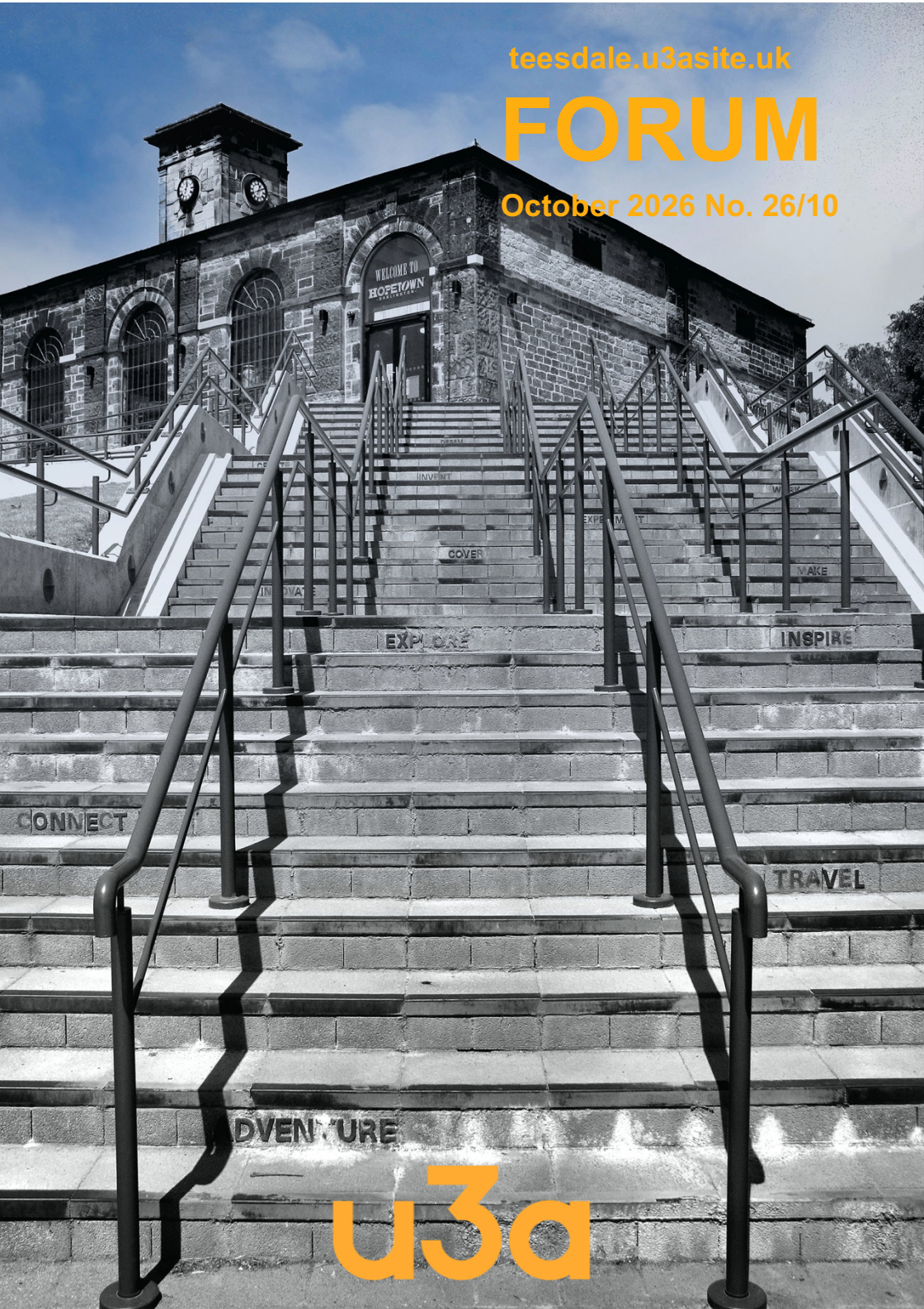


teesdale.u3asite.uk

FORUM

October 2026 No. 26/10

u3a

CHAIR'S LETTER

Dear Friends

I don't have much local news for you this month as I have been lucky enough to have been to Andalucia on a tour with the local Arts Society. It was amazing and lived up to my expectations. Lots of beautiful Moorish architecture and beautiful gardens and cities. The only down side was the temperatures, 28C+ every day. Once again, I marvelled at the lack of litter to be found on European city streets. Another positive experience was the speed we got through the new security system at passport control in Malaga, lots of helpful attendants to help us get through the process. Now it is back to the normal routine of enjoying living in Barnard Castle.



Looking forward to the October meeting with Gordon Hetherington, who will be talking about Gertrude Bell, the Uncrowned Queen of Iraq. Gertrude Bell is one of the women travellers/explorers featured in a favourite book of mine, 'The benefits of a good thick skirt'

Looking forward to catching up with you all.

Bye for now

Julie

Cover Photo: Ian Royston

It's *Your* Forum

Editors: Kate Bailey, Annie Clouston, Jane Kenwright, Alyson Kuby, Tony Seward
This month's editor is Jane Edition No: 26/10

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 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 16 November and next month's editor is Tony.

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.

teesdale.u3asite.uk

TEESDALE u3a Committee Contacts

Chair: Julie Archer chair@teesdaleu3a.org.uk
Membership Secretary: Ian Royston memsec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk
Business Secretary: Ruth Lapworth bissec@teesdaleu3a.org.uk
Treasurer: Hazel McCallum treasurer@teesdaleu3a.org.uk

MONTHLY MEETING – Report by Ian Reid

David Winpenny, the speaker at the September u3a meeting, spoke about the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, and described him as 'a Singular and Delightful Man'.

Lutyens was born in London in 1869. As a child, he suffered from rheumatic fever and was not able to attend normal school. He was educated at home and displayed a talent for drawing and mathematics. At the age of 15 he attended the Royal College of Art, but left without completing the course, and yet at the age of 19, he established his own architectural practice. His early houses were strongly influenced by traditional English architecture, particularly the Arts and Crafts movement. He developed a friendship and professional collaboration with the garden designer Gertrude Jekyll and they designed many country houses and gardens together, including the conversion and refurbishment of Lindisfarne Castle on Holy Island. Gertrude was a very practical gardener and was nicknamed 'the Queen of Spades'. Lutyens collaborated with her until her death in 1889. In 1911, George V visited India and announced that the Indian capital would move from Calcutta to Delhi, leading to the development of New Delhi. Lutyens and Herbert Baker were appointed the principal architects. The site was enormous, accommodating civic buildings, open gardens and a new house for the Viceroy, which was larger than the palace of Versailles. The design for the house also incorporated Buddhist stupa forms. After WW1 Lutyens was asked to design some of Britain's war memorials, the most famous being the Cenotaph in Whitehall. It represents an empty tomb, originally built in wood, which was subsequently rebuilt permanently in Portland Stone. He designed many other memorials outside Britain, including the Thiepval Memorial in Northern France, dedicated to the missing of the Somme.

A miniature mansion doll's house was built for Queen Mary, which includes fully functioning miniature objects made by British manufacturers, incorporating a library with real books written by well-known authors, and flushing toilets. He designed a proposal for the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool, intended to rival St Peter's in Rome, but only the crypt was built to his plan. Lutyens supposedly said that the spiral staircase should be built so there was nothing to stop choirboys sliding down. Lutyens died in 1944 and his ashes were interred in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral.

NEXT MEETINGS AT THE WITHAM

26 November FOOLS GOLD: Fools Gold are a duo of acoustic musicians, Steve and Carol Robson. They will present a themed show entitled 'Old King Coal' – a series of songs and stories all linked to the miners and mining communities of the north-east. Audiences can expect a funny, fascinating and poignant selection of tales and tunes.

AS USUAL, THERE WILL BE NO MONTHLY MEETING IN DECEMBER

21 January 2027 Close Encounters of the Avian Kind: Meetings with extraordinary birds from across the world. U3a member Andrew Lapworth will present a personal selection of some of his favourite bird encounters during his travels.

