

www.teesdaleu3a.org.uk

FORUM

April 2026

No. 26/04



u3a

CHAIR'S LETTER

Dear Friends

Out with March and in with April, four seasons in a day. That said it really feels like spring with daffodils on the road sides, and in our gardens, as well as early flowering tulips giving lots of colour, even on a dull weather day.

Now I have to confess I am writing this letter late, having excelled myself last month by sending in my letter a couple of days before the deadline. I knew it was too good to last, back to the normal me, last minute Julie. My excuses? I have been busy, preparing for the AGM and writing my annual chair's report, so much writing when really talking is my speciality, as most of you will know 😊.

So, what has been happening since my last letter? Well, we had the quiz night, a very popular event with many teams and a lot of brain power. There were prizes for both the winners and the losers, testing our knowledge and making the little grey cells work extra hard. Thank you, Ian for all your hard work in devising the quiz and Sue for organising and managing the event.

On 24th March Hazel held a Convenors' meeting to bring us up to date and answer all those queries we have. It was a great opportunity to share our knowledge, experiences and tips. Hazel had done a lot of work regarding insurance, Health & Safety, and managing the groups' monies. A very useful meeting.

So, what local events did I take advantage of this last month? I went to one of the Barnard Castle Library talks, this was given by a member of DCC's department who works with both local detectorists and archaeologists. The talk was called Portable Antiques, and focussed on the typical historical items detectorists discover, broaches, pins, flints and tools, as well as the way these finds can help identify historical sites for further archaeology investigation. Then Easter weekend I went with friends to the Vivienne Westwood exhibition at the Bowes, thoroughly enjoyable and well worth a visit. As usual I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the next monthly meeting and catching up with all that you have been doing.

Bye for now, Julie

It's Your Forum

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

This month's editor is Alyson Kuby: Edition No: 26/04

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 separately.

Please limit submissions to 1 page or 400 words, and 1 photo, and send them to the Forum Editor at: forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

DEADLINE for the next edition: 6pm Monday 18th May and next month's editor is Jane Kenwright.

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

Dr Beverley Still was the speaker at the March monthly meeting. Beverley has been leading archaeological excavations into prehistoric settlements and burial sites in the Teesdale area for several years and this talk covered life in the Bronze Age, roughly 3300 to 1200 BCE, when there was extensive use of bronze, the copper/tin alloy. Her team is composed of students of various nationalities who have been 'trained on the job', together with volunteers from Altogether Archaeology.

The excavations were in an area where the largest Bronze Age hoard in the north had been discovered in 1980, there being thousands of hoards discovered throughout Britain. A number of burnt mounds have been identified. These are usually kidney or oval shaped and their size can be roughly 10m x 2m x 1.5m high. They are made of piles of stones which would be heated and then dunked into water which might then be used, for example, for saunas, cooking, leather working or brewing beer. In addition, several new hoards were discovered which contained bronze arrowheads and spearheads, or fragments of, together with flints and cherts, cherts being similar to flints but softer. It is likely that the hoards were collected for possible reuse at some stage. The remains of hazel and alder were also found but no oak. Hazel and alder are much more pliable and durable than oak and alder is particularly useful in wet and marshy conditions.

The finds suggest that there was considerable trade and travelling taking place and there is evidence that these sites were in use for about 500 years, perhaps from time to time, as people moved around. On the Gilmonby site, among the discoveries were stake holes, a food hearth, a paved entrance and perhaps a stone building of some kind. There may also have been reuse of the site at a later period.

These excavations are continuing in July 2026, through funding from the Royal Archaeological Institute and the Society of Ancient Antiquities, but excavations beyond July will depend on the availability of funding. No remains of round houses have yet been found but the team are hopeful and still looking.

NEXT MEETING AT THE WITHAM

The next meeting is on Thursday 28th May, Speaker: **Mike Thornton and Ann Thornton nee Cornish**, Norman Cornish, The Test of Time.

Mike Thornton was a close friend of Norman Cornish and for over fifty years enjoyed many years of conversation with him, providing an unrivalled access to a slice of art history. We can look forward to an excellent story for both those who are familiar with his work and those who have followed his career from the early days.

FORTHCOMING EVENT



MICKLETON LIVE
Bringing Quality LIVE Music to
TEESDALE

Mickleton Village Hall - Music Venue - DL12 0JR

Saturday 2nd May

THE STUMBLE

Tickets £18.50

visit our website - mickletonlive.uk
Contact Keith 07498 378174

Full Bar & Pie + Pea supper available


mickletonlive.uk
Scan me

QUIZ NIGHT – Report by Sue Overton

It was a full house for our spring social event, a Quiz Night, on Saturday 21st March at Glaxo Social Club. The majority of the 14 teams comprised six members mainly from a specific interest group and unsurprisingly, all were extremely competitive.

Many thanks must go to our Quizmaster, Ian Royston, who had spent a lot of thought and time devising what proved to be a very challenging set of questions including a picture round, a music round and a connecting wall. The latter certainly defeated me!



The winners were the Walkers - 82 points.



Runners up - the Literati - 68points

The wooden spoon for lowest score went to the Wimmin' Swimmin' team (41 points).



Other scores:-

Bats to the Future 67

Freelancers 64

Arty Farty 62

Cruciverbalists 61

Petrolheads 61

Pickled Eggs 60

Chatterbox 54

Geogers 48,

Daffy Dills 47

Wildflowers 42

A few people would have preferred easier questions but the majority of the feedback has been positive and we hope to repeat the event sometime in the future.

DAY TRIPS – Report by Jane Mathieson

UPDATED TRIPS 2026

BACS payments after March 1st please

20-83-73. Account 03778576. Cheques payable to 'TEESDALE U3A'

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

Tulip Festival am, afternoon in Leyburn.

No Tea room. Costs, £26.00. Entry/Refreshments/Coach. **Payments March & April. Reference Constable**

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

Home of TV Sewing Bee. Galleries/Exhibition, Retail Outlets, Eateries, Tour about History of Mill & Textiles. 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 only & grounds. Visit the town with Farmers & Weekly Market, 'Barthers', England's largest second-hand book shop. If you want to just visit the town, cost will be £16.50

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, & a Plant Fair in the grounds. There is also an exhibition named 'Extinction', about Dinosaurs.

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

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Many thanks to all 366 members who have now renewed their membership.

Membership fees became due on 1st March and membership will lapse for those who have not renewed at the end of May 2026. Please pay by Bank Transfer (BACS) and the last opportunity to pay by Cash or Cheque will be next month at The Witham on 28 May.

