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FORUM

u3a

August 2026

No. 26/08



Dear Friends

Here I am again, having survived what was for me a very hot week, I am a wimp and prefer temperatures in the low 20s. My sister who was visiting did appreciate our lower temperatures compared to the 30C+ temperatures they have been experiencing in the East Midlands.

As I look back at the month, I have lovely memories once again of U3A events, both general and specific group activities. The U3A trip to Pooley Bridge was thoroughly enjoyable even though it reached 28C. I was one of the group of people who opted to take the steamer to Glenridding, have lunch in the pub and sail serenely back again in time to visit the air-conditioned bookshop, bliss, before returning home. Thank you Sue for organising such a lovely day out.

Here is a photo I took of some of our members enjoying the steamer to Glenridding.



Looking forward to the August meeting with Keith Simpson talking about his thoughts and memories of the Castles of Durham, and catching up with friends and members.

Bye for now, Julie

Cover Photo: VV Kuby

It's Your Forum

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All editors receive all contributions and share the email account.

NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

We are very grateful for all your contributions. Wherever possible, we will try as editors to include your work, and also urge you to be succinct. The more succinct you are the more photos, illustrations and interesting articles and silliness we can include! Photos should be credited, of high resolution in jpg format and sent separately.

Please limit submissions to 350-400 words (in a Word document) and 1 photo and send to the Forum Editor at forumeditor@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

DEADLINE for the next edition: 6pm Monday 14th September and next month's editor is Annie.

If you want to receive a copy of the Forum but cannot make it to the monthly meeting, you can acquire one by:

- Viewing it online on Teesdale u3a website at: teesdale.u3asite.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.

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MONTHLY MEETING – Report by Ian Reid

One of our own members, Alan Kenwright, stood in at short notice at the July meeting and spoke on “What use is a Rainbow”, an intriguing title.

He began on familiar ground by describing what happens to white light when it passes through a triangle of glass and produces a spectrum of different colours (different wavelengths). He then introduced us to the term “spectroscopy” which is the study of how substances interact with light (more accurately called electromagnetic radiation). Spectroscopy allows the identification and study of substances quickly and accurately without at the same time destroying them and this has become extremely important analytical tool in modern scientific methods.

Our eyes can detect visible light which is only a small part of the electromagnetic spectrum. Many other animals can detect much more. Sophisticated machines have been developed to detect and analyse light or radiation and its interaction with other substances. An enormous number of uses have been found for electromagnetic radiation and Alan described some of these.

Infrared light is a type of electromagnetic radiation with wavelengths longer than visible red light. We can't see it but can often feel it as heat. Ultra violet light which causes sunburn is also electromagnetic radiation with wavelengths shorter than visible light. Shining infrared and ultraviolet light on certain substances can make them appear different colours which can be useful e.g., in detecting forged bank notes, checking driving licences, postage stamps and envelopes. X-rays have very short wavelengths and can pass through many materials making them useful in medical imaging and security screening. X-ray fluorescence can be used to identify elements present in materials without damaging them. Gamma rays have the shortest wavelength and can be used in radiotherapy, equipment sterilisation and food preservation. NMR and MRI scans, which many in the audience will be familiar with, use gamma rays to produce detailed images of internal organs and tissues.

This was a brilliant talk from Alan, who made a complex topic accessible to a mixed audience and showed that light (the rainbow) or electromagnetic radiation has lots of beneficial uses.

NEXT MEETINGS AT THE WITHAM

24th September – David Whinpenny – Edwin Lutyens – ‘A Singular and Delightful Man’

David Whinpenny worked for the Countryside Commission before setting up his own PR company. He has always been interested in gardens and in the quirkier side of architecture. His talk explores Edwin Lutyens' career.

In the first half of the 20th century, Lutyens was certainly Britain's most famous architect – and one of the most famous in the world. Meeting garden designer Gertrude Jekyll was a major turning point early in his career, and the partnership between the two produced vernacular-inspired houses fully integrated with majestic gardens.

Lutyens went on to embrace Classical and Renaissance architectural styles, designing both grand country houses and civic and commercial buildings. His largest project was the design of the city of New Delhi: his smallest was a royal dolls' house.

22nd October – Gordon Hetherington - Gertrude Bell, the Uncrowned Queen of Iraq

Gertrude was brought up in Redcar as a member of a wealthy family of iron and steel manufacturers. She had an unusual career, being educated at Oxford University at a time when there were few women undergraduates.

She became the foremost women mountaineer of her time and then started a series of epic adventures in the deserts of the Ottoman Empire. These led to her becoming the leading expert on the Middle East during WW1. She was attached to the British forces during the invasion of Mesopotamia and was heavily involved in the formation of the new state of Iraq. She died aged 58 in Bagdad.

26th November – Fools Gold – Acoustic Music

A SERIES OF TALKS AT ST MARY'S, BARNARD CASTLE

ST MARY'S PARISH CHURCH, BARNARD CASTLE

Westhill
make things happen



St. Mary's Barnard Castle with Whorlton
Celebrating God's Love



CROSSING BOUNDARIES

A series of free talks on the challenges of modernity, seen from a Christian perspective

9th September:

'Inside/outside the church: the Bible and the secular world'
Revd Prof Walter Moberly

16th September:

'Life/death: medical vs Christian viewpoints on dying'
Dr Annabelle Plyming

23rd September:

'Them/us: divided communities - political division'
Dr Sam Rushworth MP

30th September:

'War/peace: anxiety around our future'
Dr Brian Powers

7th October:

'Nature/culture: facing the climate crisis'
Prof Robert Song

14th October:

'Human/digital: the present and future of AI'
Revd Prof David Wilkinson

All talks will start at **7pm** at St Mary's parish church (Newgate, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NQ), accompanied by a glass of wine and followed by ample time for questions.

