

A photograph of a stream flowing over mossy rocks. The water is dark and turbulent, creating white foam as it flows over the rocks. The rocks are covered in bright green moss. In the foreground, there are several snowdrops with white flowers and green leaves, growing among brown, fallen leaves. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor setting.

www.teesdale.u3a.org.uk

FORUM

February 2026 No. 26/02

u3a

CHAIR'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

Here I am again trying to be inspired about what to put in my monthly letter to you all. The weather is frustrating, the fields look saturated with water standing in the ridges, and my garden looks bedraggled. The bird food I put out in a flowerpot saucer for the ground feeding birds keeps turning into 'soup'. All the water containers are full to overflowing, when not frozen solid. Stop whinging Julie and think of the nice things!

What have I been up to? Well musically I have been lucky enough to attend two different offerings. Enjoyed a production of *Carmen* at the Hippodrome in Darlington, with some lovely voices in the company. Then a complete change, seeing the Blues Band at the Witham, a great evening, and hope I look as good as Paul Jones does at 83 years old. Will have to get taller and slimmer 🎷. In addition, like several other U3A members, I am a member of the Community Choir and we are madly learning and practising our music for the March concert. Must practise more !



I joined Kate Bailey and Celia Chapple at the February Coffee and Chat in Henry's bar at the Witham. Another sociable and enjoyable catch-up with people. Do try and join us at the next one, Thursday 12 March, 2.30-3.30, Winters Cafe, Middleton-in Teesdale.

Other U3A activities I have enjoyed recently are the lunch group, we went to Bowes Café at the museum, and the first Garden Group meeting of 2026 - read all about it in the Garden Report by Kate Keen.

News on the ways to make U3A payments. We are hoping to soon launch a card payment option for the monthly meetings, membership and trips. Watch this space.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the monthly meeting. Bye for now, Julie

It's Your Forum

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

This month's editor is Kate - Edition No: 26/02

e-mail: forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

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

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 as separate attachments.

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: 6pm Monday 16th March; next month's editor will be **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
- Asking a friend to collect one for you at the meeting - the cost is £2 on a 'first come first served' basis.
- Back copies are available online and also at Coffee and Chat events.

www.teesdaleu3a.org.uk

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 Ian Reid

'George Stephenson, tribulations, trials and triumphs' was the title of David Williams' presentation to the January meeting. George was brought up in Wylam, in a tiny one-roomed cottage by parents Mabel and Robert who was a pitman. George was the 2nd of six children. He started work in the pit at 8 years old. None of the children went to school and George didn't learn to write until he was 18. His sister Anne left for the USA aged 18. His other sister Nellie started work in service in London.

George was always very sure of himself but developed a reputation for falling out with his superiors. He married Fanny and the couple moved to Newcastle where George worked in Newburn pit. George and Fanny had 2 children, Robert and Fanny, but daughter Fanny only lived for a few days. She was followed by her mother who died shortly after. Add to this tragedy, George lost his job. He did find other work but it was in Montrose. His sister Nellie who had never married returned from London to look after Robert. There was further misfortune when George's father was blinded by hot steam from one of the boilers and was forced to stop work. George had to return from Montrose and initially he was unable to find work.

However, a new colliery was opening in Killingworth, where there was a recurring problem with a steam pump. Although George was not a qualified engineer he was good at making machines work. George was given a week to sort it out, which he did in 3 days. Then began a change in fortune for George. He was awarded a 12 month contract at £200 a year and he was now able to send Robert to school, where he excelled at technical subjects. George then married Betty at the second time of asking. She was musical and enjoyed the liberal arts, so was able to help George with his broader education and his social skills.

George and Robert persuaded the wealthy Pease family from Darlington to invest in a steam engine railway, which would also take passengers. The official opening took place on 27th September 1825, when Locomotion 1 hauled 33 wagons, despite two being temporarily derailed, and 300 passengers, at a maximum speed of 15 mph to Stockton Quay where an estimated 40,000 onlookers were waiting. Apparently the noise of the engine in reverse gear was tremendous.

NEXT MEETINGS AT THE WITHAM

Thursday 26th March - Beverley Still (Durham University) will talk about 'Exploring the Bronze Age of the Greta Valley'. Her research is part of a project aiming to contextualise the Late Bronze Age metalwork hoards found there. For the last five years she has organised geophysical surveys and directed excavations within the valley, culminating in the uncovering of Bronze Age and wider Prehistoric landscapes.

Thursday 23rd April - Teesdale u3a AGM - Speaker Max Adams will talk about his new book *King Offa, the Dyke and the Making of Anglo-Saxon England* - the fourth in the series which began with *The King in the North*. Max Adams looks beyond the Venerable Bede and the Golden Age of Northumbria for a new perspective on the origins of England. He finds that Mercian kings, traders, bureaucrats and holy men turned the Midlands into England's powerhouse before the Viking invasions of the 9th century. For the first time this rich and complex period of our history is brought to life.

ADVANCE NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THURSDAY APRIL 23rd 2026

The 18th Annual General Meeting of Teesdale u3a will be held on Thursday April 23rd 2026, in The Witham Hall, Barnard Castle commencing at 10.30am. Doors open 10.00am.

All AGM documents will be sent out by email.

Nominations for Committee and Motions for debate must be received by the Business Secretary on or before Thursday March 26th 2026. bissec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT MEMBERSHIP FEES 2026/27

From: Ian Royston, Membership Secretary

Members are reminded that the annual membership fee for Teesdale u3a becomes **due on 1 March 2026**. We are pleased to inform you that the membership fee for 2026-27 has been reduced to £16.00 or £12.50 for associate members.

If you already pay by Bank Transfer (BACS) or Standing Order then please remember to amend the amount to £16.00 (or £12.50) and please make sure that the payment is scheduled for **no earlier than 1st March 2026**. This helps us keep our accounts straight.

If you do not already pay by Standing Order then we would very much appreciate it if 2026 could be the year when you make the change. Banks make it difficult for us to pay in cash and are making it increasingly onerous to handle cheques. Some banks have already started imposing fees for this.

Please make your payments to: Account: **The Teesdale U3A**.

Sort Code: **20-83-73** Account Number: **23470873**

Please include as **your reference** the name by which your membership is registered and if possible, your membership number.

For those who joined after 1st September 2025 no membership fees are due until 2027.

BACS payments can easily be set up online, at a branch of your bank or at the Witham banking hub on the right day. Once done it can be set up to make an annual payment as a Standing Order. If it is impossible for you to pay by BACS we will be accepting CASH and CHEQUE payments ONLY at the 26 February and 26 March meetings at The Witham.