GROUP REPORTS

ART APPRECIATION GROUP – Report by Tony Seward

To mark the current exhibition of his work at the National Gallery, our April session was devoted to Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-97).

Many will be familiar with his two most famous paintings, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* and *A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery*, but it was rewarding to have a closer look and explore them in all their complexity.

Wright's career followed a fairly typical trajectory for artists at the time, training in London, visiting Italy in the wake of the Grand Tourists, and making his living primarily by portraiture. He was proud to be a provincial artist, and based himself mainly in Derby, where there was a ready market amongst the rising entrepreneurs of the region, as well as the aristocracy and local gentry. He may have been a member of the Lunar Society, and certainly knew many of its members, who included Midland luminaries such as Josiah Wedgwood, Erasmus Darwin and Matthew Boulton. He was thus familiar with the exciting contemporary advances in science, technology and industry.

However, his response to these was strongly influenced by his artistic training. Following the revolution in treatment of *chiaroscuro* initiated by Caravaggio, many European painters came to focus on scenes lit by candlelight or moonlight, giving ample opportunity for dramatic contrasts of light and shade. Wright was the leading English artist of this so-called *tenebrist* school. In 'conversation pieces' like the *Air Pump* he combined candlelight with his proficiency in portraiture to brilliant effect.

There is drama and pathos in the scene, as well as a fascination with science and technology. Even at the time, the use of live animals in such experiments was regarded as inhumane, especially as they were not at the cutting edge of scientific research, but were often put on by travelling showmen for the entertainment of the public. The varying reactions of the characters in the painting reflect this ambiguity.



An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump, 1768 (*National Gallery, London*)

If you can't visit the exhibition, which closes on 10 May, it is well worth a detour to Derby next time you are on your way south. Derby Museum and Art Gallery has the most comprehensive collection of Wright's work in existence, including the *Orrery* and landscapes of the nearby Peak District.



An Earthstopper on the Banks of the Derwent, 1773 (*Derby Museum and Art Gallery*).

An earthstopper's job was to block up foxholes to prevent the foxes from going to earth during a hunt.

BIRDWATCHING – Report by Andrew Lapworth

March field trip: the River Tees in Barnard Castle

Twelve members of the group met at the Green Bridge in Thorngate on 16th March for a slow and leisurely morning walk along the Tees, from the bridge to the fields beyond “MacDonald’s farm” and back.

It was a little drizzly with a moderate but gusty wind. Most of us managed to have good views from the bridge of a pair of Goosanders preening on the riverside; noisy Oystercatchers flew over accompanied by Pied Wagtails, the usual Jackdaws and Black-headed Gulls. A Song Thrush sang from the Startforth Bank as we walked by the river on the Demesnes, and we quickly saw and heard Robin, Great, Blue and Coal Tits plus Chaffinches and Blackbirds.

As we approached the falls we recognised Curlew song before realising it was a close Common Starling doing a really good mimic! A Mistle Thrush sang into the wind from a distant treetop.

Along the river we looked in vain for Kingfishers, Dippers and Grey Wagtails: all birds we’d expect to see along here (Roger later did get a glimpse of a Grey Wagtail but we failed to relocate it). However, we enjoyed a good view of a **Cormorant** as it preened itself on a boulder in the river: superficially an all black bird, but on close views in our binoculars and good light we could appreciate its oily, scaly green colouration.

Our disappointment at not seeing the 3 riverine birds was more than made up by us all having close, eye-level and prolonged views of **Wrens**, Treecreepers, Nuthatches and Long-tailed Tits as they worked the bankside trees (I even managed to video the Wren for 1min 18 seconds). We noted that Treecreepers climb up the trunks before flying down to the next tree, in contrast to the Nuthatches which went headfirst down the trunks. Enroute we also heard one of the earliest Spring migrants: Chiffchaffs singing their name; eventually we all had good views of one, again, at eye-level. A total of 25 species were seen during our short visit.



**A Cormorant in breeding plumage:
Photos by Andrew Lapworth**



An obliging Wren

BOARD GAMES – Report by Jane Kenwright

Our April meeting featured two tables playing *Cascadia* and those at the third table played *Qwirkle*. All tables completed two games.

The abstract game of *Qwirkle* consists of placing wooden blocks, adding on to those already played, similar to Scrabble. The blocks feature six different shapes in six different colours. The blocks must all be played in a line and match, without duplicates, either the colour or shape of the previous block. Players score one point for each block played plus all blocks adjacent. It is possible for a block to score in more than one direction. If a player completes a line containing all six shapes or colours, they make a *Qwirkle* and an additional six points are scored. The player with the high score wins, which in both games was Sue. Her legendary scrabble skills may have helped!



Cascadia is also a tile-laying game where you take turns building your own terrain area and populating it with wildlife. Ideally you place habitat tiles to create matching terrain and create wildlife corridors, mostly because you score for the largest area of each type of habitat at game's end, with a bonus if your group is larger than each other player's. At the same time, you place wildlife tokens so that you can maximize the number of points scored by achieving the wildlife goals. On table one the first game was a tie between Terry and Jane, with the second won by Jane. On table two Claire won the first game and Chris and Kate tied in the second.

Our next meeting is **2pm on 11 May** at the Old Well Inn.

ROOM TO READ BOOK GROUP- Review by Kate Bailey

This month's book "*Show don't tell*" was a lively collection of short stories by a relatively unknown (in the UK) American author, Curtis Sittenfeld. Her earlier book "*American Wife*", based loosely on the life of Barbara Bush, was a best seller and these short stories similarly reflect Sittenfeld's apparent obsession with mid-life, college educated and privileged American women. For want of a copy of the book group choice, I read a different collection "*You think it, I'll say it*" but my enjoyment was much the same as the group's.

The stories are well written, fun to read, providing lightweight entertainment but with 'American' language that is often sufficiently irritating to make it exhausting to read from cover to cover. They are clever and revealing about the lives of these families, gossipy, even 'bitchy' in part, and 'laugh out loud' funny in places. Some characters seem to be stuck in the adolescent arrogance of their college days, bored now with married life and wishing for romance, intimacy or escape. Although divorce is feared as a 'communicable disease'. Other characters tend to be judgmental, envious and critical of their acquaintances. These are the 'smart, knowing' American women who mislead themselves, get themselves into situations that are 'cringe-worthy'.

Sittenfeld is not asking us to be sympathetic to her characters, she is clever at showing us the mismatched expectations of men and women, the frictions within 'small-town' social groups and the ways some women attempt to puncture the egos of their self-important male partners.