AI WORKSHOP REPORT – by Peter Colley

Artificial Intelligence is featuring heavily in the news. Firstly, this is due to the unprecedented level of investment in computing capacity by the AI companies. This investment is in processing chips especially from companies like Nvidia, and in the data centres necessary to handle the computing and storage.

But secondly, there has been growing concern that AI will do irreparable harm, perhaps a threat equal to the Cold War.

We gathered at The Witham to learn more about this new technology. Pete Redgrave talked us through what AI really is, what it can be used for in everyday life, and what the risk around its development might be.

AI has many uses: Robotics; Face recognition; eCommerce; Data security; Digital assistants; Navigation and Education to name a few. The workshop concentrated on chatbots which are readily available to all computer users.

A chatbot is a computer program designed to simulate human conversation through text or voice. Common examples are ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude and Google Gemini.

Users interact with chatbot, behind which is huge computing power, known as a Large Language Model. These LLMs have learnt how to interact with users by hoovering up vast quantities of data. Trillions of pieces of information including practically every book ever written.

We learnt how to interact with a chatbot, especially how to frame questions. This framing shapes the answer for example the level of detail, the format and constraints.

Chatbots can reply at any desired level, from bedtime story for a toddler to a doctorate level thesis. They can answer factual questions, make recommendations and provide technical support. They can produce images such as this one that was generated by requesting a donkey playing basketball on Bondi Beach.



AI is unavoidable. It is in the background of many online transactions, generating correspondence and creating transactions. It has massive potential in areas such as medical research, design and engineering. But there are significant ethical and safety concerns.

Chatbots are programmed to avoid harmful topics; however, they do have negative features. These include but are not limited to: inaccuracies and "hallucinations;" over-reliance and skill erosion; bias; security and misuse.

At the end of the workshop, we left better informed and perhaps more confident that using chatbots would not herald digital Armageddon!

(This article was written by a real u3a member not a chatbot.)

FUTURE WORKSHOPS AND SOCIAL EVENTS

Saturday 21st November, 11.00 am-2.00 pm, (Preparing and eating) A Winter Vegetarian lunch with friends. (Full, but you can be added to the reserve list)

Thursday 3rd December 12.30 for 1pm, this year's u3a Christmas lunch at Headlam Hall, Headlam DL2 3HA. Cost for either 2 or 3 courses, £42pp or £46pp to include a glass of wine or soft drink.

The venue requires a seating plan - if you wish to be seated with specific people Sue will need all your names; if you don't mind who you are seated with, let Sue know. She will endeavour to produce a table plan!

Payment can be made by BACS to:- Teesdale u3a, Sort Code: 20 - 83-73, Account No: 03778576. Reference: XMAS plus your surname. **NB: This account is not the same as the one for your subscription payment!**

Cheques and/or cash can be paid at the monthly meeting or sent to Sue at: 5 Cecil Road, Barnard Castle DL12 8AL 07512 368884 sueoverton@hotmail.com

Friday 12th December, 6-8pm, CHEESE AND WINE PAIRINGS, at Andalusia, Galgate, Barnard Castle.

HOLIDAY GROUP

The holiday group has a coach tour booked for 11 June, 2027. The Historic Houses, Heritage and Gardens of Oxfordshire and the Cotswolds. This trip will be very busy with visits to Hardwick Hall and Gardens, Hidcote Manor Garden, Upton House and Gardens, Ashmolean Museum, Blenheim Palace and Wentworth Woodhouse.

We are staying 4 nights in the 4-Star Oxford Belfry Hotel and includes dinner bed and breakfast. Prices are £814 per person for a shared room plus a single room supplement of £119. Entrance fees are included and a Blue Badge Guide on 2 days, except National Trust properties.

There are still a few rooms remaining for double, twin or sole occupancy.

For full details and a booking form contact Kate Keen. The brochure and booking form are also on the Teesdale U3A website under Events.

GROUP REPORTS

ANDROID PHONE GROUP - Report by Martyn Radcliffe

The android phone group met once again at the Guide HQ on Thursday 1st October.

We initially looked at what appears in Spam folders within the email apps on the members phones. Deleting the emails in spam/junk folders is good housekeeping and makes it easier to see emails that occasionally end up in the folder by accident. We looked at how to identify emails that were not legitimate like misspellings, email addresses that are not related to the company they purport to be from.

We started to look in more detail into settings. This is found using the app that has a cog image. We started with "Connections" and went through Wi-Fi connections (including Wi-Fi calling).

Bluetooth was discussed with connection to cars and other devices. NFC and contactless payments were run through as well.

We finished by discussing what should be considered when buying a new phone, like network, phone manufacturer etc. Purchasing a refurbished or year-old phone was one of the cheaper options considered.

The next meeting will be on **Thursday 5th November at 2pm**, Guide HQ, Birch Road.

ART APPRECIATION GROUP - Report by Pamela Moody

We met for a session of 'Show and Tell' about items which have meaning for us (not necessarily pieces of 'art'), and the two hours passed very quickly with everyone engaged in the proceedings and joining in with questions and comments.

Fiona Burt showed a piece of magnesian limestone which had been given to her by a stonemason when she worked at York Minster: it had come from one of the capitals, and was originally quarried in the early 14th Century. Her small second object was wood with carving on both sides, probably a

wool winder, traditionally carved by young men as love tokens for their sweethearts.

Anne Roberts's mystery objects were 7 slightly different-sized wooden cones, beautifully tactile antique plumbers' Pipe Flarers for expanding the ends of lead pipes when making joints, made from beech, box or lignum vitae.



Hazel Yeadon brought in prints, etchings and a painting by local artist John Degnan of Bowes including one of a hen whose first egg was used to create the tempura paint used for her portrait! Also, a necklace featuring 5 family initials around what had once been David's great-grandfather's cigarette case. David showed a portrait of the larger-than-life French trombonist Marguerite du Fay, rescued from his former office.

Yorkshire-born Kate Bailey chose a print of David Hockney's 'Garrowby Hill', once climbed successfully by her parents in their open-topped MG sports car but only by *use of reverse gear!* Kate's cousin had gone to school with David in Bradford and she cited various anecdotes - including one about the young Hockney not answering any questions during an exam but sketching the invigilator instead!

Jenny Haywood spoke very informatively about the two pottery jugs she had brought in. (see photo). Her experience in this field shone through as she talked us through the different techniques involved in stoneware and earthenware. The group discussed visiting 'PotFest in the Pens' in Penrith, running from 23-25 October.



Pamela Moody brought a print of Christian Spiritualist Evelyn De Morgan's pacifist painting 'S.O.S' which had caught her eye in the Faith Museum. A stone found in her garden during the pandemic revealed beautiful fluorite crystals, giving a sense of hope and positivity. Thirdly, a book about Stanley Spencer, nicknamed 'Cookham' while he was at Slade Art School. She grew up in Cookham, Berkshire and the artist's presence had been everywhere.

Sheila Kilgarriff produced a print of Pieter Brueghel the Younger's 'A Village Fair': we managed to spot the urinating man, the bare-bottomed nun and the amorous hens! Finally, a pair of allegedly very comfortable Italian cream-coloured leather platform shoes from the mid-Sixties, which Sheila wore on a first date with her husband-to-be.

For our November meeting we will visit the current exhibition at the Bowes Museum, 'Impressions of Light'.

AUTOMOTIVE GROUP - Report by Peter Colley

On a breezy day in September we mustered at the Bowes Museum ahead of a drive through the Dales to Buckden.

The weather forecast had varied between moderate and heavy rain but, in the event, it turned out to be both dry and clear.

Our vehicles of choice included a Lotus Elan, a rare Gilbern, a Mazda RX8, a Mazda MX5 and a rather rapid Triumph motorcycle.



The route was up The Stang to Reeth then along the Swaledale road to Muker. From there we headed to Hawes via Buttertubs. This is a spectacular road with wonderful views across Wensleydale and over to Wharfedale.

The early autumn sunshine produced warm colours backed by blue skies with a few cotton wool clouds.



The road from Hawes to Buckden is narrow and twisting with several hairpins and many steep gradients. Picturesque does not do it justice.

Buckden sits below Buckden Pike and is a magnet for hikers, campers and tourists.