STMARYSBARNARDCASTLE.ORG.UK

THE 21ST RICHMOND WALKING AND BOOKS FESTIVAL:

September 18th - 25th 2026

An amazing, varied programme of 28 walks and 26 book events covering everything from environmental issues to being a prisoner of the Taliban in Afghanistan, from the heritage of the Stockton to Darlington railway to the journey of a lone wolf moving from Slovenia to Northern Italy.

There is a selection of graded walks to choose from each day, you can embark on an ambitious climb one day and enjoy an historical stroll the next. For example, you could:



- join a 'The Way of Life' Pilgrimage Walk from Gainford to Durham for the whole route or for one of the two days.

- explore a section of Arkengarthdale accompanied by one of the organisers of 'Sustainable Swaledale', visiting several of the sites where their volunteers have worked to increase biodiversity and to develop a natural method of flood management.
- There is also a tour of the 200 acre Heggs-Castle renaturing project, guided by the major landowner Liz Sutcliffe.
- climb up alongside Cautley Spout to The Calf and enjoy wonderful views across the Howgills to the Lakes. Continue on over Bram Rigg Top and Calders, before returning via the Rawthey Valley.

Some of the book related talks may link to the local area and some may take you off in into completely different subjects.

There are also often more participatory events such as a Book Binding Workshop and Sketchbook walks. Speakers for the 25 book events include Adam Weymouth (winner of the 2026 Sherborne Prize for Travel Writing for 'Lone Wolf '), Terry Deary (famous for Horrible Histories who has now written a murder mystery), the former President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom Baroness Hale and a collection of poetry and prose with TV presenter Kathy Klugston and poet Rob Stepney. To see the full programme or to book tickets visit:

<https://www.booksandboots.org/Programme/Whole-Programme>.

WORKSHOP REPORT by Peter Colley

Georgian Barnard Castle:

Next year marks the two hundredth anniversary of the first detailed map of Barnard Castle.

Our August workshop assembled to enjoy an informative and entertaining talk on Georgian Barnard Castle by Dr Richard Witham.

In 1827, the surveyor John Wood published the first detailed map of the town. Intriguingly he noted the owners or occupants of many of the buildings. The accuracy of his map is remarkable and barely differs from modern satellite imagery.

We learnt about the town's prosperity derived from the wool trade and associated industries, particularly carpet weaving. The population rose and fell with the fortunes of the trade. The current population of the town is little changed from the heights of two centuries ago although the number of houses has significantly increased. Back then, an average of seven people occupied each property.

Dr Witham had mined many sources of data. One striking fact was infant mortality that was a shocking 25% for 0–1-year-olds and 20% for those aged 1-18. Medicine was essentially primitive with the town's doctor merely holding a classics education.



Our members left the workshop feeling better educated about our town and may be found counting windowpanes to identify Georgian properties.

FUTURE DAY TRIPS – Report by Jane Mathieson

UPDATED TRIPS 2026

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

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 £24.80, HH members £14.00. **Reference Ushaw.**

Pick up at Spar shop Staindrop & Manor House Hotel West Auckland

These trips are for U3A members only. Sorry, but payments are non-refundable.

Jane Mathieson

GROUP REPORTS

ART APPRECIATION GROUP - Report by Tony Seward

Henri Matisse (1869-1954)

In his long career, Matisse early established himself as one of the leading figures in contemporary art. In friendly rivalry with Picasso, he constantly pushed the boundaries, experimenting boldly with colour, form and technique. We began our July session with one of Professor Kloss's masterly short introductions, explaining the significance of Matisse's early breakthrough with the painting *Le Bonheur de Vivre*, with its strange forms and Fauvist colours – a modernist vision of Arcadia.

[Le Bonheur de Vivre, 1905-6, The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia)



An engaging Irishman then took us through Matisse's life and work, from his childhood in industrial Northern France and training in Paris, to his formative collaboration with the Fauves (who included Braque and Derain), and development of the avant-garde

compositions which so appealed to the Russian collector Sergey Shchukin that he bought 38 of them. While these were available for the last great Matisse retrospective in 1996, they can unfortunately no longer be shown in the West as they remain in Russia.

La Danse II, 1910, (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg)



With the coming of World War One, some critics argue that Matisse reverted to a more comfortable, immediately appealing style, with his move to Nice and travels to Morocco and Algeria.

He was still experimenting, moving gradually towards abstraction, but the paintings of this period are of exotic colourful landscapes and people. The rich blues, later taken up by Yves St Laurent, are characteristic of this period.

Between the wars he continued to pare down his style, ever striving for greater purity, economy and balance, until a serious operation in 1941 forced him to invent an entirely new way of artmaking – the famous paper cut-outs. It was almost as if his illness had helped him to crown his life's work with these exercises in pure form, colour and movement. A well-known example is *The Snail* in Tate Modern.

From his early days growing up in a major textile-producing area, Matisse had always found inspiration in the colours and patterns of fabrics. We concluded with a blog showing how, as he travelled farther afield, he was able to incorporate fabric and embroidery designs from different cultures including Spain, Moorish North Africa, even Polynesia. These in turn were adopted by leading fashion houses, and continue to be influential to this day.

[Seville Still Life, 1910, (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg



Next month, Wed 2 September: The Bayeux Tapestry

AUTOMOTIVE GROUP - Report by Peter Colley

Over the summer our members dispersed to all points of the compass, often taking their cars and motorcycles along for the ride. Those of us with convertibles enjoyed the long dry days. Less appealing was the condition of our roads, and the sheer volume of traffic. Nonetheless, the roads less well travelled rarely fail to deliver.

