mach Bands figure*). It seems that no aspect of consciousness (sensations, emotions, intentions, memories, ideas, etc) can operate independently of underlying neural activity. All classes of mental experience can be evoked or suppressed by stimulating or inhibiting neurones in appropriate regions of the brain. Psychoactive drugs would be just one example of physical events altering subjective experiences ('Is it my round again?')

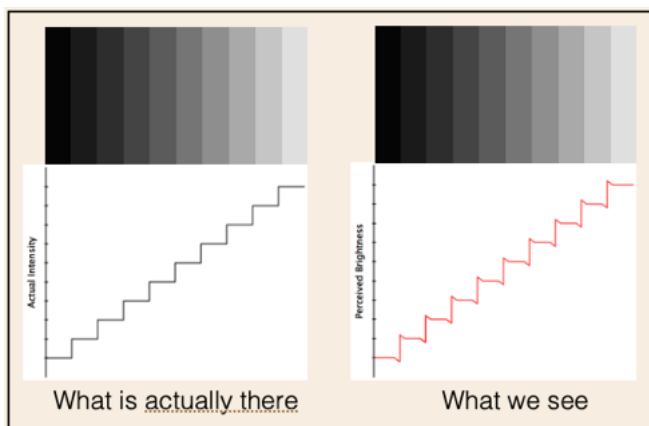


Image: Mach Bands: *Our uneven subjective experience of even grey bands is wholly determined by the process of neuronal lateral inhibition in our visual system. No amount of volition can suppress this illusion.*

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 26th August at 10am at Enterprise House, which will continue the Consciousness topic. All welcome.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP – Report by Alan Kenwright

In July the photography group went on a trip to Staithes. After the recent spell of hot weather with lots of sunshine, we got a refreshingly cooler day with complete cloud cover making for photos with the 'giant soft-box' effect of having no shadows.

The picturesque little village was full of promising subjects in the way of quaint houses and narrow passage ways, but also full of nesting seabirds and wandering tourists. So a good spot for taking a few pics. We also found a very pleasant tea-room in which to have some lunch before a final tour of the village for some last shots and then the trudge back up the hill to the car park.

A very enjoyable day out.

(Photographs by Pete Redgrave and Val Reynolds)





POETRY GROUP – Report by Mike Catling

What is it like to experience exile in one's life? Our June meeting brought together a wide range of poetry from those who had such an experience.

There were familiar laments of being exiled from one's homeland, perhaps by necessity or by force, but also poems by poets rarely heard of or unknown. Robert Burns, a familiar name to many, tells us that 'My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here // My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.' The Hebrew Psalmist (Ps.137) remembers that, 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept // for there our captors asked us for songs // How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a foreign land?' By contrast, W B Yeats decides to return to a place he either remembers or longs to go to in *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*: 'I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree // I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore / While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey / I hear it in the deep heart's core.'

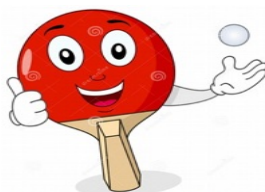
War and/or foreign occupation can be the cause of physical or mental exile. The poet, Li-Young Lee and her family fled their home in Djakarta, where she was born in 1957, due to anti-Chinese sentiment and eventually settled in the United States seven years later. She remembers

her mother singing 'and my grandmother joins her // I've never been in Peking, or the Summer Palace // but I love to hear it sung // Both women have begun to cry / But neither stops her song.' Equally one can feel exiled in one's own land as a result of foreign invasion or occupation. In Pamela Mordecai's poem *Lament of an Arawak Child* we read that 'strange men came and took this land / and plundered all we had // They made my people into slaves / they worked us to the bone / they battered us and tortured us / and laughed to hear us groan.'