We treated ourselves to a hearty lunch at The Buck Inn and then returned at a leisurely pace via Leyburn. Overall, a really enjoyable trip and a reminder that we should get out and do this sort of outing more often.

BIRDWATCHING - Report and photos by Andrew Lapworth

Five of us enjoyed two days of birdwatching in North Norfolk, visiting the famous Cley and Salthouse Marshes Nature Reserve on the first day and the spectacular Holkham estate on the second. Cley Marshes, purchased by Norfolk Wildlife Trust in 1926, was the first reserve acquired and managed by a county wildlife trust. Since the 1950s it has become one of Britain's premier birdwatching sites, renowned for attracting both large numbers of birds and occasional rarities.



Photo: Juvenile Spoonbill

At Cley we explored the Bishop Hide and East Bank in the morning before moving to the thatched hides overlooking the central pools and scrapes in the afternoon. The reserve was alive with birds. Ducks, especially Teal, were abundant, while Greylag and Canada Geese gathered in large flocks alongside a few **Egyptian Geese**. Black-headed Gulls were numerous, and many of the large white birds proved to be **Spoonbills** rather than egrets.

The waders were the highlights. We recorded **Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit, Lapwing, Curlew, Common and Spotted Redshank, Snipe, Dunlin, Turnstone** and impressive numbers of **Ruff. A rare Pectoral Sandpiper**, difficult to pick out among the other waders, had attracted plenty of visiting birders.

From the visitor centre we watched an exceptional gathering of 15–20 **Grey Herons**, including both adults and juveniles. Overhead were **Buzzards, Marsh Harriers, Red Kites, a Kestrel** and several energetic **Hobbies** hunting dragonflies on the wing. We were also fortunate to see a **Bittern** flying low over the reedbeds on two occasions. Swallows, House Martins and Sand Martins added to the spectacle.



Photo: Black-tailed Godwits

Later, at nearby Salthouse, we explored the grazing marshes and shingle bank. **Goldfinches, Linnets and Stonechats** were plentiful, while two **Wheatears** provided particularly pleasing views. Offshore, noisy **Sandwich Terns** plunged into the surf for small fish. We also admired the saltmarsh flora, including glassworts, Sea Aster and Sea Lavender.

The second day at Holkham offered a different experience. Despite light rain, the pine belt behind the dunes held feeding flocks of tits and warblers, singing **Robins** and several **Little Grebes**. From the raised hides we scanned the grazing marshes, where **Spoonbills** have bred since 2010, and enjoyed good views of **Marsh Harriers, a Red Kite, a Brown Hare** and a cautious **Muntjac**.

Although a juvenile **White-tailed Eagle** failed to appear, our return along the vast beach produced **Sanderling** and **Ringed Plover.**

The open coastal landscapes and huge skies of North Norfolk provide a striking contrast to Teesdale. With more than 70 bird species recorded over the two days, it was late-summer birding at its finest.

BOARD GAMES - Report by Hazel McCallum

We had two tables at September's meeting. One playing Ticket to Ride and the other Rummikub. Ticket to Ride is a popular game in our group where the players collect coloured cards to claim railway routes and connect cities on the board game map. Rummikub is another well-liked game with our group, where the objective is to lay numbered tiles in sequences and be the first player to clear all the tiles from their rack.

On this occasion, two games of Ticket to Ride were completed and Jane won both! The Rummikub winners were Vanessa, Sue and Jean.

We have welcomed several new members recently, so please don't be shy, just come along and (hopefully) have some fun!



ROOM TO READ BOOK GROUP- Review by Annie Clouston

The Artist by Lucy Steeds

This novel won Waterstone's Debut Novel of the Year 2025 award and is a belter of a first novel by this 31-year-old author. Set in Provence in 1920 the sense of place is exceptionally strong, the sheer sensuality of this story is palpable.

Its three protagonists are Tartuffe the eponymous artist – a monstrous, narcissistic misogynist tyrant, Ettie his niece (or is she the eponymous artist?) who services the tyrant, and Joseph, an aspiring journalist, failed artist and wartime conscientious objector.

Joseph, questing for an article on the famous Tartuffe, and desperate to get away from a furious father, travels to remote Provence after receiving a one-word answer "Come" to his request for an interview with the Great Tartuffe. Ettie had replied without telling her reclusive uncle about his arrival, which by happy coincidence meets Tartuffe's needs for a model for his painting "Young Man with Orange".

There unfolds a subtle love story and along the way sumptuous writing about the content and structure of the paintings, the landscape, and the emotional intensity of life in this isolated world of its own, where silence is demanded and secrets are buried.

The reader wills Ettie to break free from this stifling, enslaved existence. Her own work as an artist is destroyed by the tyrant uncle, but she takes revenge in a truly magnificent way – a way that is perfectly designed to have maximum impact.

Most of us really enjoyed this read, finding it compelling even though there were inconsistencies and oddnesses. The word we could all agree on was ***sensuous.*** Whilst one of us thought the narrative lumpy and two members went adrift in the central section, the rest of us thought it flowed smoothly towards its ending which left some questions unanswered.

One thing we did agree on was that our favourite character was Peggy Guggenheim who appears with several obnoxious American male art collectors at the studio. She challenges her boorish companions around the lush dinner table with the wild notion that women too would be artists if they had opportunity in an art world dominated by male-led institutions determined to keep them out.

She was a woman who put her money – which was considerable – where her mouth was.

Scores for recommending to friends and for book groups were four out of five stars each.

CHESS GROUP - Report by Diana Marks

Keith Miles, who was a valued member of U3A and had been a member of our group, sadly passed away shortly after celebrating his 80th birthday. It was his funeral on the day of our October meeting. Four of us attended his service, having changed the timing of our monthly get together so we could do both.

As it happened only two of us made it to The Old Well and had a leisurely game with accompanying drinks, toasting Keith.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GROUP - Report by Kate Bailey

This month we discussed the devastating effects of summer heatwaves, wildfires and droughts on food crops throughout the UK and Europe. As the UK imports approximately 40% of our food, crop losses are likely to result in higher prices for milk, meat, animal feed, vegetables, orchard fruit and grain. Plans and policies made by the United Nations, the European Commission and the UK government are all pointing towards the need for farmers to nourish soils to hold more moisture, to capture and conserve rainwater, adopt nature-friendly 'regenerative' farming practices, diversify crops and develop heat-tolerant varieties.

If you have a garden, or space for a few large pots, it can be very rewarding to grow some of your own food - my raspberries, strawberries, rhubarb and blackcurrants have fruited well this year. Most vegetables depend on regular (early morning) watering. Using waterbutts that fill up in spring, spreading mulches to retain moisture and shading crops from blistering heat make this activity more sustainable. A small pond in a damp corner will soon attract frogs that will help deal with garden pests, including slugs.

Buying fresh natural foods from local shops, farm shops and markets, avoiding supermarket bread that is bulked up with ground chalk and highly processed foods (which often include large amounts of emulsifiers, fat,

sugar and salt) are good ways to stay healthy and to support local food producers and farmers.

Good News includes an Earthshot Prize winner, Notpla that, in its first 3 years, has replaced over 32 million items of single use plastic with seaweed-based materials.

The Cairngorms National Park woodland expansion plans include monitoring, using Lidar laser scanning, a survey area containing over 6 million trees, that identified 2.65 million young, naturally regenerated, native trees (40%).

Nature has recovered fast on a former golf course on the Lincolnshire coast, transformed into a wetland nature reserve that has seen the rapid return of skylarks, short-eared owls, avocets and curlew.

A farm in Northumberland is trialling a carbon capture and food production technique known as 'myco-forestry', which could deliver carbon-negative edible mushroom crops. The underground mycelium strands of the fungi act as natural carbon storage units in the soil.



Photo: Thanks to pixabay.com

DISCUSSION GROUP - Report by Glen Howard

A number of members were missing this month but we still had a good variety of topics to discuss, including: the closure of Glaxo Social Club; AI killing humans; recent by-election; package holidays; a three year old scaling all 214 peaks in the Lake District; and the first ever artificial tongue.

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 **November 13th** and **11th December**.