We attend various races, meets and rallies, both as participants and spectators.

This year included the Beamish Reliability Run and the annual Cumbria Classic & Motorsport Show at Dalemain. Further afield I drove the magnificent Spa Francorchamps circuit in Belgium. Whilst my trusty MX5 was not quite in the same league as the Formula 1 cars racing there a few weeks previously, it did successfully complete the 1200-mile round trip. A thrilling racetrack, not for the faint hearted.

Our next run out is to **Buckden in the Yorkshire Dales, on 23rd September**. This is open to group members with or without a 'plus one' and **includes a leisurely pub lunch**.

The next group meeting is on 20th October, 10:30 until noon at our usual venue.

Do contact me for information about the group and our activities by email at Petergcolley@icloud.com

BOARD GAMES (July) - Report by Hazel McCallum

We met on a warm day in July for an afternoon of heated competition (well, not really heated!). There were two tables playing Carcassonne and one playing Rummikub Word.

Carcassonne is a tile-placement game where the players build a medieval French landscape with cities, roads and monasteries to score points. Each player also has a number of small wooden figures called "meeples" which they use to lay claim to roads, buildings and land.

On one table the two games that were completed were won by Kate and Hilary. On the second table, Andy won both games.

Rummikub Word is a variation of standard numerical Rummikub. Instead of laying numbered tiles, alphabet tiles are laid to form and manipulate words. The aim of the game is to be the first player to lay all your tiles and Liz won all three games!

BOARD GAMES (August) - Report by Peter Harding

On Monday 10th August at 2pm, at the Old Well Inn members of the Board game group met.

As usual a variety of games were on offer and people decided what they fancied playing and having enjoyable fun, .
Rummikub and Cascadia were chosen.
Liz and Pete had not long returned from travels in Ireland hence.....

There once was an old man they called Pete.
At Rummikub He decided to try and compete.
But one does have to confess.
His strategy was a complete mess.
When eventually He won, it was an amazing FEAT.,,,, BOOM .BOOM.



**Next
meeting
Monday
September
14th 2pm.**

ROOM TO READ BOOK GROUP- Review by Celia Chapple

***My Cousin Rachel* by Daphne du Maurier**

This novel is set in Cornwall and Italy in the 19th century and is a story of intrigue, suspense, naivety and romance, dishonesty, manipulation and punishment. Du Maurier, in the first chapter, skilfully unfolds the misery and mystery of our protagonist, Philip's, forthcoming future. Philip is brought up in an all-male household by a kind but misogynistic Ambrose, who believes 'women are a race apart.' Philip has little understanding of women. Ambrose, however, resides in Italy for the winter and sends letters to Philip about his marriage to Rachel. Ambrose's rhetoric, however, becomes increasingly distressed and Philip is suspicious of Ambrose's sudden demise, believing that Rachel poisoned Ambrose. He vows revenge on Rachel.

Whether Rachel did or didn't poison him becomes the crux of the story. Rachel comes to stay at Philip's house. A confused Philip becomes infatuated and in love with Rachel, whose behaviour is erratic and conflicting. The group agreed that the issue was not resolved even at the end, allowing each reader to create their own ending. All agreed, at least, that Rachel was an arch manipulator.

The characters are well drawn, and the suspense carries the reader along. The book generated discussions about female authors writing well about male characters; whether Philip's action at the end was intentional (you have to read the ending yourself!); women's lack of rights to have money in 19th century; 1950s and contemporary literature; and the little hints planted in the narrative that toyed with a reader's suspicions. We voted 4/5 for recommending this book to a friend, and 4.5/5 as a good group read.

Next meeting: Wednesday 19th August. Book: *The Glassmaker* by Tracy Chevallier.

BOOK GROUP 2 - Report by Ruth Stables

Our July meeting had 2 of our members relating personal recent events in their lives which were absolutely hilarious – and which were told with all the skill of born storytellers (in the best sense of those words!). Was truth going to be more rewarding than fiction?

We had been encouraged to sample a new author to all of us, the Irish writer, David Park – and none of us was disappointed. One person read “The Light of Amsterdam”, two read “Travelling in a Strange Land” and one read “A run in the Park”. Each of the books has a “stream of consciousness” approach and each of the books captivated its reader.

“The Light of Amsterdam” told the stories of 3 sets of people away for a weekend, but majored on the relationship between a father and his 16-17 year-old son. It was absorbing and sensitive and rated “extremely good”.

“Travelling in a Strange Land” had a local flavour, involving a photographer’s journey from Ireland to search for his son, thought to be at Sunderland University, a journey instantly recognizable to the reader. It was an introspective journey too – by a man tortured by the thoughts in his head telling him everything he had done was a failure, and describing his feelings of regret and guilt. It had an unexpected ending - read it!

“A run in the Park” told the story of 3 single people and one soon-to-be – married couple training for a couch-to-5K run as they wanted to be fitter for various reasons. Each story in its own right was very moving and sensitively drawn and interlinked and each person changed and grew as the training continued.

Joseph O'Connor, writing in “The Guardian”, described Park’s writing as “prose full of gravity and grace”. Each of us agreed the book we read was beautifully and poetically written, moving in what was not said almost as much as what was said, with superb finely drawn and acutely observed descriptions of people and their lives.

A must-read author!

Our next meeting is on Monday 28th September at 2.30p.m. for which we are all reading “Nobbut a lad” by Alan Titchmarsh . Do get in touch with Maggie, our Convenor, if you would like to join us – you will be very welcome!