We look forward to receiving your membership fees in due course and thank you again for remaining members of Teesdale u3a. We look forward to seeing you in 2026 and beyond.

WORKSHOPS AND SOCIAL EVENTS

March 21st Quiz Night - quizmaster Ian Royston.

From 6.30pm in the Glaxo Sports and Social Club (bar available). Cost £15 per team of 6 (£2.50 per person). Bring your own supper or platters to share with your team.

Nothing is planned for April - we're taking a break!

May 9th Glass Workshop - led by Helen, the Crafty Cumbrian Lass. 1pm - 3pm in the Guide HQ, Birch Road, Barnard Castle.

Cost £35 for a T-light holder or £40 for a flower panel with wooden base.

June 11th Picnic and Open Day at Barnard Castle Cricket Club. Further details to follow.

To book a place on any workshop, contact Sue Overton at the monthly meeting or email sueoverton@hotmail.com or tel: **07512 368884**

DAY TRIPS - Jane Mathieson

BACS payments for different trips to be made in the months indicated below, not all in March please.

BACS payments - 'TEESDALE U3A', Sort Code: 20-83-73, Account No: 03778576

All Trips (except Ushaw in September) leave Barnard Castle outside Addisons at 9am, returning before 6pm.

Friday April 17th, 9am pick up. Temple Newsome House & Farm, Leeds

500 year old Jacobean house & one of Europe's largest Rare Breed Working Farms with architectural outbuildings - a few minutes walk from the House, slight slope with cobbles. Large gardens with bulbs & Rhododendron walk, parkland and lakes, some steps. Toilets in House and Farm, 2 Tea Rooms & Shop.

Costs, House & Farm £16.65, House only £10.00, Guided Tour of House £3.50, Farm only £8.50, Historic House Members Free for House, Coach £16.50

Payments by Cash /Cheque February & March. BACS after 1st March - Reference Temple

Friday May 15th, 9am pick up. Constable Burton, Leyburn

Tulip Festival am, afternoon in Leyburn. Toilets, no Cafe, refreshments in marquee on lawn, gardens mostly flat. Layburn mostly flat-ish, Friday market, shops and eateries.

Cost £26.00. Entry/Refreshments/Coach. **Payments March & April. Reference Constable**

Saturday 20th June, 9am pick up. Sunny Bank Mill, Leeds

Large woollen mill, home of TV Sewing Bee. Galleries/Exhibition, Retail Outlets. Tour about an hour- history of Mill & Textiles, 1pm-3pm. Mill is situated on Farsley High Street, so more retail & eateries can be found.

Costs, Entry Free, Guided Tour £10.00, Coach £16.50. **Payments April & May - Reference Sunny Bank**

Friday July 31st, 9am pick up. Alnwick Castle

Alnwick Castle, drop-off and pick-up at the Castle gates, few minutes walk to castle & town. Tour castle & grounds, separate guided tours available to purchase. Courtyard cafe, Armoury takeaway, Pizzeria & Ice cream parlour, Street food trucks. Few steps with handrails, small lift. Farmers & weekly market in Alnwick, shops & eateries, 'Barter Books', England's largest second hand book shop.

Cost, entry & coach £34.00, HH members £16.25. **Payments May & June - Reference Alnwick.**

Saturday 12th September, 9.30 pick up Ushaw House/Chapel

Flower Festival & Plant Fair - Ushaw are holding a Flower Festival within the building and a Plant Fair in the grounds. Fairly flat, toilets and cafe, exhibition 'Extinction', about Dinosaurs.

Cost, entry & coach £22.80, HH members £12.00. **Payments July & August - Reference Ushaw**

Cheques & Cash accepted at monthly meetings

Cheques payable to 'TEESDALE U3A', **Sort Code: 20-83-73, Account No: 03778576**

GROUP REPORTS

ART APPRECIATION GROUP – Report by Tony Seward

At our February meeting we began a two-part look at 'Vienna 1900', focusing on the painters Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) and Egon Schiele (1890-1918). In the dying days of the Austro-Hungarian empire the city was a cultural powerhouse, leading developments in medicine, science, art and music. At the same time it manifested intractable social and political problems and, amongst the intelligentsia at least, a sense of crisis and existential angst, fertile ground for the new practice of psychoanalysis pioneered by Sigmund Freud.

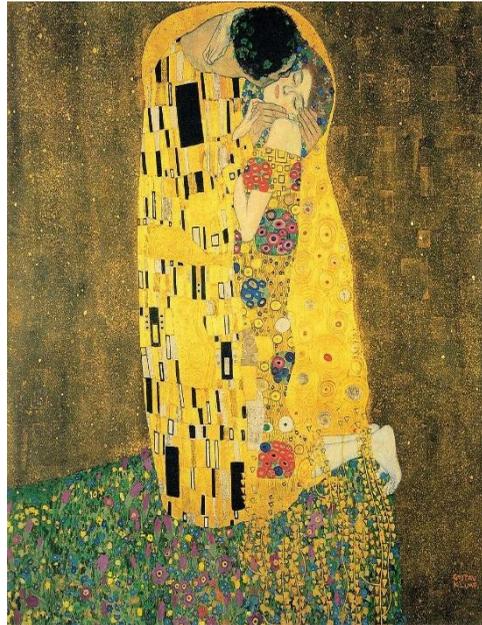
Klimt was a classically trained artist who responded to this febrile atmosphere by introducing a new realism to the portrayal of the human body, which shocked the staid burghers of the Viennese establishment.

Influenced partly by French Symbolism, he distorted the figures in major works like the Beethoven frieze in order to convey philosophical ideas and to explore the human psyche. These were increasingly overlaid with a rich

decorative surface, notable, after his visit to the Byzantine mosaics in Ravenna, for its lavish use of gold leaf, apparent in his best-known work, 'The Kiss'

Although popular as a romantic icon, its meaning is hard to decipher: the woman appears to be submitting passively to the man's embrace, with no reciprocity between the two.

Image: 'The Kiss' (1907-8 Belvedere Gallery, Vienna)



The second film of the afternoon explored Klimt's wider significance as leader of the Vienna Secession, a movement which culminated in a series of immensely influential exhibitions to which international artists and architects – including Charles Rennie Mackintosh – contributed. Its most prominent memorial is the 1898 Secession building in Vienna.



The film also explored the reasons why Klimt's work escaped the destruction suffered by that of his contemporaries, who were condemned as 'degenerate' by the Nazis.

One of these was Egon Schiele, a disciple of Klimt's who took his master's realist depiction of the human body to new extremes.