Despite the fact that some of the group were not familiar with the short story format, we agreed these collections provided an enjoyable read and led to an interesting discussion. Overall scores: 3.5 for a recommendation to a book group, 3 to a friend.

CHESS GROUP – Report by Diana Marks

We moved to the conservatory for our gathering this month. It's lovely having the sun shining down on us as we concentrate.

We were an uneven number so I was happy to sit and watch others battling it out. Then a stranger approached and asked if I wanted a game. He had been in the bar and seen what we were up to. Unfortunately, he beat me fairly solidly and quickly!! Anyway, I was happy to revert to my best skill of watching everyone else.

We meet again on **Thursday 7th May**. Hopefully the weather will be good enough for us to play outside.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GROUP – Report by Kate Bailey

We focused this month on the environmental impacts of data centers, the huge warehouses that house equipment for internet (cloud) storage and artificial intelligence (AI) queries. In August 2025, a BBC news report estimated that there were 477 data centers in the UK; planning research suggests almost 100 more will be built in the next 5 years. For example, in Blyth, Northumberland, a £10 billion campus of up to 10 data centers is planned to start construction in 2031. Although there are growing concerns about the energy and water demands of these buildings, data about their consumption is not readily available and, as 'Critical National Infrastructure', they are subject to few planning restrictions.

Energy use: A government briefing (Nov25) said data centers currently consume about 2.5% of the UK's electricity, a figure that is expected to increase four-fold by 2030.

In Dublin from 2021-2025 there was a moratorium on the building of new data centers because of the strain on the national grid operator. In 2025 they accounted for 20% of Ireland's energy demand. The largest (hyperscale) data centers typically require more than 100 megawatts of power [Ofgem estimates that one megawatt of energy would power 2000 UK homes for an hour] Consumers influence energy consumption - choosing an AI chatbot such as ChatGPT uses more energy than a regular internet search. A report by MIT estimates that creating a five-second video with new AI models uses the same amount of energy as running a microwave for more than an hour.

Despite regular parliamentary briefings (*TechUK/ Environment Agency*), there is no verified information available about the total number of digital queries directed to data centers each day. IBM estimates that in 2024 Google had 82% of the global search engine market and that in 2025 ChatGPT had nearly 900 million weekly active users (*sci-tech-today.com*). Until alternative power supplies are mandated for data centers, their huge demands on the UK electricity grid may lead to extended power cuts, hospital black-outs, communications, financial and transport networks, water supplies and food chains failing (and rising costs for domestic consumers).

Water use: Many data centers require vast quantities of water for cooling. A BBC news report (Feb25) explains that "*data centers use fresh mains water, rather than surface water, so that the pipes, pumps and heat exchangers used to cool racks of servers do not get clogged up with contaminants*". The report quoted a water resources management specialist, who said that a typical data center can use between 11 million and 19 million litres of water per day, roughly the same as a town of 30,000-50,000 people.

An Environment Agency report (June25) warned that England faces a 5 billion litres/day shortfall for public water supplies by 2055 – and a further 1 billion litres/day deficit for the wider economy (including energy generation, food production, and digital technologies) - (gov.uk/government/publications/national-framework-for-water-resources-2025). The long-term consequences of excessive water consumption by data centers include threats to safe drinking water supplies, the health of rivers and lakes, the survival of species dependent on watercourses and wetlands, and the loss of essential groundwater in agricultural soils.

No space for 'Good News' this month, but we plan to post our findings on the Teesdale u3a website - including a briefing on ways we can all reduce our use of data storage and AI queries.

CROCHET GROUP – Report by Hazel McCallum

Our crochet groups have been meeting regularly now, and we've been developing our skills with new stitches and discussions on yarn types and how to adapt crochet patterns. A recent popular stitch was the popcorn stitch, incorporated into a flower motif. We crocheted this in a variety of thicknesses of yarn, with pleasing results. We also started looking at things to make with a granny square.

Next time will be corner-to-corner crochet techniques, and shawlettes.



CRYPTIC CROSSWORD GROUP - Report by Sue Overton

This month (April) the eight attendees worked in one group on a Quiptic crossword from the Guardian and another crossword from the Irish Times. Some clues were quite challenging but we managed to finish both in the allotted two hours, fortified with the usual caffeine and biscuits.

Here are a couple of clues for you to try:-

Conflict with detective on plan for future (8)

Comic actor James turned away before fondness led to disillusion (12)

How did you get on with last month's clues? Here are the answers:-

Clue: Greek island company gets fur distributed (5)

Definition is 'Greek island', solution is an anagram of 'co' (for company) and 'fur'

Answer: CORFU

Clue: Form of expression originally in Douglas, Isle of Man (5)

Definition is 'Form of expression', solution is first letter of each word after 'originally'

Answer: IDIOM

Our next meeting is **Wednesday 13th May at 2pm** in the Guide HQ and then we plan a summer break – restart on Wednesday 9th September.

If you would like to join us, contact me, [Sue Overton 07512 368884](tel:07512368884) or email sueoverton@hotmail.com

DISCUSSION GROUP – Report by Glen Howard

We met on a lovely spring-like day and were able to enjoy a very good discussion of news items, including: the doctor's strike; the possible closure of rural doctor's practices; the use of Palantir technology in the NHS; the closure of Barney's register office; shoplifters; the gulf states; *the War on the West* and chat GPT; and surge pricing.

New members are always welcome so do contact me if you are interested in joining us. We meet on the second Friday of each month. Our next meetings will be on **May 9th** and **June 12th**.

[Glen Howard 07975 705816](tel:07975705816) glenhow31@gmail.com

FAMILY HISTORY INTEREST GROUP – Report by Alan Swindale

Eight members of the group listened to a talk by guest speaker Catherine Ryan on “The Use of Property Deeds in Family History Research”.

Catherine has been conducting research for her PhD on 18th century property deeds relating to Richmond and a number of Teesdale parishes in Yorkshire, mainly in the North Yorkshire Archives at Northallerton. She explained how they were a rich source of names and relationships. Many deeds had been deposited by local solicitors to clear their own archives but Northallerton had previously been the North Yorkshire Register Office where individuals and solicitors had deposited copies of their deeds for safekeeping – a predecessor of the modern Land Registry Office used to record all current land transfers.

The title deeds recording a sale of land and associated buildings included the previous history of the ownership of that parcel of land/property. Such land may have been passed down by means of a sale or by a will. A will or wills could split a property or combine properties from a previous generation. Catherine gave an example of a family of tanners with separate businesses in Barnard Castle where she had been able to reconstruct three generations of the family. There was often information on female family members which could not easily be discovered elsewhere.