DISCUSSION GROUP - Report by Glen Howard

Once again, we met on a very hot day but that didn't put us off from trying to put the world to rights. Our topics included petitions; the glorious 12th; criminal justice; social housing; and surge pricing. We then decided that next month we should try to talk about good news, so ended up talking about the solar eclipse and stargazing.

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 September 11th and October 9th.**

Glen Howard:07975 705816: glenhow31@gmail.com

GARDENING GROUP - Report by Kate Keen

In August the gardening group travelled to Sutton Park Hall and Gardens in North Yorkshire. This was another opportunity for the Historic Houses Members to gain free entry to a house and garden.



Sutton Park are clearly not used to visits from coaches as the entrance and exit to the site were a very tight squeeze, our coach driver showed his expert driving skills as always. We were lucky to have a very pleasant day weatherwise with dry conditions with sunny intervals and a pleasant temperature.

We were able to walk through the gardens and admire the herbaceous borders and the extensive range of sunflowers in the kitchen garden. The garden has a deep and well preserved ice house.

The house was built in 1730 by Thomas Atkinson for Philip Harland. It is now the home of Sir Reginald, the 8th Baronet of Sheffield. The house has a collection of 18th century treasures including pictures from Buckingham Palace and an extensive porcelain collection. We were able to book tours of the house with the guides explaining where many of the pieces had come from.

Miss Daisy's tea rooms had a wonderful selection of snacks, cakes and ice cream and we were able to sit inside or outside.

This was another enjoyable day out for the group. Julie, Fran and Kate.

On Friday 4th September we will visit Thorpe Perrow near Bedale in North Yorkshire.

iPAD and iPHONE GROUP - Report by Mike Sweeting

The initial topic for the day was using the app Apple Books. Some had not appreciated how versatile this app is. As well as reading books from the Apple Store, it can be used to store and read PDF's, audiobooks and EPUB files (these generally are books now out of copyright that can be download from sites such as Project Gutenberg).

We then moved on to the basics of using Apple Emojis - digital icons that can be added to emails, messages, notes, etc. These can be used to express emotions, objects, activities and ideas.

Lastly, the Live Text function was investigated. This function recognises text in images and once recognised behaves as if it is normal typed text. It works in Photos, Camera, Safari, etc.

We demonstrated how the function could be used to identify text in a photo of a plaque with an Italian inscription and then used the Translate function to translate it into English.

There will be no meeting in August, please note in your diaries that there will not be a meeting in either October, November or December. **The next meeting will be on 22 September as usual in Enterprise House starting at 1:30pm.**

NEEDLECRAFT - Report by Glen Howard

It was back to working on our projects this month. Most of us were knitting but we also had a crocheter with us. We all admired the blankets made by one of our members, using a new (to us) technique. Whilst working we talked about scarecrows, modern technology, holidays and Whorlton Bridge.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 7th September when we will be working on our personal projects. New members are always welcome so do give me a call if you would like to join us.

Glen Howard: 07975 705816

PHILOSOPHY GROUP - Report by Pat Rich

On 28th July ten members of the philosophy group met at Enterprise House to consider the work of Herbert Marcuse.

The session heard that Marcuse was a twentieth century philosopher who developed the work of Hegel, Marx, Freud and Nietzsche to reach his unified theory regarding domination, desire and identify the possibility of a non-repressive civilisation.

Marcuse's key ideas related to the impact of advanced technology on both capitalist and communist societies. He identifies the development of:

- One-dimensional thought
- False needs
- Surplus repression

Philosophy group members questioned these difficult concepts and were able to apply them to their day-to-day experiences. The group recognised the impact of social media "influencers" on people's beliefs and agreed we all rely on "specialists" to inform our beliefs and actions. Examples were shared of our own and our family members "false needs". There was also some discussion about level of repressed desire was essential for community living and what would be "surplus repression".

There was then discussion regarding the political implications of Marcuse's theory and his critique of Marxism before the group applied Marcuse's thoughts onto current developments in technology and the implications for the future.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Alan Kenwright

In August the photography group mounted an expedition to North Shields, to the Fish Quay and its environs. Despite the recent run of unbroken good weather, the morning of the trip found us in light rain in Barnard Castle, which turned into much heavier rain as we approached the Tyne. But we are not easily deterred and, comforting ourselves with the thought that we would not have to contend with harsh shadows, we pressed on.

By the time we had parked and all met up the rain had eased to "persistent precipitation" so we adjourned to a nearby café for refreshment and to admire the work of the local photography group which was on display there.



Photograph: Martyn Briggs

By the time we came out of the café, the rain had stopped and there were even intermittent hints of blue sky, so we split up and started to take pictures. There were a surprising number of interesting subjects within fairly easy walking distance, including an impressive sculpture by Ray Lonsdale ("Fiddler's Green"). There were also a significant number of volunteers on the beaches trying to help clear up the recent spill of (about a billion!) plastic "nurdles" in the Tyne, and they were happy to chat and share their views about the environment and the shortcomings of the Port of Tyne.



Photograph: Alan Kenwright



Photograph: Pete Redgrave.

After a couple of hours, we all met up again and went for a late lunch of excellent fish and chips before heading back just before the rain started again. Winner!

Our next outing will be a return visit to:

Beamish Museum on Tuesday, 1st of September.

POETRY GROUP - Report by Annie Clouston

POETRY GROUP

Our intrepid poetry lovers fought their way through the searing heat of a Barnard Castle morning to meet at Group HQ and discuss "Birds".