Image: Egon Schiele, 'Self-portrait with arms thrust backwards', 1915 (EWK, Bern, Switzerland)

Like many artists of the time, he was strongly influenced by the spareness and economy of line in Japanese prints. Particularly in his self-portraits, Schiele appeared to be testing the human frame to its limits, stretching and distorting the body and ruthlessly exploring inner anguish through facial expression.

While Klimt is something of a blind alley in the history of art, Schiele's influence is everywhere, and exhibitions of his work still pack a raw power undiminished by the years. In March we will look at the last in the trinity of leading Viennese artists of the period, Oskar Kokoschka, leading on to consideration of German Expressionism.

BIRDWATCHING – Report by Andrew Lapworth

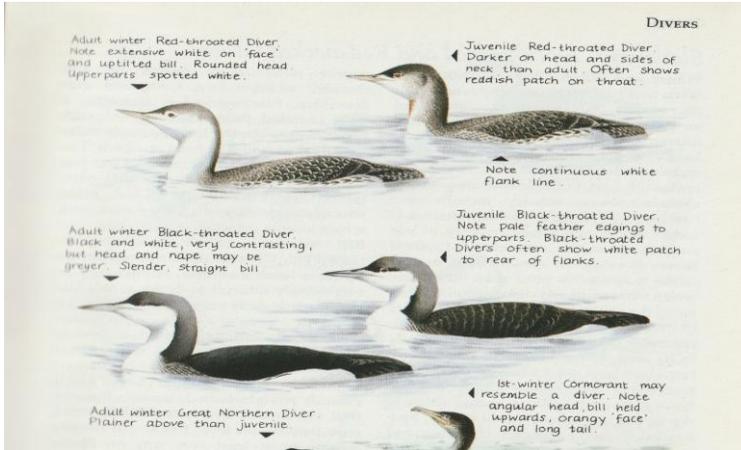
November at RSPB Saltholme & December in the Western Isles

For our final field meeting of 2025 nine of us gathered at RSPB Saltholme in industrial Teeside on a cold but dry day in November. We had our coffees and cakes in the cafe overlooking the main lake which by then had much higher water levels. In amongst the variety of duck species we saw at least 4 Redshanks resting at the edge of one of the islands, but it was otherwise quiet. On the ground floor we had close views of birds at the feeding station: Finches: Gold, Green and Chaff, and petite Stock Doves.

Because the tide was rising, (with high tide due at 14.00) we made our way to the seal-spotting viewpoint overlooking Greatham Creek. Sure enough, the salt marsh was glistening and we had much closer views of numerous Redshanks in the muddy creeks plus 'scope views of Curlews and Godwits, Shelducks, Teal and Wigeon, and Little Egrets and Starlings. A few Grey Seals were hauled out, resting on the banks.

We then walked along Greatham Creek (and into the chilly wind) towards Seal Sands and the warm hide there. By then Teesmouth was filled with the

rising water and we had to work hard and use our 'scopes to soon find several distant divers and ducks.



Counting left or right from various prominent structures on the horizon we all managed to get views of a preening Diver species; in their winter plumages.

Illustration above from: *The Macmillan Field Guide to Bird Identification*, by Alan Harris, Laurel Tucker and Keith Vinicombe. London: Macmillan, 1989

Divers are tricky to identify and we thought either Red-throated or Black-throated (neither bird showed any trace of their neck colours!)* A slightly nearer Red-breasted Merganser was easier to see and identify.

On the walk back to the cars we added a couple of Turnstones in one of the pools, and then returned to the RSPB visitor centre for a warming lunch.

A final session was then at the larger West and Back Saltholme pools hide where we had good views of hordes of duck and geese, with big flocks of Wigeon, Canada and Barnacle Geese with one lone White-fronted Goose. Kestrels and a Buzzard occasionally appeared and we enjoyed the spectacle of rising flocks of both Lapwings and Golden Plover.

Some handsome Pintail Duck eventually revealed themselves. In front of the hide, hiding in plain sight, eagle-eyed Charlotte found a flock of 6-7 tightly grouped Snipe, tucked-in inconspicuously along the muddy edge. A few Linnets and Little Grebes were identified and as a highlight, we found a family party of Whooper Swans. In total over 40 species seen.

*PS. Having checked a helpful reference guide I am now inclined to agree with Roger that our diver was Red-throated. The smoothness of the head shape (compared to the steep forehead of Black-throated) is more helpful than the bill-shape.

Our December meeting at Enterprise House was an illustrated talk by me on the *Birds and wildlife of the Outer Hebrides*.

BOARD GAMES – Reports by Peter Harding and Celia Chapple

January: Peter Harding

Two Guys and some Dames.
Met for some fun and games.
Fourteen Gamers when all told.
They had braved the rain and cold.

Six gathered around a table.
Rummikub. The horse in their stable.
The quest to lay down numbered tile.
With grace, poise and a little style.

Cascadia, with rulebook at hand.
To help novices play and understand.
Hazel, with a kindly smile and chat.
“Sorry you’re not allowed to do that”

The last group decided to have a go.
At a card game known as SkyJo .
Easy to learn, to master is hard
Just hope to turn over a minus card.

Meet every month, second Monday.
At 2pm is when we commence play.
In Barney, at The Old Well Inn .
Come along, you just might WIN.



Image: Scoring Cascadia

February: Celia Chapple



With two tables of four and one of three, we circulated Rummikub (numbers) and Rummikub Word, which was new to many of us. Rummikub combines strategic skill and imagination with a pinch of luck. Jean won the former whilst Andy, Pete, Sue and Terry won Rummikub Word.

In the meantime, the noisiest of the groups filled the room with laughter as they played Skyjo. This is an apt game for February as the more blue, low-numbered and 'cold-looking cards' you get, the nearer you are to winning. There is an element of surprise as each player reveals their cards. The winner was Sue, with Chris close behind.

Meanwhile, on another table, a game of Bananagrams walmage: Rummikub in plays played and won by Jean. We meet on the second Monday of the month at 2pm in the breakfast room of the Old Well Inn. Next meeting: Monday 9th March. Come and join us and enjoy the fun and games!

ROOM TO READ BOOK GROUP - Review by Ann Whitfield

'The Story Of A Heart' by Rachel Clarke

This month we discussed the winner of the 2025 Women's Prize for Non-Fiction, by journalist and doctor Rachel Clarke. It explores the human experience behind a heart transplant. We meet nine year old Max, facing imminent heart failure, his family and the family of nine year old Kiera, who died after a road accident. Unusually the families had met, as a result in the first place of a publicity campaign in the Daily Mirror to increase the availability of organs for donation by a change in the law. In addition to the

highly emotional stories about the two families and the events leading to the transplant, Rachel Clarke details advances in medicine which led to heart transplantation, with insight into the technicalities involved, the characteristics of the surgeons who first attempted it and the difficulties they overcame, for example in obtaining funding and ethical approval as well as the highly complex medical obstacles.