FAMILY HISTORY INTEREST GROUP - Report by Alan Swindale

Eight members were present for the talk on Family History Basics: Where to Look - Data Sources (Data Sets)

For dates after 1837 - the commencement of Civil Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths (BMDs) – the two essential sources are the Index to BMDs held by the General Registry Office (GRO) and the National Census (held in the National Archives)

FreeBMD is a transcription of the index and can be readily searched online to locate an ancestor. For further information a copy of the full entry in the register must be requested from the GRO (for a fee).

The Census is available on-line from 1841 to 1921. Use FamilySearch to locate your ancestor. From this a link is provided to the images (1841 – 1911) of the original in the National Archives (free)

For dates prior to 1837 information must be sought first from parish registers and the probate records (wills and letters of administration). There is no single best way to access the information in parish registers but FamilySearch (free) and Ancestry (paid subscription) will provide a majority of church records. The National Probate Calendar is an index to Wills and Letters of Administration from 1858 and is available on-line (free). A copy can then be ordered for a fee. Earlier wills were lodged with church courts and can be found in various record offices and diocesan archives. Many are available online.

In place of the normal meeting next month in Enterprise House, there is a trip on **Thursday 12th November** to The Story, Durham's Record Office.

A talk by one of the Archivists about the records at The Story has been arranged starting at 10:30 a.m. sharp for up to 12 members. Five of those places have already been reserved and others wanting to take part should contact Alan Swindale. Bishop Auckland u3a have made a contribution towards the cost of the talk. Shared car transport to The Story will be arranged

GARDENING GROUP - Report by Kate Keen

In October the gardening group returned to having a talk at Stainton Village Hall.

Our speaker was Nick Smith, Show Director for the Harrogate Flower Shows. Many of the audience had been to the flower shows so this was an interesting insight for us. Although now living in Yorkshire, Nick grew up in Bishop Auckland and his father trained as a gardener at Raby Castle.

The Harrogate Show is run as a charity with all proceeds going to the North East Horticultural Society. The charity helps with schools, the “in bloom” programme and with training for the next generation of horticulturists.

The charity started in 1931 at which time there were no shows in the North East and producers had to travel south. With the different climate in the north, the plant season is around 2 weeks behind the south and there was a lot of travelling involved so plants were not at their best. It took a while for the show to get started and in the early days it was held at the Harrogate Winter Gardens, which is now a Wetherspoons! Later it transferred to Valley Gardens and then to the Harrogate Showground. After Covid the autumn show was moved to Newby Hall, which is more cost effective and a different experience.

In the early days the councils were involved in displays, but due to cost restraints this is no longer the case. Floral art was included from the 1950s, initially in hotels and is now established in both the pavilion and the house at Newby Hall.

The team producing the show is very small and they need to plan well ahead, so are currently working on the 2028 event. Although the space, contractors and the site are within the control of the team, the weather is not.

Over the years the weather has caused a number of situations with snow causing tents to collapse, storms blowing tents down and freak rainfall turning the car park into a mud bath. Cranes are used to erect the marquees, but as this is a windy site the cranes are sometimes unable to operate, so this delays all aspects of the show build. Producers are able to select a preferred type of stand with wall stands and islands. All are judged so that a high level of display is maintained for the paying guests. The larger show gardens have 12 days to build and are prepared by local designers, groups and charities.

The show is launched with a traditional press call as well as social media updates. A lot of thought is put into the photographs, which when successful can cause a reaction around the world gaining welcome publicity.

Nick was an excellent speaker with a fascinating talk which was enjoyed by the group.

Our November speaker is Sue Wood who will be telling us about the Ripon Workhouse Gardens.

GEOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Jane Harrison

With El Niño very much in the news, Phil Johnson continued his series of talks about natural hazards by looking at the Earth's atmospheric circulation. The different receipt of solar radiation, between the equatorial areas and the poles, is the driving force, but the transfer of that energy, by high-level and surface winds, is complicated by the Earth's rotation. There are three circulatory cells in each hemisphere, which determine the broad position of the Earth's climatic zones and influence the trade winds and ocean currents.

Richard Bothroyd explained more about El Niño, so named "the boy" because its effects are usually greatest around Christmas time. The event is associated with an increase in sea temperatures and changes to the strength and direction of trade winds in the Pacific. Its impact is greatest along the North and South American seaboards, where it causes heavy rains and triggers flooding and landslides. It also disrupts the cold Humboldt current, along the Peruvian coast, which affects marine ecology and reduces fish catches. On the opposite side of the Pacific, it brings drought

conditions to Australia and Southern Asia. El Niño can also affect global weather patterns, although its impact must be isolated from other contributing factors. The current El Niño is classified as being “very strong” as Pacific sea temperatures are expected to increase by 2 to 2.5°C. Whether such events are becoming more frequent and more severe is the subject of much scientific research and debate.

In the second half of the meeting Phil looked at how we might mitigate our consumption of carbon-based energy within a geography scenario. He looked at the feasibility of household solar systems and storage given our more northerly latitudes.

Next meeting: **Thursday 19th November, 2pm** in The Witham. Professor David Evans of Durham University. “Lichenometry – the scientific dating of exposed rock surfaces based on the size of lichen colonies”.

GEOLOGY GROUP - Report by Bob Tuddenham

There were talks on two very different areas of Geology in our September meeting.

In the first half Bob Tuddenham gave a talk on the basics of Radiometric Dating; this topic embraces physics and chemistry as well as geology.

A hundred years ago geologists had no idea of the absolute age of rocks but the discovery of radioactivity with exponential decay in the early 20th Century opened up the possibility of an accurate geological clock. Arthur Holmes, the first Professor of Geology at Durham University, was a leading scientist in the very early development of radiometric dating while many of his colleagues at that time were not convinced this could be achieved.

It was the discovery of isotopes and the development of the modern mass spectrometer in the 1950s that enabled geological ages to be accurately measured. These revealed the vast expanse of time since the Earth was formed 4.6 billion years ago and confirmed absolute ages in the geological stratigraphic column. Radiometric dating was also essential in the discovery of the mechanism for plate tectonics in the 1960s showing that the ocean floor moves out each side of a mid ocean ridge.

In the second half of the meeting, David Saville continued his excellent series of talks on ‘Introduction to Geology’.

This talk was the first of two on the Jurassic Period. David explained that there had been a mass extinction at the end of the Triassic because of a massive outpouring of lava with the release of extensive carbon dioxide and acidic sulphur dioxide. At the start of the Jurassic, the supercontinent Pangaea was starting to break up and shallow seas were flooding in across NW Europe. The climate was more benign and humid than during the previous Triassic period. There was rich flora and early dinosaurs began to dominate with no obvious predators.

Our next meeting will be at The Witham on **Monday October 26th at 10 am**. All are welcome to join us. Please contact the convenor for details.

HISTORY GROUP - Report by Tim Meacham

At our April, March and September meetings, Rob Pearson presented his extremely detailed three-part talk on 'What the Quakers did for Durham'. The room was packed for all three meetings culminating in the September meeting with over 30 members present. We were left in no doubt that the Quakers were a (the?) fundamental influence on County Durham over the last 300 years! To keep the report a manageable length I can only dip into the myriad aspects of the topic Rob introduced.

The story would not have probably not have started without the example of George Fox (1624-1691), regarded as the founder of the Society of Friends. The eldest of six children born towards the end of James I's reign, he was a restless wanderer who, disillusioned after visiting London, headed north 'preaching and speaking'. He stopped at Sedburgh where, asked by the 'Seekers of Truth' to preach in the church, he refused, gathering people on Firbank Fell above the town to speak there instead. The Quaker movement took off after such meetings and their influence was soon visible in County Durham. Thankfully they were passionate about equality and their involvement tended to be extremely positive for the entrepreneurs and ordinary workers alike.

The remainder of the talks introduced, then went on to discuss the effects of these individuals. Quakers were very much family-based as well as business and finance- orientated. This was lucky as Britain was now heading at pace towards the industrial revolution and the Quaker families' social consciences were an important factor as working conditions developed to meet new challenges.