Maya Angelou

The song of the caged bird is deceptive.
It is not a sign of happiness but a cry for freedom:

*And his tune is heard
on the distant hill.
For the caged bird
sings of freedom.*

In The Yellowhammer's Nest **John Clare** sensitively describes the overwhelming detail of a rural scene and the destruction of a yellowhammer's nest by a snake:

*For snakes are known with chill and deadly coil
to watch such nests and seize the helpless young
....leaving a houseless home, a ruined nest.*

Mary Oliver Wild Geese

Urges us to be ourselves like the wild geese:

*You do not have to be good
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft
animal of your body
love what it loves”...*

Meg Peacocke

Warns against thinking of birds as metaphor, or subordinate:

*Kestrel, small, masterful falcon; I'd have you
Nothing beyond yourself. Let me not see you
as symbol, no minion your shoulder
on the tilting air, never the posture
of a servant before his lord.*

Brian Turner describes birds bathing:

*A conflagration of birds feasting, fighting and bathing
in their personal lake.*

Should it matter that an artist is not a nice person?

Does that invalidate their art? **Ted Hughes** survived two toxic relationships and wrote some poetry of unflinching honesty:

Thrushes

*Terrifying are the attent, sleek thrushes on the lawn
Triggered to stirrings beyond sense - with a start,
a bounce, a stab
Overtake the instant and drag out some writhing thing.*

Thomas Hardy The Darkling Thrush:

*In a full hearted evensong
of joy illimited
an aged thrush frail, gaunt and small,
in blast beruffled plume
had chosen thus to fling his soul upon the growing gloom.*

To end with a bit of Silliness:

Christopher Isherwood:

*The common cormorant or shag
lays eggs inside a paper bag.
The reason you will see no doubt
is to keep the lightning out.
But what these unobservant birds
have never noticed is that herds
of wandering bears may come with buns
and steal the bags to hold the crumbs.*

Next month our band of sans culottes will man the barricades on Galgate and plot The Overthrow Of The System...(theme - "Revolution")

RUMMIKUB GROUP - Report by Julie Archer

The Rummikub group were again hosted by our Members in their house near Barnard Castle. As the group grows in number, we may use a larger location in the town.

In July all the Members had played before so we could launch straight into the games. This time there were 9 of us and we tried playing a game with 5 players but one of our team then did not actually get the required 30 points to join the game. After this we played in three teams of three people which worked well. Some managed a total of 5 games, the rest of us played 4 games.

Halfway through we had a break for refreshments, it was another warm day so cool drinks were welcome. This was another enjoyable and relaxed afternoon.

We have plenty of Rummikub game sets so can take on new Members.

If anyone wishes to join us to try out Rummikub then please let Julie or Kate know.

SCRABBLE GROUP - Report by Ray Thompson

We met at Judith and Phil's house for this month's Scrabble meeting. There were 7 of us and we split into 2 groups of 3 and 4 for the first round. Monica, Kate and Ray played their first game, which Kate won with a score of 294 including a 7 letter word of TATTERS for 56 points. Regina, Paula, Phil and Judith played, which Paula won with a score of 239 including a 7 letter word WRITERS for 75 points

We stopped for half time for refreshments of tea, coffee, and homemade chocolate mint ganache with bourbon biscuit.

We started playing the second round with the two winners and highest runner ups, so Kate, Paula Regina and Ray played, and Kate also won this second game with a score of 257 including AGILEST for 82 points, Ray also scored 66 for VILIFIED. In Judith, Phil and Monica's game Monica won with a score of 121. Well done to Kate for 2 wins, and to everyone for an enjoyable afternoon. Thank you to Judith for hosting and her delicious cake.

The next meeting will be on 10th August, venue undecided yet, as people are away at present. **Please phone Judith on 07790 407152** if you are interested in joining the group.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GROUP - Report by Ray Lee

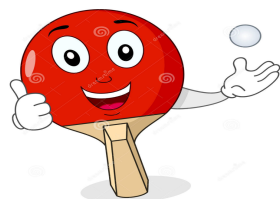
In July, the Science and Technology group assembled to hear a talk with the intriguing title, "The Nailfile, the Puddle and the Tardigrade" by Jenny Lee, and instead of just sitting back and listening, the group had to fill in their handout and answer questions. This, Jenny said, was with the aim of keeping them awake throughout the talk!

We began by a way of thinking of the age of the earth by stretching out our arms. If the age of the earth - from when it first formed to the present day - is the length of your arm from shoulder to fingertip, our whole human history could be wiped out by the single swipe of a nail file. We then concentrated on what happened during the time between shoulder and wrist- how the new earth formed, developed its atmosphere and later acquired water. We looked at how life may have begun from inorganic molecules, a little under 4 billion years ago, when conditions were just right.

We went on to explore what happened during Snowball Earth, about 715,000,000 years ago. We heard that after about 50 million years, the ice's grip began to loosen, when dark dust, stripped away by the wind from the highest peaks still protruding above the ice, sucked in the sun's warmth, and created tiny meltwater puddles. But what really set the thaw going was red hot lava smashing through the ice, absorbing the heat of the sun and releasing volcanic gases.... including carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas. When the ice finally melted, it flooded millions of tonnes of minerals into the sea, and life began to flourish again. It was still microscopic and it might have included animals such as the 0.5 of a millimetre tardigrade, descendants of which can still be found thriving at the bottom of seas, in tropical rainforests, at temperatures of -273°C . The talk ended with life emerging from the water and onto the land. A science quiz followed; although the scoring was arbitrary, and the prize for the best team was only extra biscuits, nobody seemed to mind.