The money from local farms and businesses was often used to set up younger sons in business in towns and cities elsewhere in the country and the title deeds may provide the clues to missing members of the family.

Catherine’s talk gave a fascinating introduction to what can be found in title deeds and gave me, at least, thought for a further field of family history research.

Next month’s talk will be “How do I know I’m right?” – an introduction to the Genealogical Proof System. It will be followed by a ‘Help your Neighbour’ practical session.

GARDENING GROUP – Report by Kate Keen

In April we held our second talk of the year at Stainton Village Hall. The guest speaker was Steve Bradley who came along to talk to us about bulbs. Steve and his wife are experienced horticulturists who also offer free advice on their website garden help.

Bulbs can be planted into lawns, to make them look natural throw a handful of bulbs and plant them where they land. Take care if using a bulb planting tool as these are awkward and cause injuries which could even require surgery. Instead, a weeding tool can be twisted to produce the correct size of hole for planting.

Bulbs can also be planted into containers and Steve explained how best to plant these in layers for a succession of blooms. He explained that we could use a similar layering technique in a border to extend the timings of bulbs in flower.

Steve explained that he likes to think of bulbs as herbaceous perennials which can flower year after year, he did not approve of some of the garden programmes on TV advocating that bulbs be discarded after only 1 season. He advised us to feed bulbs when they have finished flowering to encourage healthy bulbs for the following year.

Steve was an entertaining speaker and had us laughing out loud at his witty take on situations.

On **Friday 1st May** we are having a trip out to Howick Hall Gardens in Northumberland.

On **Friday 5th June** the trip is to Littlethorpe Manor and Ripley Castle.

GEOGRAPHY GROUP – Report by Ian Royston

SNOWBALL EARTH: LES KNIGHT

Dr Les Knight, a geologist whose career has spanned work in the coal industry, exploration for gas in coal measures and mudstones, and research with Nirex on long-term nuclear waste disposal, delivered a talk on the concept of "Snowball Earth" and the deep history of climate change.

He opened by situating his subject within geological time — a scale so vast it dwarfs the span of recorded human history. We currently live, he noted, in an unusually cold period relative to most of Earth's past: permanent polar ice caps are the exception rather than the norm over geological timescales, and our current cold phase has persisted for roughly 2.6 million years. Our everyday understanding of climate change is constrained by recorded temperature data, the oldest reliable series of which — the Central England Temperature record — dates only to 1659. That record reveals temperatures averaging around 9°C before 1900, with slow warming to mid-century and then more rapid increase, driven by industrialisation and transport.

Dr Knight challenged the premise underlying the widely cited 1.5°C warming target, pointing out that "pre-industrial" baselines are typically set during the Little Ice Age (roughly 1400–1890), a period of exceptional cold. Average temperatures were likely higher — by perhaps a degree — during classical antiquity, suggesting the choice of baseline is not neutral. Climate proxies such as tree rings, oxygen isotope ratios, and Antarctic ice cores (which extend back up to 800,000 years) allow scientists to reconstruct temperatures well beyond instrumental records.

Ice ages — in the conventional sense — have repeatedly covered the UK, at times reaching as far south as the Thames Valley, driven by Milankovitch Cycles: the interplay of Earth's orbital eccentricity, axial tilt, and precession relative to the Sun. Ice ages are typically followed by rapid warming periods, and we are currently in such an interglacial, which began approximately 11,000–20,000 years ago. On the very long term (hundreds of millions of years) it is probably the movement of continents over the poles which is the most significant factor in triggering ice ages

The talk also surveyed the history of glacial theory, noting that geological evidence for past ice ages conflicted with religious chronologies well into the nineteenth century. Louis Agassiz, who formally presented his glaciation theory in 1837 and published it in 1840, was the pivotal figure in establishing the science. Evidence such as erratic boulders — notably Shap granite boulder found in Deepdale near Barnard Castle, transported from Cumbria — and polar wandering in magnetic particles provided compelling proof of continental drift and past glaciation at latitudes now in the tropics.

The talk concluded with the pre-Cambrian "Snowball Earth" events: the Sturtian and Marinoan glaciations (roughly 720–635 million years ago), evidenced in Scotland's Dalradian belt. A completely ice-covered Earth was likely not the full picture; a "slushball" model — with liquid water and rocky margins persisting — better explains how life survived. Stromatolites provide evidence of life enduring even through these most extreme climatic episodes.

GEOLOGY GROUP – Report by Bob Tuddenham

This was an interesting and varied meeting which ranged from the dip and strike on geological maps to holiday geology in Shropshire.

In the first half Wilf Wrigley gave an excellent tutorial style presentation on the interpretation and importance of dip and strike in geological maps. These key measurements apply to the bedrock underneath any superficial deposits such as clay, river deposits, peat etc. Wilf went through numerous examples and exercises and there were plenty of questions. Interpreting contours and the dip and strike of the strata was a most useful exercise together with the relationship of the map to the geological cross section. I'm sure all at the meeting will now view an OS or Geological map with more scrutiny and understanding.

After the coffee break, Bob Tuddenham gave the second part of his talk on the Geology of South Shropshire. The geology of this small area ranges from the very old pre-Cambrian at Caer Caradoc and the Long Mynd to the younger Permian at Bridgnorth and relatively recent Devensian glacial meltwater which formed the gorge at Ironbridge. The talk took us from the Welsh borders in the west to the River Severn in the east. There is even an area of 19th Century lead and barytes mining which has a similar history to the mining in the North Pennines. Further east, the carboniferous iron, limestone and coal near Ironbridge played a key role in the industrial revolution in the UK. Surprisingly, there is also a dolerite intrusion on the top of the Clee Hills near Ludlow which has many similarities to the Whin Sill in age and composition.

The next meeting is at The Witham on Monday morning **April 27th at 10 am**. All are welcome. Please contact the convenor for details.

iPAD and iPHONE GROUP – Report by Mike Sweeting

As some instances of malicious activity, particularly affecting emails, have been seen recently, we looked at how we might spot the signs and act appropriately. The particular focus was on what to do if your email address has been hacked. We also looked at identity theft and some of the symptoms that might indicate you have been affected, what the potential impacts might be and what to do to attempt to put matters right.

The next topic was about the App Store. It is surprising how much information is available to help you decide which app may be useful and which is best avoided. This is also the place where subscriptions and purchases can be managed and where Apple vouchers can be bought and redeemed. There is far more there than initially meets the eye.