It is interesting to read how the NHS deals with the patients themselves and their families with enormous compassion, but also the procedural complexity of matching donor and recipient and the practicalities involved in just one transplant. We were grateful for the insights offered by our member Ruth who, in her working life, was clinical director of pathology for an NHS trust. We were not however uncritical. The writing was felt to be at times sentimental, especially about the sisters of the donor child. The story having originated with the Daily Mirror, it appeared to be directed at that particular target audience. Written to promote heart transplants, it did a good job, but possibly at the cost of avoiding many crucial issues.

Our discussions covered amongst other things, the morality and emotional and financial costs of medical advances. We wondered about the long term outcomes for Max, as well as the emotional toll and practicalities faced by his wider family. The story of the donor family similarly seemed to gloss over harsh reality. The book was felt to glorify cutting edge surgery without always addressing its long term impact on individuals and families.

These are massively complex issues, many of which were necessarily touched on lightly, if at all, in a book which concentrates on reporting facts in a journalistic style. Most of us were glad to have read it and we all appreciated the opportunity for discussion. Rounded up, the scores for a book group discussion were 5/5 and for recommendation to a friend 4/5.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GROUP – Report by Kate Bailey

Our first meeting of the year was very positive and productive. Our conversations ranged from heartening 'Good News' items and the continuing success of Sue's 'blister pack' recycling campaign, to new ways of raising awareness of things we can all do to make a positive impact on the environment. We are very grateful for the donations given by people

bringing empty blister packs for recycling; these will enable us to pay for another Terracycle collection when the current bin is full.

We are aware that most of the plastic we collect for recycling in the UK is in fact incinerated or packaged for export. Now, a UK parliamentary committee is examining resource efficiency and the potential for a circular economy, including developing domestic reuse, repair, and recycling industries and reducing plastic pollution. To help investigate the scale of the household plastic packaging problem 'The Big Plastic Count' asks us to count and record all our plastic waste in the week of 9th to 15th March - Big Plastic Count **website - <https://thebigplasticcount.com>**. Members of our group will be signing up and taking part, and we encourage others to do the same.

Positive Tipping Points: "These happen when amplifying (positive) feedback loops take over from damping (negative) feedback loops and get strong enough to support self-propelling change." (*Prof. Tim Lenton, World Economic Forum, July 2024*). In terms of 'permanent and cascading' positive change - the BBC reported last October that, in the first half of 2025, renewable energy had overtaken coal as the world's leading source of electricity.

A recent review of the EU's energy sector by thinktank Ember (<https://www.positive.news> 28 Jan) revealed that wind and solar generated 30.1% of electricity in 2025, edging out fossil fuel sources, which generated 29.0% - a milestone described by energy analysts as a major "tipping point". And National Grid statistics (<https://grid.iamkate.com>) show the same encouraging balance was achieved in the past year in the UK - with 41.1% renewables ((33.2% wind), 12.6% nuclear, 28.2% gas. The last UK coal-fired power station closed in 2024.

Other 'Good News': In several US states, including Pennsylvania and California, some 2,100 out-dated dams are being dismantled so that rivers can be restored to a more natural condition, benefitting aquatic wildlife and enabling native salmon that have been prevented from migrating upstream to feed and spawn again.

In Seoul, South Korea, a river running through a dense central business district has been restored by the removal of a 6-lane concrete highway, with multiple positive effects.



The positive impacts include providing habitat for nature, reducing air pollution, preserving cultural heritage, providing access to nature for the public, flood control, and a micro-climate cooling effect.

Image: https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?204454/Seoul-Cheonggyecheon-river

And local news - a 2025 Natural England funded survey has confirmed that Dunlin - a rare and declining upland wading bird - are breeding successfully in new areas of the North Pennines National Landscape. RSPB surveyors captured camera footage of Dunlin chicks on High Helbeck estate, where peat restoration works since 2022 have led to habitat and biodiversity improvements.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD GROUP - Report by Sue Overton

There were 8 of us in January and so we split into two groups of 4 to add a bit of competition! In the two hours both groups managed to complete 3 crosswords - the Times Quick Cryptic, the Weekend Cryptic and the Telegraph. Here are a couple for you to try: -

Catch sight of article – and fume! (6)

Boss's last greeting extremely tremulous (7)

Did you solve November's clues?

Determined what may be carried by shippers is ten tons (10)

Definition is DETERMINED

Solution = PERSISTENT – a hidden clue

Joy beat up a hero and I must intervene (8)

Definition is JOY

Solution = EUPHORIA – an anagram of ‘up a hero’ plus ‘I’

We meet on the second Wednesday each month at 2pm in the Guide HQ, Birch Road, Barnard Castle. Contact me if you would like to join us - Sue Overton **07512 368884**, sueoverton@hotmail.com

DISCUSSION GROUP – Report by Glen Howard

We met on a snowy morning this month but there was nothing frosty about our discussions. Topics covered included: quartz worktops/Silicosis; Nurses to do doctor’s jobs; children changing gender in school; immigration/colonialisation; ICE; quality of life; winter Olympics; what’s next for the Labour party?; sleepwalking/ease of ordering online; upgrading of Palace of Westminster.

New members are always welcome so do contact Glen Howard **07975 705816** if you are interested in joining us. We meet on the second Friday of each month.

FAMILY HISTORY INTEREST GROUP – Report by Alan Swindale

Nine members of the group and one visitor listened to a talk on North Atlantic Passenger Lists. This was followed by the usual ‘Help Your Neighbour’ practical session.

Emigrants have been leaving England for North America since the early 17th century but it was only in 1820 that lists of passenger arrivals began to be

collected. These lists give the name of the ship, its departure and arrival details and passenger name, age, occupation and country of origin. If the researcher is fortunate an emigrant family will be listed together. This is little enough to go ahead with but details on US censuses and other documents often provide a much better picture.

For example 'The Manhattan, arrival 21 April 1869, Transcription "Fred Swindall, 20 M, Lab' (actually Swindells) leads to the story of Frederick Swindells who made his way up from a factory worker to running and then owning a woollen mill.

The talk went on to discuss fares (around £4 steerage for most of the 19th century) and journey times as sail gave way to steam. In the discussion afterwards one of the members read out part of a letter describing boarding just such an emigrant vessel. The talk was followed by coffee and then a useful practical session.

An index to PDFs of other past talks is to be found at [Teesdale U3A Genealogy Tutorials](#).