The next talk, in September will be "The Fascinating World of Fungi" by Ray Lee. All are welcome.

TABLE TENNIS GROUP - Report by Peter Singer



In a recent newspaper article entitled "*Games have no place in adult society. I would ban them for anyone over 12,*" Emily Watson, a freelance writer, recounted a meeting in the park with a friend, who "... pulled out a pair of ping-pong paddles and indicated a nearby table. 'Fancy a quick game?' We are no longer speaking". Where to start with such a (deliberately?) provocative statement? Leaving aside minor issues like the fact that the game is table tennis (ping pong was only ever a trade-name) and we play with bats not paddles, it is a mite curmudgeonly, to say the least.

Watson goes on to trash cards, Scrabble and any other board games, so convenors of other groups, who enjoy such a wide range of games, may have something to say about it too. The writer clearly has not experienced the unabashed joy that is regularly and frequently released in our table tennis group.

Who knew the rather mundane time of 3pm on a Friday could be so enjoyable? The fact that our enjoyment may stem equally from a fabulous smash for an outright winner (if it's one's own shot) to feebly missing a little dink over the net (if it's an opponent's shot) is immaterial. It's fun! Of course, there may be frustration and even despair at times but, as in life, that's all part of the game.

A reader later wrote to support the article and quoted the line in the poem *Leisure* by W H Davies: "What is life if, full of care/We have no time to stand and stare"? Well, one may stand and stare as an unreturnable ball whistles past one's ear, but your doubles partner will certainly not be too enamoured of you for standing and staring during the course of play (even if you are trying to remember where you left your glasses). Anyway, there are another 167 hours in the week for all that standing and staring, so an hour's table tennis per week doesn't seem too much to ask, now, does it?

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

20th Century Greats Part 3 with Howard Goodall – Leonard Bernstein

Leonard Bernstein will best be remembered for two things: composing what is arguably the greatest work of musical theatre, *West Side Story*, and his international reputation as a conductor. Less celebrated are his three symphonies — *Jeremiah*, *The Age of Anxiety*, and *Kaddish* — all introspective works drawing on his Jewish faith and heritage.

Bernstein's breakthrough came in November 1943, when, as assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic, he was called in on a few hours' notice to replace the ailing Bruno Walter for a nationally broadcast Carnegie Hall concert. The strong critical response brought him immediate national recognition and opened the door to guest-conducting invitations worldwide.

Somewhat wary of Broadway convention, where big numbers can feel incidental to the plot, Bernstein sought to fuse opera and jazz idioms in early works such as *On the Town* (1944), for which some critics accused him of frivolity and of abandoning his classical roots. His more serious operetta *Candide* (1956) fared better with critics, if not always with audiences, and drew the unwelcome attention of the McCarthy era for its political undertones.

West Side Story had its origins in 1949 as *East Side Story*, a modern reworking of *Romeo and Juliet*. It wasn't until 1955 that the concept was refocused on the racial and cultural tensions of Puerto Rican immigrants on Manhattan's West Side, with Bernstein and a then-unknown Stephen Sondheim bringing the finished work to the stage in 1957.

A massive theatrical and musical undertaking, *West Side Story* builds thematically across its score — most famously through the unresolved tritone at its core — where classical and popular idioms collide.

There are echoes of Bizet's *Carmen* and distinctly Latin rhythms, giving it an edge that set it apart from Broadway's more sentimental conventions.

Though Bernstein remained a celebrated conductor, *West Side Story* stands as the peak of his output as a composer. His *Mass*, commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis to open the Kennedy Center in 1971, was somewhat overshadowed by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which opened on Broadway the following month.

In Part 2, we looked at earlier composers: Hildegard von Bingen, notable as one of the earliest composers known by name, whose liturgical music survives in her own notation; Palestrina, celebrated for his mastery of counterpoint in the Renaissance; and Jean-Philippe Rameau, whose *Les Indes Galantes* fused Baroque style with opera and ballet.

Our next meeting is at Startforth Community Centre on Friday 28 August at 10:00.



WINE GROUP Too - Report by Jane Mardon – July Report

I'm not sure what caused the most merriment at our recent meeting. Was it the tease of the zero-alcohol fizz that fooled us all or the hammer smashing fennel seeds moment? But reader.... I digress.

Sue hosted what was another splendid and informative evening this month. Her theme was wines under £10 and all were from Sainsburys.

The fizz was an addition to the ones we were actually 'tasting'. So, after laughing at our perceived wisdom in the tasting world of wine we then got down to the serious business of exploring a range of whites and reds.

1. Soave Classico 2024 ABV 12% £8.75 - a dry white Italian wine from northeast Italy.

Good with risotto, shellfish. Grape Garganega

2. Cono Sur Bicicleta Viognier 2025 ABV 11% £7.75 a Chilean aromatic white.

Drink with white meats, seafoods, salad and chilli. Grape Viognier

3. Fronton 2024 ABV 12.5% £8.75 dry crisp rose from SW France near Toulouse.

Good with pasta, pizza and bbqs. Grape Negrette

4. Gamay (Comte Tolosan) 2024 ABV 12% £9, a fresh and light juicy red wine to drink.

Good with pasta, pizza and bbqs Grape Gamay

5. Primitivo 2024 ABV 13% £9.25 a rich and complex wine from Puglia.

Drink with rich meat dishes, sliced cheeses and charcuterie.

6. Carmenere 2024 ABV 13.5% £9 smooth and mellow from Chile.



Drink with red meats and spicy food. Grape Carmenere.

We all rate Sainsburys quite highly for the wines they sell and for the various offers and promotions. Supermarkets do have some remarkably good deals it seems.