The First World War was the subject of many poems, and one of the best known is by Rupert Brooke, who writes in *The Soldier*, 'If I should die, think only this of me / That there's some corner of a foreign field / That is for ever England.' Edward Thomas writes of being exiled from friendship as a result of this war. In his poem *The Sun Used to Shine*, he remembers it doing so 'while we two walked / Slowly together, paused and started / Again, and sometimes mused, sometimes talked / As either pleased . . .'

There is not the space to speak of Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer's poem *Letter to the Parts of Me I Have Tried to Exile*, which expresses a healing journey of welcoming all aspects of ourselves, Eaven Boland's *Quarantine* that tells the story of a husband and wife who left the workhouse in the winter of 1847 and both died of cold and hunger on their journey north, and Bob Marley's *Redemption Song* that asks, 'Won't you help to sing / These songs of freedom.' A salutary request when we think of so many held in exiled captivity either distant from their homeland or within their own land by occupying forces.

TABLE TENNIS GROUP - Report by Peter Singer



Hamilton: An American Musical, Lin Manuel Miranda's epic story of the founding of the United States, is brilliant – see it if you can! It invokes a range of emotions, but is ultimately an uplifting experience, set to great music (even including the occasional forays into hip-hop) and incredible dance.

One of the key songs and something of a motif, is 'My Shot', with the recurring refrain 'I am not throwing away my shot'. This may broadly be interpreted as not wasting one's chances of making a success of one's life. Later in the story, it relates also specifically to duelling (apparently not an uncommon event at that time amongst the upper echelons of American society) and the notion of deliberately aiming to miss one's opponent, in the expectation that they will do the same and the matter will be settled, with honour served and no-one injured. Not surprisingly (spoiler alert), this doesn't work out well either for Alexander Hamilton or his son Philip, who both reputedly adopted the tactic in their duels respectively with Aaron Burr and George Eacker.

It is, however, a good learning point for those of us constantly fighting a duel with a small, round, white, plastic opponent – the ping pong ball. It is especially important in relation to the serve, the only 'shot' that is entirely within one's control. Some useful pointers, for example, might be:

- * take a breath and focus;
- * ensure a well-balanced stance;
- * decide where you want your shot to land;
- * choose the spin you may or may not want to put on the ball;
- * vary your serve – a hard and fast serve may work well, but an occasional shorter, slower ball may surprise and prevents a fast return.

The first three points probably apply equally to duelling, but this is not recommended by u3a nor covered by the insurance policy. Whatever you do, don't rush it, make sure the ball lands somewhere in play and, above all, **don't throw away your shot!**

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

UNDERSTANDING CLASSICAL MUSIC – Report by Ian Royston

Another month, another episode of Howard Goodall's *Story of Music*, this time entitled 'The Age of Rebellion' where he looked at music at the turn of the 19th century.

Almost in rebellion against the pervasive grandiloquence of Wagner came music from France in the shape of Fauré. Debussy and Ravel who provided a much simpler style of music but it was Satie who best epitomises the start of a golden age of French music, his 'Gymnopédies' coinciding with the formative International Exposition, remembered of course by its iconic monument, the Eiffel Tower. The same Exposition Universelle brought Russian music, that had been little-known outside its own country to a much wider audience. Initially and perhaps as a reaction to the Italian art of opera, Tchaikovsky became globally applauded as the master of ballet and his trio: *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty* remain popular today.



Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake

A wider appreciation of Russian music paved the way for Stravinsky and Mussorgsky: the latter, who was entirely self-taught, developed a style of piano-playing hitherto unheard. It's not generally appreciated that his 'Pictures at an Exhibition' was 'composed' for piano

and only later orchestrated by Ravel. The German riposte to Wagner initially came from the more lyrical Mahler but darkened again with Richard Strauss, whose first opera 'Salomé' remains controversial even now.

Having by now thrown out (almost) all of the rules which had governed European music for 300 years, Goodall looked at other composers who embraced folk tunes and those from much deeper heritage such as 'call and response' chants which were codified into what were known as Negro Spirituals. Many of these forms use the pentatonic scale, common in Eastern music but unknown in the West. This rebellion, particularly outside a Europe long-dominated by German ideas, gave rise to the Blues, the syncopated rhythms of Ragtime and Jazz.