The next meeting will be on **28 April 2026 at 1:30 PM** as usual in Enterprise House on the Harmire Estate.

LUNCH CLUB – Report by Elizabeth Carrick

On Wednesday 18th March, we had our lunch meeting at the Cross Keys Hamsterley. It was a lovely journey as the views were spectacular on what was so far the sunniest day of the year.

The pub itself has a friendly relaxed atmosphere. The dining room although not large was able to seat the 12 of us without our being too crowded. It took a little time for the food to arrive but it was worth the wait as when it arrived it was delicious. The fish pie was very popular with four people choosing it and all agreeing it was lovely. The cod and chips had the most amazing large fish with splendid crispy batter and some beautifully cooked chips. The steak pie was fantastic and everyone enjoyed their meal. The portions were large and most could not manage a desert but those who did found the strawberry and clotted cream cheesecake and the bread and butter pudding delicious.

It was the first time we had met at this pub, but everyone seemed so happy with the venue that we will certainly meet there again.

NEEDLECRAFT – Report by Glen Howard

Our meeting this month coincided with Easter Monday, but in retirement it is often preferable to stay at home and avoid struggling with bank holiday traffic. We certainly had a very enjoyable afternoon progressing our projects and chatting. I learnt a new word, Chinglish, used to describe Chinese English which is often used in patterns.

Our next meeting will be on **Monday 4th May**, which is another bank holiday. New members are always welcome so do give me a call if you would like to join us. [Glen Howard 07975 705816](tel:07975705816)

PHILOSOPHY GROUP – Report by Pete Redgrave

Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was announced by the United Nations General assembly 10-12-1948. After the horrors of two World Wars the aim was to promote justice and to prevent future conflicts.

The mission was to reaffirm Universal Rights; assert the dignity and worth of individual humans; and to assert equal rights for men and women. Although aspirational it has since acted as a global reference used by governments, organisations, and courts. The Universal Declaration asserts core rights of individuals – people are born free and equal in dignity and rights to which they are entitled without discrimination (race, sex, religion and language); they have a right to life, liberty and personal security. Moreover, individuals have rights and duties before the law with courts established to review violations. There should be fair trials open to scrutiny and an initial presumption of innocence. Individuals should have freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and should be able to express their opinions freely.

The Human Rights declaration was heavily influenced by centuries of evolving ethical and moral philosophies. The analogy would be – If ethics provide the philosophical architecture, human rights are the specific building codes and legal guarantees.

However, philosophical and practical dilemmas can arise when ethical principles and particular rights come into conflict – lying to the authorities/protecting life; individual rights/the common good; honesty/loyalty; autonomy/paternalism.

In such cases Human Rights Courts adjudicate using principles of proportionality and necessity.

So, if ideas of ethics and morality are the foundation of Human Rights, what forged the foundation? The evolution of humans solved the Darwinian problem of survival and reproduction by becoming an ultra-social species. For most of the 200,000 years *homo sapiens* has been around, survival involved cooperation between individuals within small groups (~50-150 people). The down side of cooperation is that it creates opportunities for exploitation (free-riders/cheats). Morality can be viewed as psychological adaptations that developed in human societies to balance social vs selfish interests. Within this framework Martin Luther King claimed that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”



However, viewing the world today it seems that “rules-based order is fading...with a shift from the cooperative to individualist transactionism at personal, national and international levels.” (Mark Carney – Davos 2026). Wither the arc now?

As one might imagine, these ideas lead to spirited discussion.

The Philosophy group meets on the 4th Tuesday of the month, and all are welcome. Future dates are **28th April** and **26th May**.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP – Report by Alan Kenwright

Photographs by Anne Newton, Val Reynolds, Pete Redgrave and Alan Kenwright. Our next outing will be to Beamish Museum, on **Tuesday, 5th of May**.

In April the photography group visited Woodhorn Museum, a former coal mine near Ashington, now converted to use as a museum and gallery space. Nine members of the group made the trip north of Newcastle and we were once again blessed with cloudless blue skies and brilliant sunshine.

The only slight disappointment was that the mine headstocks were undergoing major refurbishment and so were shrouded in scaffolding and plastic sheeting. (Poor planning on the part of the organiser – ie me!) Nevertheless, there were plenty of interesting subjects to photograph as well as a number of art exhibitions and museum displays explaining the history of mining in the area. At the peak of the industry, it employed more than ten thousand people in the Ashington area alone. While the loss of employment has clearly had major social consequences, the museum exhibitions made clear the harsh conditions that those employed in the industry endured. It certainly did not give the impression that those were “the good old days”. But, for those of us fortunate enough to be visiting the re-purposed site in our retirement, it provided a very pleasant day out in glorious spring weather.



POETRY GROUP – Report by Terry Whitfield

Six of us met to look at poetry by American writers. We started with a poem by Langston Hughes called 'Daybreak in Alabama'. This was published in 1940 and envisages the poet composing music which will bring together people of all races in harmony:

'In that dawn of music when I
Get to be a colored composer
And write about
Daybreak in Alabama.'

In 'Hay for the Horses' Gary Snyder describes an older man who has worked delivering hay all his life:

'I first bucked hay when I was seventeen.
I thought, that day I started,
I sure would hate to do this all my life.
And dammit, that's just what
I've gone and done.'

Elizabeth Bishop describes the coldness of water in 'At the Fishhouses':

'Cold dark deep and absolutely clear,
Element bearable to no mortal'.
Not surprisingly this was chosen by the wild swimmer in the group.
'Poem in Praise of my Husband' by Diane de Prima was something we could all recognise:

'I suppose it hasn't been easy living with me either
With my piques, my ups and downs, my need for privacy,
Leo pride and weeping in bed when you are trying to sleep
And you, interrupting me in the middle of a thousand poems'

Finally, we received sound guidance from Wendell Berry in 'The Peace of Wild Things':

'I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief.'

It was good to remind ourselves of some of the positive things which have come out of the US.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY – Report by Steve Rolt

The James Webb Space Telescope

The James Webb Space Telescope was launched on Christmas Day 2021. Designed as a successor to the Hubble Space Telescope, its massive 6.5m mirror gives it unparalleled capabilities in penetrating the deepest regions of space. A previous talk highlighted the contribution of the University of Durham to this extraordinary multi-national project. This talk provided an update, reviewing the progress since the launch and commissioning of the instrument.