The best of the wines was agreed by all to be the Primitivo but none of the wines scored badly. The wines were perfectly paired with some tasty nibbles including home-made Parmesan and fennel cheese straws.

So, another excellent evening of wine in good company and with plenty of discussion and good humour. **Our next meeting is in August** when Julie will be hosting.

WIMMIN' SWIMMIN' GROUP - Report by Annie Clouston

I know that many of my fellow humans consider me bonkers for hurling myself into open water at the very sight of it. But really! These last two months you'd be mad not to. A friend of mine, living in London (poor soul), has had roofers at work, one of whom had the good sense to fill a bin with cold water in the heat of the day (37C) and sit in it until his temperature and the water's were pretty close and then let evaporation do its work while he toiled the afternoon through among the ridge tiles.



Two Teesdale silkies were playful in the waves at Saltburn, the pink-hatted pike chaser and pup were once again seen at Castle Ashby, and a blue-footed crab-spotter nithered while ploughing the main in Druridge Bay.

The blue-footed crab-spotter having her birthday dip in Druridge Bay.

Two Sleek Carp Skimmers were evident at Ellerton Lake. I hear the Bird Watching Group are on their way there this month so they may happen upon them and be very afraid... akin perhaps to a double vision on the shores of Loch Ness.

In more placid environments, the Wimmin Swimmin' of Teesdale have been keeping on keeping on and we look forward to newcomers who will share the pleasure of a relaxing, safe and companionable swim in temperatures that are usually 15C above the North Sea at its thermal best. We look after each other so if you've always wanted to swim but were put off by negative experiences of water, we'll help you to overcome them and enjoy the weightlessness and peace that floating about a bit can bring. September's session is on **Saturday 26th September from 4-5pm at Teesdale Leisure Centre**. Call me for swimming information **07988 625738** or email Sue to book: sueovertton@hotmail.com

COFFEE AND CHAT

Coffee and Chat - Coming up – Thursdays 2.30 – 3.30pm

The next Coffee and Chat will be on:

**Thursday 10th September at 3.30. at Henry's Bar in the Witham,
Barnard Castle**

Everyone's welcome!

WALKING GROUPS



SHORTER WALKS - Report by Peter Harding

Monday 24th July, 20 members from the U3A shorter walking group gathered outside the Co-op shop on Front St in Cockfield.

Full of eagerness and enthusiasm for the walk ahead.

Pete led the group up Front St, along Garden House Lane, to pause at George Dixon's home for some information about George, an engineer famous for blowing up his own house whilst pioneering the use of coal gas in heating and lighting. He was also the older brother of Jeremiah, famous for surveying the Mason-Dixon line.



Then on we walked and talked reaching Cockfield fell, we observed the station cottage, the general position of the Cockfield railway station that was part of the Bishop Auckland to Barnard Castle line. We walked along the old railway line to reach the site of an old level crossing then we joined Scotland Lane to walk to Burnt Houses from there a footpath between the cottages returned us to Cockfield and the start point. We did encounter some livestock, however James ensured we got safely past them.

About a 3.5 mile walk with some good views of the surrounding landscape.

4-6 MILE WALKING GROUP - Report by Janet Bayles

On Tuesday 14 July, 7 of us met at Hanging Shaw car park for a 5.3mile circular walk. After crossing the main road, we immediately picked up and followed the Pennine Way crossing Cronkley Bridge as we made our way towards High Force Waterfall. After a steep ascent we had fantastic views of the Tees Valley looking back towards Cronkley Bridge and in the distance, farmers could be seen busy cutting grass. Below us the river Tees meandered round Calf Holm and Dine Holm Scar. We stopped briefly to admire Bleabeck Force and get our breath back.

As we continued along the Teesdale Way a member of the Botany Group was able to identify for us flora of special significance to Teesdale including Marsh Fragrant Orchid, Bog Asphodel, Northern Bedstraw, Harebells and Marsh Thistle to mention just a few. We also noticed, on the opposite side of the river near Force Garth Quarry, that a non-native plant to the area (*Alchemilla Mollis*) had taken hold. Force Garth Quarry is still being worked and is a key provider of building material throughout northern England. Dolerite rock, known locally as Whinstone, is quarried from the site.

After High Force the route left the Pennine Way and took us across a footbridge and then up very steep steps (counting was interrupted at 77 steps!) to the High Force Hotel and a welcome break (with facilities) in the shady picnic area.

The final stages of our walk took us across fields behind the hotel towards Ettersgill with a short stretch on a minor road before crossing a series of fields with rough grass and boggy bits just to add variety to the terrain.

We were then “on top of the world” with glorious 360-degree views and the sun shining on the golf balls on the distant horizon. The final tricky stile was attacked with gusto and all too soon we were back at the car park.

The weather was perfect, warm but with a cooling breeze and shade in some places.



4-6 MILE WALKING GROUP - Report by Ian Royston

A Figure-of-Eight Walk from Marske

Eight walkers set out on a 5¼-mile walk from Marske (pronounced "Mask") in Swaledale, on a beautiful sunny day.

The one threatening rain cloud, forecast for 11am, sensibly failed to show up. Being a figure-of-eight route, we crossed Marske Beck no fewer than six times.

We began with a visit to the picturesque Norman church of St Edmund, with its striking box pews. Marske sits on the Coast-to-Coast path, and the church enterprisingly runs a tuck shop selling drinks, snacks, and even blister dressings for long-distance walkers. In a sign of the times, the church no longer relies on an honesty box for purchases — it now has a card reader!