In the second part of the meeting Simon Callow embarked on Part 1 of a two-part tour of a very small part of Eastern Germany where J S Bach grew up and flourished to become probably the most dominant force in classical music of all time. This month we concentrated on Weimar but hope to progress to Leipzig next.

We plan to continue with the final Howard Goodall episode and learn more about Bach and his sons next month at 10:00 on 25 July at Startforth Community Centre.

WILDFLOWER GROUP – Report by Kate Keen

On the 9th July, 11 of us set out on a beautiful summer afternoon at Augill Nature Reserve near Brough and just off the A66. The terrain was challenging with broken and overgrown steps leading up to the meadow but well worth it for the variety of plants that we saw.

In the woodland leading up to the meadow we were surprised to see a large patch of Herb Paris, it must like the habitat as this was the most of these plants any of us had ever seen. In the meadow we came across several patches of red bartsia, none of us recognised the plant, it seems that it is only found in a few places in the UK.

We were hoping to see butterfly orchids but sadly we could not see any. Last year on the 2nd July I had seen 15 butterfly orchids in the meadow. Perhaps they flowered earlier this year because of the hot weather. There were masses of common spotted orchids in flower.

We were surprised to come upon a globe flower which was in fruit. We are used to seeing globe flowers next to rivers and streams. This one was sat at the top of the hill in the meadow with no stream or river in sight.

In all we recorded 64 plants. We also saw many butterflies, small copper, small skipper and red burnet moths.

After the walk we made the short trip to the Brough Castle Farm Ice Cream parlour where we enjoyed our ice creams sitting outdoors in the sun and admiring the views.

On Friday 25th July there is an additional wild flower walk meeting at Hayberries nature reserve, followed by a visit to Cotherstone Chapel for refreshments.

WIMMIN SWIMMIN' GROUP - Report by Annie Clouston

Our Band of Sisters met at Teesdale Leisure Centre for our monthly hour of peace and quiet in the pool. Confidence is growing in those who have been afraid of becoming immersed in water all their lives, and for some the gentle plopping of their limbs as they embrace the chlorine reinforces their belief that the water will hold them up and let them glide. It can be a tall order to get your face in the water, but head down, bum up, achieving a good bodyline is the key to a watery glissando that will deliver style!

Every year I take a swimming holiday in the Med. We get our differently coloured caps on the first day and these give us both visibility and - taking me back to Alderman Leach Junior School, put us into a set; fast (usually populated by thrusting youth and master swimmers) medium (me and other wannabes) and slow (generally vintage but determined breaststrokers). Setting off in waves, slowest first, we flop off the boat, swim a bit more than 2 km - it always feels like a lot more - back to the boat that has disappeared over the horizon after our floppage. We do this twice a day.

Why? Well, the sea is warm and silky, the wildlife generally friendly (Moray eels, sea anemones and the odd jellyfish excepted) and the reward of the food on the boat exceedingly enticing. But one of the best things is the company we keep, from all corners of the globe, with great stories to tell about this, that and the other.

This year, it's back to Turkey. The first time we were there, there was a coup, but that was on land and elsewhere, the only visible difference we could see was a three-storey high photograph of Erdogan that appeared on the front of the Town Hall and a rash of Turkish flags on the taxis.



The Sisterhood of the Sea - photo taken from a Turkish gulet, 2023

I am not sure I can yet convince my Band of Sisters, other than Ruth, that a swim holiday is a life-affirming week's worth of time, but who knows? I hope at least I'll get some of them on a day trip to Hathersage Lido for a touch of the outdoors sometime soon.

Our next session at TLC is on Saturday 26 July at 3.45 for 4pm. Swimmin' wimmin welcome, book with Sue, sueoverton@hotmail.com.