Rob looked in some depth at metal mining in Durham. Back in 1564 German experts had reported to the 'Society of Royal Mines' to help bring in new practices for the mining of zinc and lead. From 1692 the Quakers became heavily involved especially through the London Lead Mining Company, established in 1704 by Royal Charter. Within a year the company had leased land for mining in Blanchland and Shildon, before building a new town at Nenthead up by Alston. Even closer to home for us, from 1753 Middleton-in-Teesdale was developed following the same pattern as at Nenthead (company offices, schools, bakeries, chapels, housing – 100 new homes in the first 50 years - libraries and reading rooms, allotments etc.). This was a total revolution and of course required the provision of adequate finance. From 1824 Middleton's 'new town' at Masterman Place was built with its proud archway entrance and high-quality housing featuring more than ample gardens and allotments, not to mention its own doctors' surgery.

The Quakers showed themselves equally progressive in providing the finance to drive all this. There emerged a number of key families who entered the banking business. Rob went into great detail on two in particular, the Backhouses and the Peases. After an inauspicious start (his father James Backhouse 1 dying in gaol) William Backhouse, a yarn dealer, became a Quaker minister. His son James 2 married into the Pease family, the start of a formidable alliance. In the first quarter of the 19th century both families were instrumental in the creation of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. James 2's son Jonathan had set up a family banking company in 1777, a forebear of the present Barclays Bank.

Turning to the Peases, Joseph 1 (1665-1719) was a Barnsley merchant dealing in linseed and cattle fodder. Two generations later his grandson Joseph 2 set up two small banks, one of them in Darlington. His son Edward is regarded as the father of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Edward it was who brought George Stephenson on board and the rest is history. In 1812 Edward had opened his first mill and his son Joseph 3 became the first Quaker MP later in the 19th century.

At times the social consciousness of these banking Quakers brought their families into financial difficulties. They supported local industries such as the mines, railways and mills, encouraging fair wages and good working conditions even when times became hard, for instance when competition

from abroad created volatility in these markets. Spanish imports of lead devastated the UK lead mining in the second half of the 19th century, and this proved terminal, yet Rob went on to show that the Quakers, while continuing to support the failing areas, were astute in spotting more profitable alternative sources for investment, such as coal which had yet to reach its peak.

During the early 20th century the Quakers continued to support 'good causes'. Indeed, their mission work in Africa, their support for the civil rights movement and the emergence in America of 'professional Quakers' showed them adapting to the new era. Yet, Rob showed us, they became, in a sense, victims of their own success. As the families increased in prosperity and reached positions in Society which put pressure on them to compromise their earlier passion for equality, integrity and religious purity, these qualities became less distinctive. At the same time their family-run enterprises transitioned into public corporations, and the days of revolutionary change were over.

Thanks again to Rob for this fascinating series of talks – and for overcoming computer difficulties before the third talk which forced him to deliver it without a full set of slides!

iPAD and iPHONE GROUP - Report by Mike Sweeting

We gathered for what will be the last session this year.

To start, we finished off the session on the things that can be done with pictures in the Photos app. We had already looked at how text could be lifted from pictures and pasted into other documents with the ability to translate that text into English if necessary.

This time we moved on to, firstly, Visual Lookup. The Photos app indicates where there may be additional information available about the subject of the photo. This could be a flower, landmark or building, vehicle or any other recognisable object. This then leads to additional information and thumbnails of other photos of the same or similar objects.

Then we looked at how an object, for instance, a car, can be lifted out of a photo and pasted into another document or sent elsewhere without the clutter of its background.

The converse of this is the function that allows an unwanted object to be removed from a photo. The Photos app then convincingly fills in the empty space.

A few days before our meeting Apple brought out the latest version of its operating system (OS27). We looked at the main changes, improvements to Photos functions and the significant changes made to Apple Intelligence (Siri). The changes to Siri are only fully implemented for the latest versions of the iPhone.

As indicated above, there will be no more meetings this year. The next will be on **26 January 2027** at the usual time **1:30pm** at Enterprise House.

LUNCH CLUB - Report by Kate Keen

In September the lunch group returned to the Raby High Force Hotel. We were seated in the Garden Room restaurant with its panelled walls and tasteful décor. The hotel was busy with a mix of tourists and locals and some of us, dressed up, and other guests ready for a hike.





We welcomed another new member and this month we were a party of 10 with many of our group away on holiday.

As usual we had pre ordered our meals with a range of choices including fish and chips, Cumberland sausage, and soup and sandwiches. The most popular dessert was the fruit crumble although the chocolate truffle tart looked very inviting too.

We had an enjoyable and relaxing lunch with good company, pleasant food and a nice atmosphere.

NEEDLECRAFT - Report by Hilary Dunninghan

This month we were hosted by one of our members at Grove Park, in the communal lounge.

People were working on their own projects, which involved mainly knitting but some crochet. There was lots of chatting on various topics, including holidays, the annual flu/covid vaccinations and the triumphant re-opening of Whorlton bridge after 7 long years.

At half time, we were treated to tasty refreshments provided by members of the group. The homemade peanut butter cookies were particularly good!

Our convenor, Glen Howard, has decided, for personal reasons, to step down. I know I speak for everyone in thanking her whole-heartedly for looking after us for many, many years. Glen has been an excellent convenor and has ensured the smooth running of the group – finding hosts each month, bringing in new crafters, organising outings, writing reports and much more. Thank you, Glen.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 2nd November when we will be working on our personal projects. New members are always welcome so do email me if you would like to join us. hilary.dunnighan@gmail.com

PHILOSOPHY GROUP - Report by Pete Redgrave

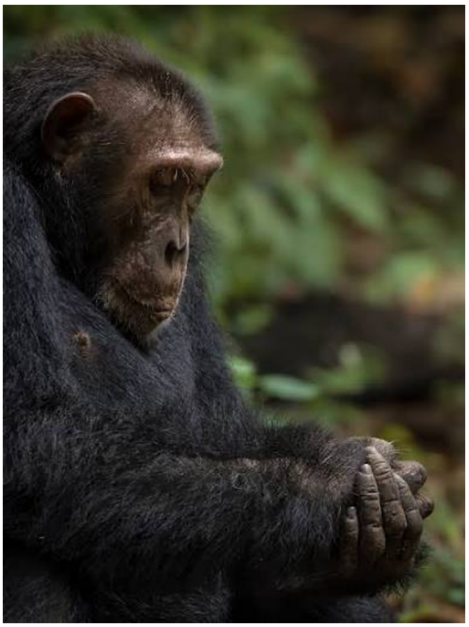
Animal Rights

Our discussion revolved around the following major issues.

For comparative purposes we started with a brief recap of a previous presentation of human rights. The main point was how far should animals be afforded rights derived from them having an inherent value, independent of human considerations?

It was noted that humans, who have moral agency, have rights, but also responsibilities. How far can animals have responsibilities? Philosophers contend that moral agency requires that an individual must distinguish right from wrong, can choose freely, and hence be held accountable for their actions. The extent to which animals can choose, and act purposefully based on moral understanding, is debatable – more likely in some cases (great apes, whales/dolphins, elephants) and less in others (a mouse).

Aside from questions of moral agency, there are those who argue the inherent value of animals means they should have legal rights, akin to those afforded to humans. Their arguments lie on a spectrum from the relatively modest (animals deserve protection from unnecessary suffering), to more radical (animals deserve rights equivalent to those of humans). Our current animal welfare law reflects protection from suffering, while aspects of contemporary philosophy grapple with the conundrum of rights for animals.



It may be relevant that such deliberations deal only with relationships between animals and humans, never between animals and animals – 'let nature take its course'. We humans are, of course, a product of evolutionary biology and are here because we have negotiated the Darwinian imperative – to survive and reproduce. Consequently, and throughout, human well-being has depended importantly on our relations with animals.

Animals have been and are useful to humans in many ways – food, clothing, transport, companionship, and more recently, safety testing of medicines, and scientific and medical research….to name but a few. Animal welfare therefore has a strong utilitarian basis. A further reason is anthropomorphism – if we think animals think and feel like us, we will likely extend our human-to-human morality also to encompass our dealings with them. For example, when an animal appears to be suffering, for both neurological and behavioural reasons, anthropomorphism is probably a useful guide.