The instrument's main focus has been to resolve questions around the evolution of the early universe. We can still view the early universe through observations of very distant galaxies. By virtue of their great distance, light from these objects takes thousands of millions of years to reach us. Hence, with these observations, we are viewing the universe in its infancy. Of course, these objects, whilst they are naturally very faint, they are also highly redshifted. This (Doppler) redshift arises from the fact that these galaxies are receding very rapidly from us – close to the speed of light.

To address these challenges, the James Webb Space Telescope has a large 6.6 m mirror – larger than the famous Palomar Telescope, formerly the largest telescope in the world. Most importantly, because the observed light is highly redshifted, the telescope must work in the infrared, not the visible. All instruments on JWST, cameras, spectrometers and imaging spectrometers, must therefore work in the infra-red. Imaging spectrometers, such as the NIRSPEC IFU, enable a spectrum to be acquired and spatially mapped across an extended object, such as a galaxy.

Durham University played a key role in the production and testing of this instrument. Recent JWST observations of distant galaxies have revealed them to be even more massive and bright than current cosmological models might suggest. It has thrown into some doubt the role of dark matter in the Universe. A lively cosmological debate has ensued with the promotion of alternative cosmological models. However, the debate continues and no consensus has yet been reached.



Closer to home, JWST has produced the first direct images of exoplanets. Some 6,000 exoplanets (planets outside our solar system), have been discovered, mostly through indirect observations by terrestrial instruments. Within our own solar system, JWST spectrometers have revealed interesting details of the atmospheric chemistry of the Gas Giants and their moons. With the NIRSPEC IFU, this chemistry has been

spatially mapped. Most importantly of all, JWST has produced a plethora of stunning images, highlighting the wonderful beauty of our heavens.

JWST – Deepfield View of Distant Galaxies (Courtesy National Aeronautical and Space Administration)

TABLE TENNIS GROUP – Report by Peter Singer

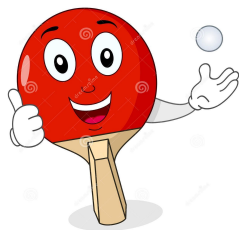


Table Tennis is in the news again, having recently had a mini-moment with the film *Marty Supreme*. This time the game made the national news on World Parkinson's Day on 11 April, with an item extolling the power of ping pong in moderating the symptoms of that most cruel neurological condition, which robs many sufferers of their balance, flexibility and ability to walk. Apparently, table tennis's combination of movement and strategic thinking has beneficial effects on both mobility and mental wellbeing.

How much strategic thinking is actually deployed in our group is debatable, given that much of our brain-power is concentrated on trying just to hit the damn ball and land it on the right side of the table, but the claims certainly ring true. We all undoubtedly feel better at 4pm on a Friday afternoon, after a bit of exercise and usually more than a few laughs.

To quote Liz in the Parkinson's UK magazine:

"I'm convinced that playing table tennis regularly for the last 16 years has meant I'm better able to manage my Parkinson's. When I'm playing, I forget everything in the heat and pace of the game. The clumsiness in the other areas of my life has not yet reached the table tennis court. It's a fast game and there's little time to think – you can only react as the small ball flies at you in a blur. Decisions have to be made in a split second. It's fantastic for hand-eye coordination and the movements from side to side, backwards, and forwards, are good for balance. I'm sure it's also good for the brain. You have to form the correct basic strokes and continually repeat those actions until they become part of your muscle memory. There's an emphasis on decision-making and strategy too, to outwit the opponent – rather like a physical form of chess. This may all sound a bit serious. It's actually great fun. I have forged many good friendships across the table."

People of all ages, shapes, sizes and abilities play regularly. It's a passion to constantly drive to improve and play the perfect game."

It couldn't have been said more eloquently and don't you just love Liz's passion for the game? Let's go play!! 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 \(pandjsinger@btinternet.com 07508 663998\)](mailto:pandjsinger@btinternet.com). 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 March we concluded the BBC 'drama documentary' on the "Rise of a Genius – Mozart"

1787: Mozart experienced estrangement from his father and mourned the loss of his pet starling.

During this period, amidst ongoing conflict between his homeland and the Ottoman Empire, he composed 'Don Giovanni,' considered his bleakest work to date and reflective of his personal struggles. However, the opera did not provide the intended distraction from the war, and Mozart chose not to cater to popular tastes. Consequently, his financial situation deteriorated as concert opportunities diminished, although he continued to indulge in an extravagant lifestyle.

1789: With the onset of the French Revolution and the absence of Constanze from his home, Mozart reached a low point both personally and professionally. Seeking renewed success, he revised 'Cosi-fan-Tutte,' a narrative about infidelity that metaphorically paralleled the challenges in his marriage. The opera's remarkable and widely appreciated arias helped stabilize his declining fortunes.

Following Joseph II's support or tolerance of Mozart, Leopold II's ascent to Holy Roman Emperor marked a shift; Mozart was not invited to the coronation.

In response, he pawned family valuables to stage a rival performance, presenting the distinguished 40th Symphony.

1791: Mozart accepted a position as kapellmeister in Vienna, reuniting with his wife and son and composing the renowned 'Ave Verum Corpus.' Although initially settled, domestic harmony was short-lived. He joined a Bohemian commune and shifted focus from Italian Opera to works in the German language, culminating in *Die Zauberflöte*. This opera encapsulated Mozart's philosophies, life experiences, and fascination with Masonic symbolism.

The *Magic Flute* achieved significant success, motivating Mozart to undertake additional commissions. The increasing workload led to exhaustion and illness. Tragically, Mozart received a mysterious request for a requiem, which ultimately served as the mass for his own funeral. He passed away at the age of 35.

Part two took a bizarre turn where we looked at Josep Castanyer Alonso's reinterpretation of "I'm a Barbie Girl" in the style of six different composers, amusing but a little shallow.

Thus, the second video where Matthew Cawood reacts to the first video in a highly instructive analysis of each composers' style and a much deeper understanding of what makes them characteristic through looking at some classical musical tropes of piano music.

The next meeting is at **10:00 on Friday 24th April** and the following on **Friday 22nd May**, both at Startforth Community Centre.

WILDFLOWER GROUP - Report by Anne Thomson

Our first wild flower identification stroll of 2026 took place on Wednesday, 8th April in Bowes Village. The weather could not have been better - very warm and sunny.

Sixteen of us met in the Village Hall car park and proceeded down the lane to Gilmonby Bridge identifying Dandelion, Lesser Celandine, Daisy, Hairy Bittercress and Red Dead Nettle on the way.