WALKING GROUPS



3-4 MILE WALKING GROUP - Report by Linda and Godfrey Irving

Egglesstone Abbey with added history

Ten of us set off from our meeting point, the post office on Galgate, in blustery but dry weather. But first we were first asked a question: 'Why were 200 Italian (or mostly Italian) soldiers marching along Galgate in the past?' No, they weren't prisoners of war from the Second World War but Roman soldiers!

We walked to the Roman Way Picnic site and Sculpture Park, where we learned from the information board that this area has been well used over the years. It was thought to be the main crossing over the Tees for Roman soldiers making their way, in their usual direct route, to their fort at Bowes. In more recent times it has been the site of a gasworks and is now a pleasant picnic area.

Progressing along the path behind the castle with the river on our right, we heard that the castle was first built in wood by the Normans shortly after their 1066 invasion of the country. It was built more permanently in the 11th and 12th centuries from stone by the Balliol family; the town gets its name from Bernard Balliol.

We lingered to look at the County Bridge dating from the 14th century and still in constant use today. Walking on we crossed the river by the Green

Bridge noting the old weavers' cottages on Thorngate with their small row of windows on the top floor, followed by the old woollen mill factory, now stylish apartments on the riverbank. We followed the overgrown footpath towards the caravan park, noting the old Mill House on the opposite bank of the river where water shot from the sluice under the house.

After following the entrance road of the caravan park up hill, we turned left into a field edged with blackberry bushes covered in flowers. Following the path out onto the narrow road leading to Egglestone Abbey, we enjoyed a quiet stroll along here without seeing any traffic, until we came to another ancient mill house where we turned right up the track to the Abbey.



(photo Ian Royston)

Having discussed the monks who lived there before the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, we had fun exploring the ruins, sheltering from the wind in giant fireplaces and wondered if many stones from the Abbey walls had been taken to build local cottages and farmhouses! We examined a large tomb that once upon a time had been used by nearby Rokeby Hall as a garden ornament and which one of our group likened to a large bath! It had been returned to the grounds of the Abbey when it was taken over by English Heritage.

As Egglestone Abbey bridge is closed for road works we couldn't do our usual circular walk and so retraced our steps along Abbey Lane before turning back into the field leading to the caravan park and our starting point in town.

4-6 MILE WALKING GROUP - Report by Patrick Neill

On a perfect morning, 11 of us met at the Parish Hall car park for this easy but spectacular circular walk around Bowes, taking us past the castle and then following the River Greta. Despite the vehicle noise from the A66 on occasion, the walk was very scenic, passing several remote farms as we walked towards God's Bridge. Here we had a short break before following the Pennine Way up on to the moor; fortunately the ground was not wet, making our ascent to Trough Heads relatively easy. From here looking down towards Bowes, the views were magnificent with excellent visibility.

We then gently descended back to the original path, where we came across a farmer taking his sheep to be shorn – he appreciated us walking on ahead and opening and closing gates whilst he on his quad bike, together with his dog, guided them towards the shearers.



(photo Ian Royston)

Returning to Bowes, we walked past Dotheboys Hall, said to have been the inspiration for the boys' boarding school in the Charles Dickens novel *Nicholas Nickleby*, and back to the car park.

7-9 MILE WALKING GROUP – Report by Judith Coleman

For our June walk, 13 of us gathered in Brough to explore the area around Mount Ida, which was unknown to most of the group. The weather was bright and breezy as we set off along the Swindale Beck, then headed up through hay meadows and a gorse patch (!) to Helbeck quarry. This is a working quarry extracting limestone which, we were to see, is so widespread in the area.

A track led us up to the foot of some crags and here we headed westwards. We were walking on short grass now, with wild flowers everywhere and good views of extensive limestone outcrops and folded formations to our right – lovely walking country. Then we took a path through open deciduous woodland to reach Fox Tower, where we had our coffee break.

The tower was built by John Metcalfe, probably around 1775 when he refurbished Helbeck Hall, and the site affords extensive views of the area and surrounding hills. It was apparently originally used as a picnic site and viewing platform and that is just how we used it all these years later. However, instead of the cannon which once stood around the platform at its base and were fired on 'birth and rejoicing days', we heard the firing on the nearby Warcop military training area. Strange continuity.