Less than a mile into the walk, next to Pillimire Bridge, we spotted through the trees the remains of a waterwheel dating from the late 19th century. Standing in isolation, it's said to have been built to generate electricity for nearby Skelton Hall, though the scheme was never completed. Also, yet to be completed was an impressive treehouse being built near the Hall.

The far point of our walk was Telfit Bridge, a reminder that this dale, like many in the region, was once served by a number of lead mines.



This route carried pack horses and miners from the long-disused workings below Clints Scar, as well as from mines further away in Arkengarthdale, bringing ore for processing at the smelting works near Orgate.

Being a figure-of-eight walk, we not only crossed the beck six times but had to climb the short, steep hill near Orgate Bridge twice — though on the second ascent we followed the designated public right of way across the narrow footbridge instead. The final stretch took us through Clints Woods, a welcome, shady respite from the sun after a warm day on the open dale.

7-9 MILE WALKING GROUP - Report by Phil Clarke

Ten of us met for an 8-mile circular walk from Fountains Abbey. It was another very hot U3A walk, as has been the norm this summer. We set off from the National Trust car park and walked towards Studley Royal Deer Park past St Mary's church. Yes, we did see plenty of deer, the three species in the park, being red, fallow and sika. We walked by one of the oldest cherry trees in the country over 350 yrs old. After just under 2 miles in the park, we left and walked towards the edge of Ripon through the village of Studley Roger. On the edge of Ripon we went to Hell Wath Nature Reserve, a new experience for nearly all of the group.



One of the group spotted a kingfisher in the River Skell, the river that we followed off and on back to Fountains Abbey. After Hell Wath we passed another Ripon housing estate being built, after which back into the lovely countryside via Whitcliffe Hall and back to follow the very popular Seven Bridges walk. I'm sure I only counted six, oh well!!! The river is non-existent in parts but nearer the lake water eventually appears. From the scenic lake we walked up to the Church which was open for afternoon viewing and well worth a visit. We continued back to Fountains restaurant for a well-deserved drink and cake-outside, of course, this summer.

FELL WALKING GROUP - Report by Phil Clarke

Different Area, Challenging Terrain BUT worth the effort.

Some of us arrived 20 minutes early so a coffee boost was taken at the Lordstones cafe, and the idea was followed by the other car members. So, we were 15 minutes behind schedule but that didn't matter as I had shortened the route from 10.5 miles to 8 miles owing to the hot weather and the terrain. I had classified the walk as difficult because of 4 steep up and downs. I think, with this walk, I lived up to my nickname of 'Phil the Hill'!



The walk was out and back along the ridge of the Cleveland Way and the Coast to Coast in the North York Moors National Park. At the top of the first climb, we were treated to some amazing views of Teesside, Pennines, Hartlepool and the North Sea spoilt slightly by a tad of heat haze.

The route carried on until we clambered over the highlight of the walk the Wainstones. As Wainwright once said it's not a good walk unless you use your hands, and we certainly needed ours. Another steep downhill section was rewarded by a rest and lunch.

The return to Lordstones was lower but there was one last steep climb, Broughton Bank. The final path doubled up as a mountain bike route but luckily there were none today. We did see hang gliders and some coast to coasters. Lots of people enjoying the beautiful scenery. A challenging walk was rewarded with tea and cake back at the café.

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
Holiday	Occasional	Kate Keen 07880 741151
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

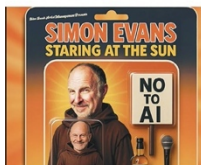
Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Photography	1 st Tues am	Alan Kenwright 07731 122399
Pickleball	Every Mon pm	Ruth Lapworth 07787 978696
Poetry	2 nd Wed am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Rummikub	3 rd Tues pm	Julie Archer 07774 903377
Scrabble	2 nd Mon pm	Judith Fanner 01833 650150
Science and Technology	2 nd Mon am	Ian Royston 07818 046938
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	Last Tues pm	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
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

15 AUG - 24 SEPT



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



Carl Hutchinson: **SOLD OUT**
Fine Whine Work in Progress
Fri 21 Aug | **Comedy** | 7.30pm | (14+) | £15

The Amazing Bubble Science Show!
Mon 24 Aug | **Family** | 2.30pm
£12 Adult | £10 Child | £35 Family

Tom Hingley of Inspirial Carpets
Fri 4 Sept | **Acoustic Music** | 7.30pm | £21-£23

Art in Action
Sat 5 Sept | **Community** | 12noon to 4pm | **FREE**

Sounds Historical: What A Wonderful World
Sun 6 Sept | **Early Music** | 1.30pm | £17

Farming on the Edge
Wed 9 Sept | **FILM** | 7.30pm | £1 Building Levy

Simon Evans: Staring at the Sun
Thurs 10 Sept | **Comedy** | 7.30pm
(14+) | £20

Jenny Sturgeon & MG Boulter
Sat 12 Sept | **Folk Music** | 8pm | £17

Dave Rowntree: No One You Know (10+)
Wed 16 Sept | **Spoken Word** | 7.30pm
£16-£18.50

Connor Selby
Fri 18 Sept | **Blues Music** | 7.30pm | £20

Bingo That's Bonkers! (18+)
Sat 19 Sept | **Night Out** | 8pm | £21

National Theatre Live: The Misanthrope
Tues 22 Sept | **Screening** | 7pm | (15) | £13-£15

Defiant: County Durham, The Miners' Strike and Its Legacy
Wed 23 Sept | **Film** | 7pm | £6

Emmelie Pankhurst: Angel or Anarchist?
Thurs 24 Sept | **Theatre** | 7.30pm | £17.50



Box Office: 01833 631107

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