GARDENING GROUP – Report by Julie, Fran and Kate Keen

In February we held our first talk of the year at Stainton Village Hall. The guest speaker was Ady Davis who came along to tell us about the landscape design history of Ushaw Historic House, Chapel and Gardens.



Photo: Julie Archer

Ady told us of how his interest in horticulture began as a child, his mother had a plant nursery and he helped with the planting and watering of lettuce and

lavender. His mother put together 700 hanging baskets for Cheltenham in Bloom and Ady helped with these before and after school.

Ady went on to complete two degrees in horticulture and botanical design but then worked in the NHS for 30 years. During Covid he spotted an opportunity to manage the volunteers at the Ushaw garden and subsequently became Head Gardener. He works part time in the garden with a full time and part time gardener and a team of 30 regular volunteers. During a recent project to plant 24,500 trees to form woodland corridors, 250 local people assisted with the project.

Ushaw was built on the site of the medieval village of Ushaw in 1808. It was designed in the style of a Georgian house although its purpose was a Seminary to train Catholic Priests. The chapel was deliberately understated and at the rear of the house as the political climate could be unfavourable to the religion.

To infer that the building was older than its actual age an outdated style of landscaping was used in the style of Capability Brown and Ramsey, to bring the landscape up to the front of the house. The 1828 garden design introduced a curved path and roadway to the house lined with yew trees. Ady showed us an image of the garden laid out with tiny yew trees which have now grown substantially.

In the 1830s John Loundon and then his widow Jane designed the new paths and garden beds to show off plant collections from around the world. It is said that the upper path was for the priests to use and the lower path was for students. Over time the garden fell into disrepair, the seminary closed in 2017. The garden has been restored by a team of mostly volunteers and is taking on a mirror role with national plant collections including veronicastrums. This will bring additional plants into the garden and make it more interesting.

Ady was a great speaker with a keen interest and knowledge of the subject and his talk was enjoyed by all those who attended.

On Saturday 13th June there will be a Specialist Plant and Garden Fair with stands including 3 Chelsea Flower Show award winners. The garden is holding the Ushaw Flower Festival 10-13th September based on the theme of Music of the North East.

On Friday 6th March we are having a trip out to Kiplin Hall Gardens, this will be of particular interest as we had a talk about these gardens in October.

GEOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Jane Harrison

Geography encompasses many subjects. Over the coming months the group will explore some aspects of physical geography, which includes topics such as climate and weather, vegetation and soils, as well as landforms and the processes that shape them. Phil Johnson, who has now taken over as convenor of the Geography Group, set the ball rolling by giving an excellent illustrated talk about the Earth's origins.

To understand how the Earth's oceans and landmasses developed, it is necessary to go back to the Big Bang and the origins of the solar system. Helped by gravity, the Earth was formed from colliding dust and gas particles between 4 and 4.6 billion years ago. As it began to solidify, the molten interior separated into the inner and outer core, mantle and crust, which form the structure of the Earth today.

For millions of years the Earth's surface remained a molten inferno. Volcanoes played a role in releasing gases and water vapour essential for life to develop on the planet. As it cooled, the crust divided into various irregular sized tectonic plates, which fitted together like a giant 3D jigsaw puzzle. The shapes and positions of these oceanic and continental plates have slowly changed through geological history. The oldest and thickest parts are geologically stable regions called cratons, which form the foundations of our continents. These are associated with rich mineral resources.

Along divergent or constructive boundaries, where plates are moving apart, such as in Iceland, new crust is being formed. Mid-oceanic ridges and rift valleys are being created as a result. Around the Pacific Ocean "Ring of Fire", there are convergent or destructive boundaries, where either two oceanic plates meet or oceanic plates are being subducted below continental plates, giving rise to island arcs, ocean trenches, violent volcanoes and high magnitude earthquakes. Catastrophic earthquakes also occur along conservative plate boundaries, such as the San Andreas fault, where two continental plates are moving past each other. Collision plate

boundaries occur where two continental plates meet, creating fold mountains, such as the Himalayas. Plate movement occurs as a result of a combination of slab pull, ridge push and convection currents within the mantle.

Phil will continue his talk about physical geography later in the year. Meanwhile the convenors are happy to have suggestions as to the direction the Geography group takes in the future.

Next meeting: Thursday 19th March. 2pm in The Witham. Les Knight will talk about “Snowball Earth”.

iPAD and iPHONE GROUP – Report by Mike Sweeting

There have been a number of mentions in the media recently on the importance of the IMEI number of the phone when reporting its loss to the Police. We now understand why this is important, where to find it, how to copy it down and save it safely if needed.

We discussed an article in The Times late last year that reported on a letter published by 80 cybersecurity experts entitled 'The Biggest Myths About Being Hacked, Debunked'. This suggested that the things we worry about the most are of little significance and that the important things we should be focussing on are keeping devices updated, enabling 2FA and using a password manager and strong passwords/passkeys. We will be taking this further.

Lastly, for a bit of fun, we learnt that we could use the camera to take a photo of an object and then, after highlighting the item in the Photos app, get the Amazon app to search for similar objects.

Next month, our main topic will be keeping your iPad or iPhone secure and managing passwords.

LUNCH CLUB – Report by Kate Keen

In January the lunch group had a great start to the year with 17 Members getting together at the Bowes Museum café.

We had pre ordered our meals, with the most popular main course being the homemade beef steak and venison pie. The portions were very generous with not many of us able to finish the meal.

Still, we made room for dessert or cake, with the lemon posset so popular that it sold out (see photo)

As usual we were well looked after and had an enjoyable afternoon. Our next meal will be at the Fox Hole in Piercebridge.