The next part of the walk was the ascent of Mount Ida (449m), steep at the bottom but then a gradual gradient along one of the limestone ledges leading up to the summit cairn. From here we could just make out the pillars on Nine Standards Rigg and had clear views of the Howgills and Lake District hills.

There was a strong wind blowing so we dropped down into a sheltered little hollow for lunch then made our way westwards along the uppermost limestone ridge (the summit ridge!) and zig-zagged back along a wide grassy path to the track. This led us down to the quarry and so back through the gorse and meadows to Brough. We finished off a most enjoyable walk in the Wilding Hotel where only the favoured few managed to procure a scone and the rest had to make do with cake!!



Our next walk on July 16th will be a circular walk from Cow Green. The August walk is on 20 August. Contact nickygrace729@gmail.com for further information.

FELLWALKING GROUP - Report by Jane Johnstone

For our June expedition 10 hearty walkers gathered in the Dales Bike Centre ready for the first challenge of the day, the climb to Fremington Edge. We had been informed that we were starting with a steep climb and luckily, although a bright start to the day, the sun was not yet in its full glory. We headed towards Reeth and started the ascent, initially by road then changing to track. After a short stop to remove a layer of clothing, the temperature already rising, we were informed there was a choice! We could continue with the well-trodden path or take a shortcut which would enable the Edge to be reached more quickly. On the downside, yes there always is one, it would result in a direct climb upwards, an even steeper ascent. We accepted the challenge and turned onto the upward path.

The climb was relatively short, thank goodness, and the view from the top was glorious; we looked down on Reeth bathed in sunshine. After having a moment to catch our breath we proceeded along Fremington Edge,

heading east, with a promise of coffee on our descent to New Close Bank. Coffee was spent with the sheep, whilst avoiding their droppings!

After refreshment we continued in an easterly direction passing Marrick towards Shaw Bank. As we approached the road which would take us to Marske our walk did a U-turn, looping us back towards Marrick but taking the route tracking the river Swale. Before commencing the next ascent, we decided to adjourn for lunch as we noticed the ready-made seating at the side of the track, all rocks having smooth tops! We ate lunch in sunshine plus a slight breeze which was very welcome. We were now ready to start our next series of ascents.

Continuing along our route we viewed Hutton's Monument across the valley. The monument commemorates Sir Matthew Hutton of Macclesfield, who died in December 1814, aged 35 and requested to be buried here at his favourite viewpoint of the family's Marske estate. From admiring the monument from afar we headed for Steps Wood. Here we met a field of nettles, the shorts wearers in the group were somewhat alarmed but nettle squashers i.e. trouser wearers, were deployed to create a safe passage for bare legs.



The Nuns' Steps

Such was the concentration on nettle traversing that we failed to notice that we were no longer on the footpath and no access to Steps Wood. On realising our mistake some of the group retraced their steps, dancing through the nettles, whilst others scaled the wall ensuring no damage was done. We regrouped and descended through the wood using the Nuns' Steps to Marrick Priory.

The steps were built to connect the Benedictine Nunnery to the Priory and were used by the nuns between 1160 and 1539 but are now part of the Coast to Coast. They have sunken over the years but are still clearly

visible and provide safe passage. After emerging from the woods, we passed the Priory and were nearing the end of our walk. We followed the wall down from the Priory to Stony Bank and rejoined the Swale for a gentle walk to Grinton Bridge. Subsequently we returned to the Bike Centre for coffee and cake, our treat for the successful completion of the 11-mile walk.

COFFEE AND CHAT

Thursday 14th August 2.30-3.30pm

The Witham Garden (if fine, otherwise in the Gallery)

Thursday 11th September 2.30-3.30pm

Winter's Café, Middleton-in-Teesdale

ANOTHER MONTH IN AMBRIDGE - Report by Annie Clouston

Remember! I listen so you don't have to...