At the entrance to the wood a keen-eyed member spotted Butterbur of which there were quite a few in the woods. The Garlic was in flower with more to come, along with Dog's Mercury which is one of the signs of an ancient woodland. Whilst in the wood there were several Orange-tip butterflies fluttering around and we heard a Woodpecker.

At the end of the wood, we stopped to investigate St Farmin's Well, a Holy Well or Sacred Spring but there wasn't much to see.

As we entered the field there was a very small Field Woodrush hardly visible nestling in the grass.



The slope was covered in bright yellow Lesser Celandine - this plant is prolific at the moment. We traversed across the field to the ruins of the former Bowes Mill which was, at one time, the water supply to the Village, where photographs of the waterfalls were taken. In this area we found Barren Strawberry, Golden Saxifrage (opposite-leaved) and Wood Anemone.

We re-crossed the field nearer the River Greta and spotted what we believe to be Great Woodrush but due to its inaccessibility we could not obtain an accurate identification.

Our next wild flower identification will be to see the spring Gentians at Cow Green Reservoir on **Wednesday 13th May**.

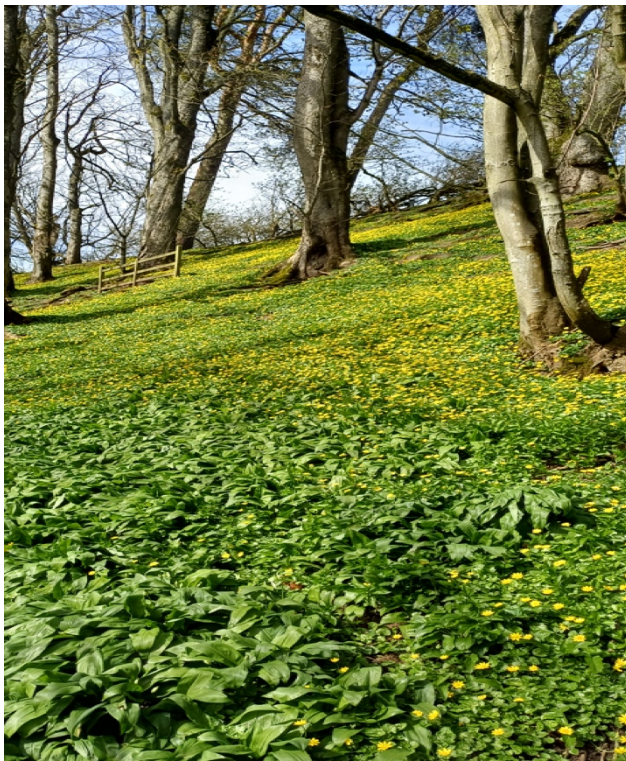


Image by Nicky Grace

WIMMIN' SWIMMIN' GROUP - Report by Annie Clouston

Wimmin swimmers have now settled into a pattern of peaceful relaxed pleasure in the water. The health benefits for women are a bonus, these include:

- Regular swimming increases joint flexibility and tones muscles.
- Women-only swimming sessions offer safe environments for our members to feel comfortable and connected.
- The combination of cardio-exercise and resistance strengthens the heart and muscles simultaneously.

Ideally regular sessions enhance these benefits, so one of our aims in setting up the group was to increase our participants confidence in the water to be able to use the mainstream facilities at Teesdale Leisure Centre. The centre offers frequent Aqua aerobic sessions (mostly attended by women) and during the week there are more quiet times that would suit timid swimmers. Avoiding the sometimes thrash, splash and crash lunchtime laned swims makes for a more leisurely experience and often timing your swim straight after the schools' early afternoon usage, between 3pm and 4pm can afford a gentler, quiet environment.

We are moving into the season where open water swimming is possible, and some would say positively desirable. Ruth and I have booked to swim at the Ripon Triathlon Festival in July, where there are 1500m or 750m swims in the lake at the racecourse. If there is anyone out there – male or female - who would like to join us we would love to hear from you. Wetsuit or skin, the plunge awaits!



WALKING GROUPS



SHORTER WALKS - Report by Paula Taylor

A short walk around Grassholme Reservoir

On 23rd March seventeen of us set off across the dam towards the north shore of Grassholme Reservoir with a chilly breeze in our face.

Having completed the recce on a warm sunny spring day the previous week, we met one week later to do the walk and were back in our thermals, hats, and gloves. A stark reminder to never cast a clout til May is out!

The route follows a well-maintained circular path that gently winds around the reservoir's edge, providing consistently impressive views of open water and surrounding moorland. The reservoir itself was calm, reflecting the expansive sky and reminding us to pause and take in the scenery.



Along the route the company and conversation helped us to forget the chilly weather, and we soon reach the bridge at the West end of the water where we pause to discuss current water provision topical issues.

We are soon on our way again, returning along the South side of the reservoir where the terrain is relatively flat and there's a more tranquil atmosphere with less wind and less effort and a sense of calm envelops us. Before we know it, we are back at the car park and happy to be on our way home again after a very manageable rewarding short walk.

Images by Ian Royston

7-9 MILE WALKING GROUP – Report by Lynda Bares

Wednesday 18th March 2026, Goldsborough

We met in the car park on the south side of Hury Reservoir in West Briscoe on a beautiful day with clear skies and the birds singing, I even saw some oystercatchers on the turret in the middle of the dam while walking over from the other side (and some of us saw two redshanks on the way back at the end of the day!).

Initially taking the path along the south side of Hury, then we crossed over to the north side of Blackton and along to Birk Hat, where we stopped for coffee.

Then over Blackton bridge and following the Pennine Journey over several fields to East Friar Farm where we joined the road briefly before taking the footpath up to Goldsborough. The day was so clear and still that we stopped there to have an early lunch, enjoying the views.

From there we descended through the boulders initially continuing on the Pennine Journey then the footpath towards Loups's Hill, hearing gunfire in the background but skirting the firing range. We dropped slowly down taking the footpath to East Stoney Lodges and down past the old meeting house, crossing a beck then uphill along the road to Keepers Cottage then down the track, across the fields, past the farm, to return to West Briscoe.



FELL WALKING GROUP – Report by J.C.Johnstone

February 2026 Fell Walking Report

The fell walkers gathered at the Dales Bike Centre and the first order of the day was to decide on the route for their walk! When the walk leader had reccied the route it was very boggy/slippy with a particular challenging descent owing to the recent weather. The walk leader therefore presented an alternative walk which was shorter and lower. After a short discussion, and the promise of glorious views, the group unanimously decided to accept the challenge and proceeded through Fremington and started the ascent to Fremington Edge.