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



NEEDLECRAFT – Report by Glen Howard

February was our first meeting of 2026, as in January we had a Christmas celebratory lunch at Thorpe Farm. Much enjoyed by all. Not all our projects had progressed very far since December, excuses were not sought! Embroidery, crochet, knitting and quilting were all in evidence this month. We also spent some time searching through a bag of goodies that had been given to us by another U3A member who had recently lost his wife. The various items soon found new homes and we are extremely grateful for the gift.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 2nd March. New members are always welcome so do give me a call if you would like to join us - Glen Howard
07975 705816

POETRY GROUP – Report by Annie Clouston Our End of Year Poetry and Room to Read Groups Meeting

As has become our practice, we combined our two groups to offer our favourite reading of 2025. Some of the books were highly unconventional, notably *Annie Bot*, the story of a robotic sex-toy who breaks out, and *The Safekeep*, very skilfully written by an author whose first language is not English. A new discovery this year was Mary Lawson, whose novels richly describe small-town life in the Canadian Shield with great emotional intelligence and intensity. Here are our favourites:

Fiction

<i>Annie Bot</i>	Sierra Greer
<i>The Offing</i>	Benjamin Myers
<i>The Other Side of the Bridge</i>	Mary Lawson
<i>Long Island</i>	Colm Toibin
<i>Guilty by Definition</i>	Susie Dent
<i>The Enchanted April</i>	Elisabeth von Arnim
<i>The Safekeep</i>	Yael van der Wouden

Non-Fiction

<i>The Living Mountain</i>	Nan Shepherd
<i>H is for Hawk</i>	Helen MacDonald
<i>The Winners</i>	Fredrick Bachman
<i>The Secret Lives of Colour</i>	Kassia St Clair

My Dear Kabul

Untold Narratives

Raising Hare

Chloe Dalton

Poems

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

W B Yeats

Friendship

Elizabeth Jennings

Peacetalk

Ray Lee

The Evacuee

R S Thomas

Satsumas are not the Only Fruit

Brian Bilston

PS. We have included one of our member's offerings to our one-time limerick competition, to make you smile.

A Limerick

Peter Lind-Jackson

A middle-aged playboy called Scacht

Enticed a young girl to his yacht.

What happened below,

We're unlikely to know,

Or if it pleased her, or nacht.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GROUP - Report by Ruth Lapworth

The first meeting of the year of the Science & Technology group was the last one to be led by Roy Tranter who is standing down as convenor after 14 years. Roy gave an excellent talk on two areas of chemistry: metal organic frameworks (MOFs) which are also known as coordination polymers and transuranium elements (TUEs).

In his overview of these rapidly expanding and exciting subjects Roy first focused on MOFS. These large and complex 3 dimensional structures of transition metal ions bound to organic molecules form holes and channels (in their structures) when linked together by long bridging molecules. The resultant holes and channels are good at trapping other molecules which can be tailored for different actions.

MOFs were first described in the 1980's but interest in these molecular complexes has increased since the Nobel Prize for Chemistry was awarded to 3 researchers in this field in 2025. An example of a MOF occurring in nature is haemoglobin which acts as the transport mechanism for oxygen within the blood.

Haemoglobin is a large complex of iron in its ferrous form attached to an organic molecule (protoporphyrin) and subunits of the protein globin. Potential commercial applications of synthetic MOFs include the absorption of carbon dioxide which would otherwise be released into the atmosphere or storage of hydrogen gas which could then be used as a power source.

In the second part of his talk Roy described the discovery of the transuranium elements (TUE's) which are chemical elements with an atomic number greater than 92. They are produced in nuclear reactors or particle accelerators in a small number of laboratories because, with the exception of plutonium, they do not occur naturally. The study of the chemistry of these elements is extremely challenging as they are very expensive to produce, are synthesised in very small quantities, are highly radioactive and disintegrate very quickly.

The group expressed their thanks to Roy not only for this stimulating talk but also for his interesting contributions over the years. ***We are now looking for someone to act as convenor so the group can continue.***

Anyone interested in this role or in joining the Science & Technology Group should contact Hazel McCallum, Groups Co-ordinator, hmmccallum2@gmail.com

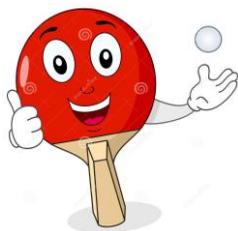
SCRABBLE GROUP – Report by Ray Thompson

7 of us met at Jeanette's house, we split into 2 teams of 3 and 4. Team 1 was Lillian, Kate, Regina and Paula, Team 2 was Ray, Jeanette and Monica. Kate made a 7 letter word of DROVING for 78 points, and Paula made a 7 letter word of TOTTIES for 89 points, Paula won this game with 238 points. Team 2's game was won by Ray with a total of 259, including a 7 letter word of FOUNTAIN for 59 points.

We stopped for tea and biscuits provided by Jeanette, our host. Once refreshed, we played another game, with the two winners and highest runner up of the first games, so Kate, Ray and Paula played together, this game was won by Kate with a score of 290. Lillian, Monica, Regina and Jeanette made up the other team, which Regina won with a score of 176 points.

Thank you Jeanette for providing drinks and delicious biscuits. Our next meeting is at Lillian's on 9th March. Please ring Judith on **01833 650150** if you would like to join us.

TABLE TENNIS GROUP – Report by Peter Singer



So, the anticipated tsunami of new members has not materialised to date, despite the success of *Marty Supreme*, although that might have changed by the time you read this, courtesy of the recent inclusion of our Forum report in the *Teesdale Mercury*, for which many thanks.

Nevertheless, our little group continues to thrive in its own small way, with 10 or more members turning up every Friday afternoon,

meaning we can play doubles continuously and cover the cost of table-hire without causing too much financial anxiety.

Changing the players at the end of each game may at times resemble a courtly Elizabethan dance, but we usually manage somehow to cover all possible combinations by the end of our hour of play. To make life easier, we have been thinking of the possibility of acquiring a third table, preferably without incurring great cost – ***does anyone have a decent table going spare?***

Anyway, onto more technical matters, a member asked recently how best to return a back-spin serve, which is a commonly used service action. Back spin, not surprisingly, means that the ball spins backwards or anti-clockwise, just clearing the net and landing with a low bounce. Often, the returner finds their shot landing plumb in the middle of the net (aaargh!).

According to coach Tom Lodziak, the stock response is a “touch shot”, also applying backspin, to land the ball short over the net, neutralising the serve and preventing an attacking response. This requires “soft hands”, taking the ball early and opening the face of the bat to stroke down the back of and underneath the ball. The extent to which the bat is opened affects how much backspin has been applied (the more spin, the more open the bat).

There are more aggressive returns, including a “deep push shot” or a backhand or forehand, topspin “flick shot”, but these are more difficult to execute successfully and it is probably better to master the touch shot first. Lodziak also mentions the “banana” flick and the “strawberry” flick – no, me neither, but maybe we could go all-out for the full fruit salad?

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

In our first meeting of 2026, somewhat unexpectedly back in Startforth Community Centre we started with the first part of the BBC 'drama documentary' on the "Rise of a Genius – Mozart". This series, co-produced by The Open University, was first aired in September 2024 alongside those of literary greats of Jane Austen and William Shakespeare and explored the life of one of the greatest composers in history, his early emergence as 'the musical genius', examining how his relationships and experiences influenced his work.

