

## **Teesdale u3a – February 2022 General Meeting**

### **Jane Ruffer – The Auckland Project**

Jane and Jonathan Ruffer launched a rescue bid to save the threatened Zurberán masterpieces, which had been purchased by Bishop Trevor in 1756. The final negotiations incorporated the buildings and grounds of the Bishop of Durham's Castle in Bishop Auckland. They then embarked on an ambitious restoration and development project, the Auckland Project, carried out in cooperation with local and national organisations and the local community as part of a long-term economic regeneration project in the post-industrial town.

Jane Ruffer spoke at the February meeting of Teesdale u3a and described what have been achieved so far and what plans there were for the future. Jane and Jonathan had supported many individual charities in the past, but the Auckland Project provided them with an opportunity to take more responsibility for and oversight of their investment.

Considerable work has already been done to restore the Castle to its former glory including the beautiful throne room housing the Zurberán paintings. In the old town centre a magnificent new gallery has been created for Spanish Art. A new Faith Centre has been built in the Castle grounds. A mining Art Gallery has been set up in the adjacent Town Hall and work has begun restoring the terraced and other garden areas, where possible keeping with earlier layouts. Binchester Roman Fort by the River Wear is also in the Project area and has only been partially excavated. The fort had been one of the largest military installations in Northern Britain and there is considerable scope for further excavations. The spectacular live outdoor show 'The Kynren' describing key parts of English history was now an annual fixture. It is hoped that these varied and substantial elements of the Project will make Bishop Auckland a national and international destination for tourists.

This was an excellent presentation of an ambitious project with a positive vision for the future. It was clear during questions that the audience were very supportive of the plans and wished the Project every success in the future.

The vote of thanks was given by Anne Lee. The next meeting will be held on Thursday 24th March when Maria Glot will be giving Part 2 of her entertaining talk on Saltaire, the Victorian model village and UNESCO World Heritage site in Shipley.

For more information on u3a visit the website [teesdaleu3a.org.uk](http://teesdaleu3a.org.uk).