Thus, utilitarian, empathetic, and current legal requirements all point to the importance of treating animals well – keeping them healthy, well fed and watered, and preventing any unnecessary suffering. In so doing, our ability to survive and reproduce will only be enhanced.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Alan Kenwright; Photographs by Pete Redgrave, Charlotte Washbourne and Bob Marks.



In October, six members of the photography group made a trip to Robin Hoods Bay. Autumn weather had finally arrived with grey, overcast skies and drizzle as we set off from Barnard Castle, and that stayed with us all the way to our destination. But by the time we had parked up, made our way on foot down the steep hill to the heart of the old village and adjourned to a café for an early lunch, the drizzle had stopped, leaving us with interesting flat light and mist in the distance. So, plenty of “atmosphere”. The weather did have the advantage of keeping the number of visitors, to what can be a very popular location, down so it was easier to frame shots without crowds in them. The village provided many quirky, interesting subjects for us to photograph and we came away well satisfied with our day out, even if the rain returned for most of the trip back.

Our next meeting will be on **3 November** when we will meet to decide on a theme for the 2028 calendar, start thinking about trips / locations for our meetings in 2027, and have a mini workshop and tips on how to take portrait shots without the benefit of a studio. Time and venue to be decided.





RUMMIKUB GROUP - Report by Kate Keen

The Rummikub group were again kindly hosted by David and Elizabeth in their house near Barnard Castle. As the group grows in number we may use a larger location in the town.

In September we welcomed another new Member who had played before, so we could launch straight into the games. This time there were 9 of us and we split into 3 groups of 3. Mandy had an outstanding day winning 3 games. Our new Member Susan won 2 games so is one to be watched.

Halfway through we had a break for refreshments, Julie had brought along a delicious cake from the farm shop at Cross Lanes.

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.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GROUP –

September Report by Ray Lee

"The Fascinating World of Fungi" was the appropriate subject of the first talk of our autumn season. The starting point was that the current views on evolution have been modified - "survival of the fittest" no longer relies solely on physical features. Now the ability to form partnerships with other lifeforms is thought to be of equal importance. Fungi form significant partnerships with up to 90% of other living things. This theme was a large contributor to the logic of the talk.

We explored how the taxonomy of the fungi family developed until finally it became a kingdom in its own right. Next the structure and amazing diversity of the fungi kingdom was illustrated.

Developing the theme of partnership, fungi's role in the ecosystem was considered. This included a presentation of the latest research into the partnership between fungi and forests: "The Wood Wide Web,"

This cooperation between fungi and the landscape was continued into the "World Wide Web" where the relationship between all landscapes and fungal networks was explored. The use of the network to store billions of tons of carbon in the soil was shown to be of world importance. The

destruction of this web and thus the ability to store carbon was one of the crucial factors affecting the rate at which the planet is warming.

Finally, the use of fungi in medicine was shown to be of great importance. The invention of fungal derived drugs such as penicillin, statins and cephalosporins was shown to have revolutionised our fight against disease. An account was given of the latest research into using fungi to counter cancer and antibiotic rejection.

October Report by Ian Royston

For a Ha'porth of Tar - The technology and chemistry of painting a ship

Our member Ian Royston, who was Chief Chemist at International Paint in the late 1990s, gave us a fascinating talk entitled "For a Ha'porth of Tar," in which he illustrated the process and chemistry of painting a ship — and showed how much has changed since he first gave this talk, as a technical paper, to the Oil & Colour Chemists' Association in 1998.

Ian began with an uncomfortable truth: we build ships from steel, one of the most corrosion-prone materials available, then put them in seawater for decades. Protecting them starts before the first plate is even cut, with a thin zinc-rich primer that survives the welding torch and continues through tough epoxy coatings, chosen for their resistance to knocks, chemicals and the alkaline conditions created by the ship's own corrosion protection.

He also described how shipbuilding itself has changed, with ships now built in large, prefabricated blocks, assembled and painted as far as possible in covered, heated sheds, in place of the open slipways once universal in the trade. Japan led this shift from the 1960s, well ahead of most of the rest of the world.

He traced the shift from coatings a ship's own crew could slap on with a brush between ports to today's professionally sprayed, two-pack systems, and touched on some lesser-known oddities of ship painting: why aluminium superstructures on cruise ships quietly corrode without the tell-tale rust streak steel gives off, and why most cruise ships are painted white — not just for a clean, nautical look, but because a white ship reflects heat and takes some of the load off the air conditioning.

The most striking part of the talk concerned the control of fouling: the barnacles and weed that roughen a hull and burn extra fuel. Ian described how tributyltin, once the most effective antifouling chemical ever devised, was found to be causing severe harm to marine life at almost unimaginably low concentrations and traced the regulatory story from the first restrictions in France in 1982 to a worldwide ban in 2008. Its replacements, he explained, range from the familiar (copper) to the exotic, including one compound that doesn't kill barnacle larvae at all, but simply won't let them settle.

He closed with a reminder that the chemistry may have moved on, but the central engineering problems Noah faced — keeping water out of a wooden, then steel, hull and how to stop things growing on it — have never gone away, and that today's regulators are still wrestling with the environmental trade-offs of every solution devised so far.

Questions from the floor ranged from the conformance to environment rules by some rogue states to just how long a ship is designed to last, which Ian fielded with his customary thoroughness.

Our next meeting is at the Witham on **Monday 9 November at 10:00.**

UNDERSTANDING CLASSICAL MUSIC - Report by Ian Royston

Why Music Moves Us - Milton Mermikides, Gresham College

This month's session took a more academic turn, drawing on Gresham College's free lecture catalogue for Professor Milton Mermikides' talk "Why Music Moves Us." Reception was mixed — some members found parts of it heavy going, even a little pretentious, but most agreed it was fascinating and thought-provoking.

Mermikides drew on neuroscience, psychology and musicology to explore how "primal" and "conditioned" listening combine to produce emotional effect, using examples spanning pop, jazz, rock, film, folk and classical traditions. He traced music's presence throughout human history — from a 40,000 BCE mammoth-tusk flute to an isolated Solomon Islands lullaby passed down orally for generations yet analysable in standard European notation — arguing we can't understand music without understanding how our bodies and brains evolved to interpret soundwaves.

He touched on early recording technology, including Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville's 1850s phonautograph, and used spectrograms to show how pitch, rhythm and timbre become visible, noting that what we hear is shaped as much by expectation and other senses as by the sound itself.

A central theme was music as language: phrasing and rhythm in speech (contrasting English and French, or Elgar and Debussy) echo into musical style, with question-and-answer phrase structures cropping up in jazz and elsewhere, and composers like Bartók and Stravinsky drawing on folk idioms. Simple motifs — Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" was the example — remain recognisable through endless inversion, stretching and repetition.

On the emotional side, Mermikides described brain-imaging evidence that music activates regions well beyond the auditory cortex, and outlined mechanisms — memory association, evocation of imagery (Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* was cited here), emotional contagion, rhythmic entrainment, and predictive expectation — bundled under the acronym "EVERBEAM." He discussed the phenomenon of musical chills, felt by roughly half the general population but over 90% of professional musicians, linking this to theories from Huron and Panksepp. Deliberately unresolved or delayed resolution was illustrated by Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, which he described as almost endlessly withholding its final resolution.

Overall: a demanding but rewarding session, reinforcing that music's emotional power rests on a complex web of biology, culture and personal history.

In the second part we learnt about Hurdy Gurdy. Originally a two-person medieval instrument called the organistrum, it shrank to a one-person version known in French as the symphonia. Widespread across Europe by the 17th century, it declined with the rise of the accordion in the 1880s, but has enjoyed a genuine folk-music revival since the late 20th century.

Our next meeting is at Startforth Community Centre on **Friday 23 October at 10:00.**

WILDFLOWER GROUP - Report by Anne Thomson

As the Wildflower Group does not meet up for wild flower identification saunters/ambles in the winter months we have GET TOGETHERs - one in each month of November, January and March.