Mozart was born into a musical family, his father Leopold being a violinist and composer and as a toddler Wolfgang at first tried to copy the piano lessons of his elder sister, Maria Anna but soon eclipsed her despite being five years younger. Leopold saw the opportunity to exploit the child prodigy and before long had him appearing in court throughout Europe where he entranced and was called a fraud in equal measure. Nevertheless, through the careful curation of his father he played to all strata of society, even composing his first symphony at the tender age of eight years.

However, as he grew older Wolfgang sought escape from his controlling father and after failing to make headway in career progression or in love in his native Salzburg he embarked on a European tour which left him destitute, his mother dead and his first love, Aloysia Weber married. Nevertheless, his twenties saw Mozart steadily grow in respect, reputation and in financial security. He married Aloysia's younger sister, Constanze and in Vienna Mozart proved most productive in terms of all types of orchestral and operatic work as well as producing a wide repertoire of work for the relatively new pianoforte. Part two of the BBC series will explore this middle part of Mozart's short life.

In the second part of our meeting, and mercifully free from interruptive advertisements, we watched a YouTube video looking at the development of the violin. We learned that the design of the 'modern' violin hails from Cremona in the late 17th Century which fixed the basic dimensions of the viol family as well as setting a standard which arguably has never been bettered. The narrator despaired that the value of say a Stradivarius violin is now praised more as an investment than for the quality of its tone. The next meeting is at 10:00 on Friday 27 March at Startforth Community Centre.

WIMMIN' SWIMMIN' GROUP - Report by Annie Clouston

When I was three I fell in the river at Winston, got a soaking, and was rescued by my dad. He was a swimmer himself having been chucked in the harbour at Old Hartlepool as a young boy and didn't drown. Somehow, we Cloustons were not adversely affected by these traumas.

My daughter Olivia was more warmly introduced to swimming at nine months at the wonderful Art Deco Mounts Baths in Northampton (see photo – Annie Clouston).

What we have heard from a number of our women swimmers is that they have had negative experiences in relation to being immersed in water, mostly as children.

Being dragged along in a hoop wielded by a stern-faced matron, having a tsunami engulf them caused by a divebombing youth, being barked at to get dressed in record time behind a rubber tarpaulin held by a resentful teacher (and going back to school wet!), are just a few of the reasons why swimming pools have not felt like sites of enjoyment or places of safety. But it's never too late to change your swimming story, and for lots of positive reasons, you can.

Swimming can be such an antidote to stress – just floating weightlessly, having a zen moment or two – in the right environment. On Saturdays between 4 - 5pm once a month, a peaceful, safe and supportive space is on offer at Teesdale Leisure Centre.

Wimmin Swimmin' have exclusive use of the pool and a trained lifeguard. Whether you are a beginner, a timid swimmer or want to be re-introduced



to exercise from which you have lapsed, Sue, Ruth and I will welcome you and help you if you need it and leave you alone if you don't..

If you want to give it a try contact Sue: sueoverton@hotmail.com or tel: **07512 368884**. Sessions cost £5 and are usually the fourth Saturday of the month. Our next sessions will be on 28th February and 28th March.

WALKING GROUPS



SHORTER WALKS - Report by Liz Colley

Plan A, B, or C? January is a tricky month for walking with the weather challenges and early sunset, so I started with a plan which would take us around the edge of town, through Flatts Wood, past the golf course and over to the actual Red Well, returning via the railway line. Unfortunately, it rained so much in the previous week that the ground was absolutely sodden. I thought no one would appreciate walking in those conditions. So it was time for plan B, a route that stayed on hard surfaces.

Sixteen of us gathered at Scar Top, with a collective need to get out walking again. It was at least dry, though chilly, and the sky grey with heavy clouds. This route took us down to the Silver Bridge and along the river towards the castle. It was an opportunity to see the river roaring past the weir. We carried on towards the Demesnes, following Gray Lane up to the churchyard and onto Newgate and the Bowes Museum gardens.

This was where plan B started to become plan C. Gradually walkers who lived on this side of town began to leave the group and head home. We said goodbye to three people as we arrived at Green Lane, we even walked past the house of one walker and by the time we arrived back at the start, there were only four of us left.

It was good to meet up for our first walk of the year; it felt like an achievement to dodge the worst of the January weather. We made a plan for February to walk in Hamsterley Forest. Hopefully Spring will be just around the corner by then.

4-6 MILE WALKING GROUP – Reports by Janet Bayles and Peter Harding



In January, eleven members of the group met at The Manor House Hotel, West Auckland to walk the Etherley Incline - following the track bed of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) from Phoenix Row to West Auckland. As part of the 200-year celebrations marking the opening of the S&DR in 1825 much of the route of the S&DR has been developed into a multi-user trail. The Etherley Incline was part of the transport development of coal in the South West Durham Coal Field.

From the Manor House Hotel the first 2.55 miles of our 4.85-mile walk took us steadily uphill following tracks and field paths (and a short stretch of

pavement pounding) to reach Phoenix Row. En route we had good views across open countryside towards Cockfield and later the Gatehouse for Witton Castle. It is thought coal would have been transported by horse drawn wagons from Witton Park to Phoenix Row where; after paying a fee, the horses were unhitched from the wagons and the wagons then hitched to a rope system to haul them up the incline powered by the engine house at the top.

Walking due south from Phoenix Row on a “massive” 40 ft high grassy embankment we eventually reached and crossed Etherley Road (the B6282) where we picked up the track bed again to walk to the summit where an information board described the former site of the Engine House and Engineman’s cottage. We then descended to cross Greenfields Road and walked along a newly installed ramp constructed to lift the route out of the existing railway cutting onto the top of the embankment thus avoiding water that had pooled on the disused railway line.

The route then took us through woodland to St Helens Auckland and back to the Manor House Hotel – and refreshments. The weather on our first walk of the new year was drizzly to start with but towards the end we had blue sky. Nothing like the dire forecast!

In February eight members of the 4-6 walking group gathered near the Post Office in Barnard Castle. As we all know there has been a lot of rain in our area and we set off in a slight drizzle. Down to Percy Beck to follow the path through the wood that leads to Barnard Castle Golf Club, treading with care due to conditions underfoot which, considering the amount of rainfall, were not too slippery.

Crossing the road to walk past the Red Well Spring the rain became heavier and with it more wind. Upon reaching the bridge beneath the old Bishop to Barney railway line, a brief discussion took place, and all agreed that the walk would be more fun on a drier day ! Some of us went home, others retreated to a warm cosy café for lunch.

7-9 MILE WALKING GROUP – Report by Phil Clarke, Photographs by Judith Coleman

The January walk was 8 miles around the local countryside and town centre of Richmond showing some of the attractions that make this North Yorkshire town so popular. A dozen of us met at the old Richmond racecourse, Hurgill road, car park where we encountered typical January weather conditions – mist, cold and finally rain.