Gone are the days, says Pete – who self-identifies as a ‘farm boy’ – as a wave of nostalgia washes over him like spray from a slurry-chucker, when a chap could rely on the Archers to tell him when to stook the hay. No, today’s everyday story of country folk must be topical and hip, ready for the smart phone-wise, savvy, entrepreneurial generation who, the scriptwriters imagine, have 13 minutes a day to spare to listen to their inane product.

Thus, hoving on to the Ambridge scene in a waft of ersatz Chanel No 5, is the newest dramatis persona, Amber - who self-identifies as “an influencer”. This lass, who has the air of an average party balloon between her ears, has somehow found a jailbird on her e-radar, and considering it cool to have him in her very public existence, has wangled a visitor’s pass from our local bad boy, George Grundy, and fallen in lurve. This love is

readily reciprocated. What else is there to think about in the long hours between lights out and slop out? They are now engaged, and Amber has, in her mind's eye, choreographed nuptials to delight her followers and become an overnight TikTok sensation.

Meanwhile, the Grundys, in a rare outbreak of common sense, are just a tad sceptical. Amber's family, who appear to have a fair bit of dosh, getting wind of her aspiration to become the wife of a common criminal, have chucked her out. She turns up in Ambridge in want of a bed, and is welcomed – as one might welcome grit in the eye - for the sake of our George, with whom good relations have only just been re-established.

In an entirely different social sphere, the BL Board, wherein Justin - who now self-identifies as an 'eco-warrior' - is engaged in a power struggle with Martin. Martin is engaged in excruciating courtship of a very horsey, haughty horror called Annabel. Good luck there Martin! Don't ever self-identify as Casanova, your romancing is as enticing as leakage from a septic tank.

Tony, our editor, asked me at the recent Coffee and Chat in Cotherstone, whether there was any reader push-back about my Ambridge Chronicles. Gone are the days, when Mrs Trellis of North Wales - who self-identifies as an 'Archers Fan' - bothered to write in with her very legitimate complaints of bias. A response of any kind, for a writer, is better than apathy. Just let me know! Is there anyone out there who still listens? Have the scriptwriters (AI or otherwise) got any defenders?

Annie Clouston

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 - Room to Read	3 rd Wed am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Books for Men	3rd Thurs pm	David Pennington 07392 758444
Chess	1 st Thurs pm	Diana Marks 07762 626912
Climate Solutions	1 st Thurs am	Kate Bailey 07867 683195
Creative Writing	1 st Wed 7pm	Martyn Radcliffe 07975 970088
Cryptic Crossword	2 nd Wed 2pm	Sue Overton 07512 368884
Discussion	2 nd Fri am	Glen Howard 01833 631639
Family History	2nd 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
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/Technology	2 nd Mon am	Roy Tranter 01833 638288
Scrabble	2 nd Mon pm	Judith Fanner 01833 650150
Spanish Conversation	3 rd Thurs 10am	Michael Harris 07799 051389
Table Tennis	Every Fri 3pm	Peter Singer 07508 663998
Theatre	Varies	Eliz. Formstone 07979 204212
Travel & day trips	Varies	Jane Mathieson 07591 095765
Understanding Classical Music	4 th Fri 10am	Ian Royston 07818 046938
Walks 3-4 miles	4 th Mon pm	Liz Colley 01833 695197
Walks 4-6 miles	2 nd Tues 10am	Janet Bayles 07887 834346 Patrick Neill 07881 811518
Walks 7-9 miles	3 rd Wed 10am	nickygrace729@gmail.com
Fell Walking	4 th Wed	Jane Johnstone 07771 657440
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

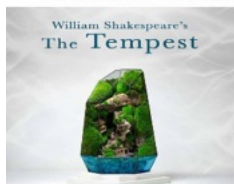
WHAT'S ON : 2025

19 JUNE - 23 AUG

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Saturday Sessions

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