The sun was shining as we started the climb and there was much discussion regarding the number of layers – probably too many!

On reaching the top the group proceeded in a northwest direction along the Edge before descending at Fell End Mine and tracking track Sleil Gill. This was where we were to encounter the ‘tricky’ descent. However, we were too busy admiring the view and chatting to notice. Thankfully the ground had dried and our descent was uneventful. We crossed the Gill and commenced the ascent towards, not for, Booze, a tiny village that isn’t on most maps. From Booze we descended, again, via Langthwaite Scar reaching Langthwaite Village. This was our lunch stop.

Langthwaite is a delightful village with the River Swale running through it. The village pub, the Red Lion, has featured in 'All Creatures Great & Small' and in July 2019 a flash flood left 5ft of water, and a tree trunk, in the pub. However, 4 months later the pub reopened in time for Christmas.

After a refreshing lunch we passed through the village and had a leisurely return to the starting point. We followed Arkle Beck via Hegg Huse and Castle Farm to reach Reeth Road bridge and back to the car park for well-earned coffee and cake at the café at the Bike Centre.



FELL WALKING GROUP – Report by Peter Harding

March 2026 Fell Walking Report

The weather forecast was not great, Pete H stood by the Bowes Museum gate. Ready to lead the fell walking group, on a gentle local ten-mile loop.

The wind strong, gusty and cold,
wintery conditions had been foretold.
all wrapped up against the weather.

Leader Pete described the route plan,
then off they went - "to follow that man".
Slowly down to the Teesdale Way,
seeing dogs having fun at play.

A little doggy out of luck,
behind a fence it was stuck.
Rescued by us and soon set free,
back to its owner, running with glee.



Pass the Abbey and Lime Kiln we went,
'Meeting of the Waters' our drink stop was spent.
As we left the Teesdale Way behind,
the weather had stayed so far dry and kind.

Upon fallen trees we sat for lunch.
We had just begun to drink and munch,
when the branch some sat on gave a crack,
and one or two folks ended upon their back.

Thankfully nobody came to any harm,
onward we went passing Humbleton Farm.
Continuing, Broomielaw Railway Station we did reach,
where Pete gave a very interesting speech.

Through Stainton, everybody doing just fine,
onto the old Barny to Bishop railway line.
To get back to the place we started,
visit the cafe - a drink and cake, then we departed.

COFFEE AND CHAT

Coffee and Chat - Coming up – Thursdays 2.30 – 3.30

Thursday 14 May – The Witham Barnard Castle

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

Barney Cricket Ground 12.30 - 2pm

ASK AUNT NORAH

Dear Norah

My husband has recently taken to obsessive use of our newly acquired vacuum cleaner. He has even given it a name (Monty) and has taken to stroking and polishing it. He claims that, taking advice from his computer (!) he realises that our marriage is under threat because he does sweet FA around the house and he thinks I want to put him in a care home.

Thing is, although he was a useless article, his reinvented self is unbearable, and he was MY useless article. What can I do to wrench Monty from his life and have the useless Eric back that was as familiar to me as my favourite slippers.

Ursula

Dear Ursula

I am afraid Eric has been fatally unmanned and whatever advice he has had from AI has compounded this. Vacuum cleaner manufacturers these days have been aggressively marketing to the Erics of this world and it is clear to me that he needs therapy to reverse this perverse attachment.

I recommend the following course of action: firstly, consign Monty to a charity shop in a distant town to which it cannot be traced, secondly, threaten him with a care home if he whines about missing Monty, and finally, encourage Eric to get some cans of lager down his neck while watching Match of the Day.

In order to prevent your home becoming a midden, you, Ursula, will have to take charge of vacuuming. You cannot have a neo-feminist threatening your power base.

Yours in friendship

Norah

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

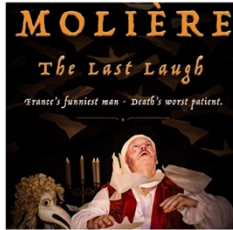
Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Photography	1 st Tues am	Alan Kenwright 07731 122399
Pickleball	Every Mon pm	Ruth Lapworth 07787 978696
Poetry	2 nd Wed am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Rummikub	3 rd Tues pm	Julie Archer 07774 903377
Science and Technology	2 nd Mon am	Ian Royston 07818 046938
Scrabble	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
Wine Group Too	Varies	Jane Mardon 07816 845557
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

18 APRIL - 15 MAY



Barnard Castle's Community Arts Centre www.thewitham.org.uk



The Choral (15) SHOWN WITH SUBTITLES
Sat 18 Apr | **Film** | 2pm | £6

John Otway & Wild Willy Barrett
Sat 18 Apr | **Rock Music** | 7.30pm | £20

Royal Ballet & Opera: The Magic Flute
Tues 21 Apr | **Live Screening** | 6.45pm | £12-£14

Oysterband's John Jones
With Ray Cooper and Al Scott
Wed 22 Apr | **Rock Music** | 8pm | £20-£22

Andy Zaltzman: The Zaltgeist **SOLD OUT** 
Fri 24 Apr | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | £20 | (14+)

Qigong Taster Day
Sat 25 Apr | **Workshop** | 1.30pm | **FREE** (BOOKABLE)

The Witham's 180th Anniversary Celebration Weekend
Sun 26 Apr | **Family** | 10am - 2pm | **FREE**

Barnard Castle Band
The Witham Anniversary Concert
Sun 26 Apr | **Brass Music** | 2pm | £6 - £9

Guy Davis
Tue 28 Apr | **Blues Music** | 7.30pm | £18-£20

Royal Ballet & Opera - The Metropolitan Opera: Eugene Onegin
Tue 5 May | **Live Screening** | 6pm | £12-£14

Boo Hewardine & Yvonne Lyon:
Things Found in Books
Wed 6 May | **Folk Music** | 7.30pm | £17

The Americana Revue
Fri 8 May | **Tribute** | 7.30pm | £28.50

Molière: The Last Laugh
Sat 9 May | **Theatre** | 7.30pm | £9-£11

Royal Northern Sinfonia:
Schubert's String Quintet
Sun 10 May | **Classical Music** | 2pm | £10-£22

Barbara Dickson **SOLD OUT**
Thurs 14 May | **Celebrity Music** | 7.30pm | £30

The Manfreds: Get Your Kicks On Tour
Fri 15 May | 7.30pm | **Rhythm & Blues** | £32.50

Box Office: 01833 631107

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