The walk took us down towards the footbridge over the River Swale and up a steep muddy hill to Hudswell and Billy Bank woods towards the town centre. In town we started our Easby loop along the less popular path next to the football ground for views of the waterfall and then to the old station.

Beyond the trees we spotted kayakers paddling down and through the rapid flowing waters of the waterfall. Crazy, brave, adventurous - who knows!!! But an amazing sight.

Our lunch stop was supposed to be exploring the Abbey but rain changed this plan, and we managed to eat outside undercover at the new outdoor café set up recently on the loop. The loop caused some excitement with a lost glove found by a panting dog and his running owner and friendly banter about the Little Drummer Boy tunnel legend.

The walk took us past the Batts and better closer views of the waterfall then UP into town. On the final part of the walk, we went past the sign on a house wall reminding everybody about the 1927 Solar Eclipse. Finally, up again, remember it is Richmond, to the car park. The rain was now most annoying so Mocha café at Aske Hall was a must.



For our next walk on 18th March we hope to do a 7 mile walk from Hury reservoir to Goldsborough.

Please contact nickygrace729@gmail.com if you would like to come along

MAKING A WILDLIFE GARDEN - Jane Mardon's Winter report

My new wildlife garden is surviving winter so far. It looks rather sad and dormant at present, though I spotted some snowdrops coming up and I bought a Winter Jasmine that has been cheerfully flowering.

The trellis went up and I look forward to advice from friends on what plants will work best and grow quickly to cover the panels. My neighbours have liked the idea of trailing bee-friendly plants cascading over into their gardens. Hopefully I will get that sorted later in the spring.

The lawn is very soggy but the blackbirds, who are always in my garden come rain or shine, seem happy pecking at the soil and extracting worms throughout the day. I took part in the annual garden bird watch survey and was pleased to see that I also have green finches and robins quite regularly.

In the monthly 'Climate Solutions' group we talked about the problems of surface water flooding caused by hard-paving over gardens - unless you use permeable materials that allow the rainwater to drain through into the

ground. The front garden where I now live has mainly shrubs and hydrangeas but a large area has small stones laid on top of plastic sheeting. I shall investigate that in the spring when I get the hydrangea pruned and maybe think of a better way to keep the area weed-free.

There'll be plenty to do, it seems, when the garden wakes up from hibernation. I'm enjoying it though, if only from the window at present. Not sure that Monty Don would approve !

IS IT SPRING YET ?

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow” – Audrey Hepburn

“No winter lasts forever, no spring skips its turn” – Hal Borland

“The promise of spring’s arrival is enough to get anyone through the bitter winter” – Jan Selensky

“The arrival of spring can’t be done in one picture” – David Hockney

“Spring is when you feel like whistling, even with a shoe full of slush” – Doug Larson

“Spring has a way of bringing everything back to life, even a broken heart”
– Willie Nelson

COFFEE AND CHAT - Coming up:

**Thursday 12th March 2.30 - 3.30pm at Winters Cafe,
Middleton in Teesdale**

**Thursday 9th April 2.30 - 3.30pm at Cotherstone Community
Cafe**

Message from one of our members - please spread the word:

There is a wonderful local charity, Durham County Carers Support (DCCS), who work to help unpaid Carers. People often don't recognise themselves as Carers, particularly when looking after a family member. This means they may miss out on valuable support from organisations such as DCCS.

DCCS has an excellent website, including a Virtual Information Hub and also provides more personalised help if people wish to register with them. Some of the many services on offer range from local support groups, benefits advice, carers' breaks, counselling, a sympathetic listening ear, and signposting to other organisations.

For more information see the DCCS website: <https://dccarers.org>

Front Cover image: Welcome signs of Spring, photo by Kate Bailey

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 Room to Read	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
Crochet Group	Varies	Hazel McCallum 01833 316484
Cryptic Crossword	2 nd Wed pm	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	Phil Johnson 07792 959320
Geology	4 th Mon am	Bob Tuddenham 07812 378004
Historic Environment	2 nd Thurs am	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
Philosophy	4 th Tues 10am	Ruth Sansom 01325 401850

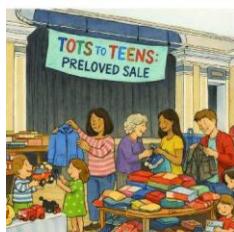
Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Photography	1 st Tues am	Alan Kenwright 07731 122399
Pickleball	Every Mon pm	Ruth Lapworth 07787 978696
Poetry	2 nd Wed am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Science and Technology	2 nd Mon am	Roy Tranter 01833 638288
Scrabble	2 nd Mon pm	Judith Fanner 01833 650150
Spanish Conversation	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	Ian Royston 07818 046938
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	3 rd or 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 : 2026

12 FEB - 11 MAR

Barnard Castle's Community Arts Centre

www.thewitham.org.uk



Jessie Reid

Thurs 12 Feb | **Indie** | 7.30pm | £18

Paul Sinha: 2 Sinha Lifetime (16+)

Fri 13 Feb | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £17-£20



Teesdale Operatic Society:

The Circle of Life Cabaret

Sat 14 Feb | **Musical Theatre** | 7.30pm | £12

Spiers & Boden

Wed 18 Feb | **Folk Music** | 7.30pm | £25

Phil Ellis: Bath Mat (14+)

Fri 20 Feb | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £17.50



From Tots to Teens:

Pre-Loved Clothes and Toys Sale

Sat 21 Feb | **Market** | 10am-2pm | **FREE ENTRY**

Jez Lowe & The Bad Pennies

Sat 21 Feb | **Folk Music** | 7.30pm | £18-£20

Angela Barnes: ANGST (14+)

Wed 25 Feb | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £17



National Theatre Live: The Audience (12A)

Thurs 26 Feb | **Screening** | 7pm | £12-£14

The West End Tenors

Fri 27 Feb | **Music** | 7.30pm | £24-£26

Ray Bradshaw: CODA (14+)

Sat 28 Feb | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £17-£20



Royal Ballet & Opera: Giselle

Tues 3 Mar | **Live Screening** | 7.15pm | £12-£14

Marcus Brigstocke: Vitruvian Mango (14+)

Wed 4 Mar | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £18



Rob Rouse: Funny Bones (16+)

Thurs 5 Mar | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £15



Fleeting Rumours

Sat 7 Mar | **Tribute** | 7.30pm | £24-£26

Mark Simmons: Jest to Impress (14+)

Wed 11 Mar | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £20



Box Office: 01833 631107

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