This is an informal chat over a cuppa and a biscuit or slice of cake in the warm and welcoming environment of Andalucia Deli & Coffee Shop on Galgate.

If you are considering joining this Group please come along to a session to meet some members and find out what we are about.

For further details contact the Group Convenor, Anne on 07928 594404 or email mistytee@icloud.com

You will be most welcome.

WINE GROUP TOO - Report by Martyn Radcliffe

The September meeting was at my home and the theme was real world analogues of wines in Sci-Fi and fantasy. Karen and I (as a bit of fun and in line with the theme) also dressed up in steam punk regalia. Steam punk is a sub-genre of Sci-Fi/Fantasy where steam and clockwork are still the main forms of power.

Vermouth Dolin Dry De Chambrey, Non-Vintage, 17.5%, £12.75, Amazon**,** Ugni Blanc grape**.** Crisp and lively with a slightly sweet yet dry white wine base. Dominant notes of toasted almond, génépi, and soft citrus are present.

Food pairing - Goats Cheese, Fried snacks and olives.

Analogue Locris Wine – Foundation by Issac Asimov

Locris wine (also called sunny wine) was a type of wine from Locris. As Locris had a permanently sunny side, grapes grown there were particularly sweet. After the Galactic Empire destroyed Locris in a nuclear bombardment, this wine was considered a rare vintage.

Sparkling Cremant De Bordeaux Brut, Non-Vintage, 12%, £10.00 (8.75 with nectar), Sainsburys. Bordeaux grapes. White blends rely primarily on Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, and Muscadelle. Notes of red apple, melon, and citrus, balanced by richer undertones of toasted almond and baked brioche.



Food Pairing - Sushi

Analogue – Alderaan Sparkling Wine - Star Wars – Lucas et all (Novelisations ghost written by Alan Dean Foster)

Alderaan sparkling wine was a type of sparkling wine that shared its name with the Core Worlds planet Alderaan.

White Alsace Gewurztraminer, 2024,13%, £12.00, Sainsburys. Gewurztraminer pink-skinned grape. Ripe tropical fruits (mango, pineapple), ginger, clove, and honey.

Food pairing – Blue Cheese

Analogue – Elven Dorwinion Wine – Lord of the Rings - J R R Tolkien

Dorwinion Wine: Elves of the Woodland Realm (and their King Thranduil) were exceptionally fond of Dorwinion wine, which was imported from the fertile, sunny lands near the Sea of Rhûn.

Rose Baron De Guers Rose.2024 12.5%, £10.00 (£7.75 with Nectar card), Sainsburys. Grapes Piquepoul & Grenache. Crisp and lively, balancing zesty lemon-citrus brightness with gentle red fruit flavours.

Food Pairing – Humous, Grilled Peppers

Analogue – Bornolla – Dune – Frank Herbert

The planet Caladan was known throughout the known universe for its fine wines. Caladani wines were still regarded as excellent almost 5000 years after the days of Leto the Just.

During the time of the Honored Matres, Danian wines were still popular choices for fine dining on various planets, including Gammu.

Red Prestige de Calvet Bordeaux, 2024, 12.5%, £9.25, Sainsburys. Grape Cabernet Sauvignon (85%) Merlot (15%). Hints of blackberry and blackcurrant, supple, well-balanced, and fleshy

Food Pairing – Meat Board

Analogue – Chateau Picard – Star Trek – Gene Roddenberry (and others)

Château Picard is the legendary multi-generational vineyard and home of Jean-Luc Picard, situated in La Barre, France. Heavily featured in Star Trek: The Next Generation and Star Trek: Picard.

In the Star Trek universe, the vineyard dates back to the 23rd century and is famous for its award-winning vintages, such as the 2305. The estate was famously tended by Picard's family, including his brother Robert and eventually Jean-Luc himself following his retirement from Starfleet.

Les Jamelle, 2024, 12.5%, £10, Coop. Grape Syrah. Full-bodied and velvety, with gentle black pepper spice and a touch of menthol.

Food Pairing – Aged Gouda

Analogue – Belter Synthetic Wine – The Expanse – James S A Corey

Because authentic Earth-grown grapes are extremely expensive to haul up the gravity well to the Belt and Mars, characters often rely on synthetic or localized variants.

"Belter" vibe, look for robust, rich red wines that pack a heavy punch: Syrah / Shiraz: These full-bodied, heavily spiced reds offer the dark, deep flavours fitting for a rough station life.

Port Taylors Late Bottle Vintage Port, 2020, 19%, £20.75, Sainsburys. Grape: Touriga Nacional (intense flavour and colour), Touriga Franca (floral aromas), Tinta Roriz (structure), Tinta Barroca (body and sweetness), and Tinto Cão (acid and longevity). Rich, voluptuous, and full-bodied. Firm yet smooth, integrated tannins offer structure to support the intense dark berry, cassis, and spicy mocha flavours.

Food Pairing – Chocolate, berries or spice

Analogue – Port – Disc World – Terry Pratchet

In Terry Pratchett's Discworld series, the fan-favourite witch Nanny Ogg has a famously pragmatic and generous approach to port:

Topping Off: In Lords and Ladies, it's noted that Nanny would happily top up her white wine with port merely because she had reached the end of the bottle.

Etiquette: In Nanny Ogg's Cookbook, she advises: "when offered port you should say, 'Ah, yes, I will have a little port.' Everyone says this. You have to say it even if what you intend is a lot of port".

The most popular wine of the evening was the Syrah. The next meeting will be on **27th October 2026** at Jane's.

WIMMIN' SWIMMIN' GROUP - Report by Annie Clouston

Wimmin of Teesdale, we need you! Lately Wimmin Swimmers have been a bit too thin on the ground – or to put it another way, not too fat in the water. To be viable we need more of you to enjoy the freedom of a women-only, woman-friendly, relaxing hour of floating about a bit, finding your webbed-feet, cruising the ooze etc, etc.

Let me address your timidities, if you have them. First, the biggy – you think you'll drown. You won't, a professionally trained lifeguard is on hand if the worst comes to the worst, plus at least eight pairs of other eyes to watch over you should you need them, and for everything else, there's a noodle (water wings are very passé).

Second, you will feel judged. We are not judgy, whatever your worries, we don't care about them except to help them go away. I've heard it said that too much exposure of the flesh causes anxiety or embarrassment, we are all shapes and sizes and let's face it, with maturity comes a certain slippage of form (unless you're Nigella Lawson or Naomi Campbell). If "Big Sue" Tilley could bare her all before Lucien Freud, Sotheby's and the National Gallery, why worry about a few friendly faces in Teesdale pool?

Thirdly, your hair will turn green with the chlorine. It's never happened, it's an urban myth. All the years I've been getting my peroxided head down in the pool, I should know. You can stop a good deal of chlorine absorption simply by soaking your hair in unchlorinated water first and then wearing a swim hat.

Fourthly, you don't know the ropes. We meet as a group in the lobby so that everyone goes into the pool together and any what's, where's, why's, are dealt with as we go.

Fifthly, you are not equipped. All you need is something to cover up the bits you feel you should. Recently, I was in the Med off Sicily with an 84 year old woman of indomitable spirit. She was in her bra and pants. Right on! I have spare goggles and hats, the leisure centre has floats, beach balls, etc, etc.

Any other worries and needing further assurance? Please contact me 07988 625738. The biggest fear should be FOMO (I'm on trend – Fear Of Missing Out) because none of our wimmin swimmers have regretted taking the plunge, and some have embraced it with gusto, loving it.

WALKING GROUPS



SHORTER WALKS - Report by Liz Colley

ATHELSTAN'S WELL

We struck lucky with the weather again as our group met for the September walk in lovely sunshine. We may walk shorter distances, but we do not shy away from a challenge and this month's walk include multiple stiles of varying heights and an elevation gain of over 300 feet in a short distance.

This month we set off from the Green Bridge over the Tees to hike up to Boldron. This meant a trek up Wyse Hill, the terrain only starts to level out once you reach Wyse Farm. Taking the first of many stiles, we took the footpaths over the fields towards Boldron. This is very much sheep country and unfortunately, we also came across a dead sheep. Picking up the Boldron Well circular walk we crossed a small packhorse bridge over

Thorsgill Beck. This bridge is notable for having very low sides, this was to enable horses with panniers to cross over it. It was also notable for having a garden trampoline jammed up against it!

Heading up the field we came to the site of the well, also known as Athelstan's Well. The well is now inside a stone enclosure and covered to keep debris out. It is thought the well was named after the first King of all England, Athelstan born around 895.He could well have used this well when leading his army over Stainmore. The well provided piped water to Boldron until mains water came to the village in 1958.



Photo: Athelstan's Well by Ian Royston

It was then a short distance into the village and some of our walkers were treated to the sight of a stoat, but it beat a hasty retreat on sighting us. We were grateful to take a few minutes rest at the picnic tables on the village green and were fascinated to learn that it is also a quoits pitch.

Our return journey via the village sewage farm took us over many more stiles to reach Wyse Farm again. From there it was a downhill walk back to Startforth and the Green Bridge. Next month's walk will be on **October 26th**.

7-9 MILE WALKING GROUP - Report by Lynda Bares

CRONKLEY FELL

There were 7 of us who met in the car park/layby at Hanging Shaw on a clear day with a bit of a sharp wind, hoping to finish before the promised rain appeared.

After crossing the B6277 we dropped down to the Tees, crossing Cronkley bridge turning right, past Cronkley Pasture, staying next to the Tees for a couple of miles, clambering over stones and walking on rather dilapidated duck boards at times, but all managing to keep upright! Then climbing up onto the Fell. Here, at the top of the climb, we had our coffee stop overlooking the northern hills.



Then over the Fell and down to the green trod, making the lunch stop just as our fellow walker met us from the other direction – now we were 8!

We wandered down the green trod to cross Fell Dike Sike and up the fields to meet the Pennine Way which we then followed down to Cronkley Farm and back to the cars. We saw plenty of sheep, a few cattle. several grouse and a few meadow pipits but not many other birds and no other walkers at all. Apart from a few drops, the rain stayed off and we all enjoyed the walk which was followed by well-earned coffee and cake.

COFFEE AND CHAT

Thursdays 2.30 – 3.30pm

Coming up:

Thursday 12th November at The Witham

BLISTER PACK RECYCLING

It is now just over a year since we began recycling our empty blister packs. Our sixth box is almost full - we have saved over 50kg from landfill or incineration!

Without your generosity and effort this would not have been possible so a BIG thankyou to all for continuing to recycle and donate towards the purchase of the boxes.

Sue Overton remains in contact with Debbie Hibbitts, Durham County Council's Senior Monitoring Officer, Strategic Waste Neighbourhoods, in the hope that DCC will eventually provide a facility at Stainton Grove Recycling Centre. They are interested in "expanding recycling opportunities.... such as blister packs....your success provides valuable evidence of the demand for such services" She sends her thanks to everyone involved in the scheme.

To continue to support the scheme, please send a donation to:-

The Teesdale u3a, Sort Code: 20 - 83 - 73 Account No: 03778576 Reference: BLISTER plus your surname

Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Android Group	1st Thurs pm	Martyn Radcliffe 07975 970088
Art Appreciation	1st Wed pm	Tony Seward 01833 630050
Automotive	3rd Tues am	Peter Colley 01833 695197
Birdwatching	3rd Mon am	Andrew Lapworth 07962 038052
Board Games	2nd Mon pm	Hazel McCallum 01833 316484
Book Group 2	2nd Mon pm	Maggie Cleminson 01833 640801
Book Group 3 Room to Read	3rd Wed am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Chess	1st Thurs pm	Diana Marks 07762 626912
Climate Solutions	1st Thurs am	Kate Bailey 07867 683195
Crochet Group	Varies	Hazel McCallum 01833 316484
Cryptic Crossword	2nd Wed pm	Sue Overton 07512 368884
Discussion	2nd Fri am	Glen Howard 07975 705816
Family History	2nd Thurs pm	Alan Swindale 01388 488348
Gardening	1st Fri pm	Julie Archer 07774 903377
Geography	3rd Thurs 2pm	Phil Johnson 07792 959320
Geology	4th Mon am	Bob Tuddenham 07812 378004
History	2nd Thurs am	Tim Meacham 07847 182554
Holiday	Occasional	Kate Keen 07880 741151
iPad & iPhone	4th Tue1.30pm	Mike Sweeting 07565 925412
Italian Conversation	Every Wed am	Marie Jenkins 07754 205664
Lunch Group	3rd Wed noon	Kate Keen 07880 741151
Needlecraft	1st Mon pm	Hilary Dunninghan hilary.dunnighan@gmail.com
Philosophy	4th Tues 10am	Ruth Sansom 01325 401850

Group	Meeting Time	Contact details
Photography	1st Tues am	Alan Kenwright 07731 122399
Pickleball	Every Mon pm	Ruth Lapworth 07787 978696
Poetry	2nd Wed am	Annie Clouston 01833 637091
Rummikub	3rd Tues pm	Julie Archer 07774 903377
Scrabble	2nd Mon pm	Judith Fanner 01833 650150
Science and Technology	2nd Mon am	Ian Royston 07818 046938
Spanish Conversation	3rd 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	4th Fri 10am	Ian Royston 07818 046938
Wildflower Group	2nd Wed 2pm	Anne Thomson 07928 594404
Wimmin Swimmin'	Saturdays	Sue Overton 07512 368884
Wine Group	3rd Tues pm	Tim Meacham 07847 182554
Wine Group Too	Last Tues pm	Jane Mardon 07816 845557
Walking Groups		
Shorter walks 3-4 miles	3rd or 4th Mon pm	Liz Colley 01833 695197
Walking 4-6 miles	2nd Tues 10am	Janet Bayles 07887 834346
Walking 7-9 miles	3rd Wed 10am	Nicky Grace nickygrace729@gmail.com
Fell Walking	4th Wed	Jane Johnstone 07771 657440

WHAT'S ON : 2026

13 OCT - 10 NOV

Made possible with Heritage Fund

the witham
Past • Present • Future
180 years
1846 – 2026

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











Pints and Ponytails
Tues 13 Oct | Workshop | 7pm | £12 including a pint

Laura Lexx: YoYo
Fri 16 Oct | Comedy | 8pm | £18

Third Class – A Titanic Story
Fri 16 Oct | Theatre | 7.30pm | £17-£19

Steeleye Span
Sat 17 Oct | Folk Music | 7.30pm | £35.50

My Life with Kenneth Williams
Wed 21 Oct | Theatre | 7.30pm | £21-£23

Fallen Angels by Nöel Coward (12+)
Thurs 22 Oct | Screening | 7pm | £13-£15

Reg Meuross
Fri 23 Oct | Folk Music | 7.30pm | £17-£19

Neil Delamere: Reinventing the Neil (14+)
Sat 24 Oct | Comedy | 7.30pm | £24

Royal Ballet & Opera: Manon
Tues 27 Oct | Screening | 7.15pm | £13-£15

Megson
Thurs 29 Oct | Folk Music | 7.30pm | £21

Daniel Foxx: How Lovely (14+)
Thurs 29 Oct | Comedy | 7.30pm | £20

Tommy & Tilly's Magic Castle:
A Spooktacular Pantomime
Fri 30 Oct | Family | 1pm | £11 Adult or Child

Adventures in Modern Recording
An Intimate Evening with Trevor Horn
Fri 30 Oct | Spoken Word | 7.30pm | £30- £80

Connor Burns: Flow (18+)
Sat 31 Oct | Comedy | 7.30pm | £19.50

Mark Steel: Work in progress (14+)
Thurs 5 Nov | Comedy | 7.30pm SOLD OUT

The Castle Players: A Lunedale Odyssey - Megan's Story
Fri 6 & Sat 7 Nov | Theatre | 7.30pm | £13-£15

Barnard Castle Band:
Remembrance Concert
Sun 8 Nov | Music | 2pm | £6-£9

Hannah James & Toby Kuhn
Tues 10 Nov | Folk Music | 7.30pm | £16

Box Office: 01833 631107

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