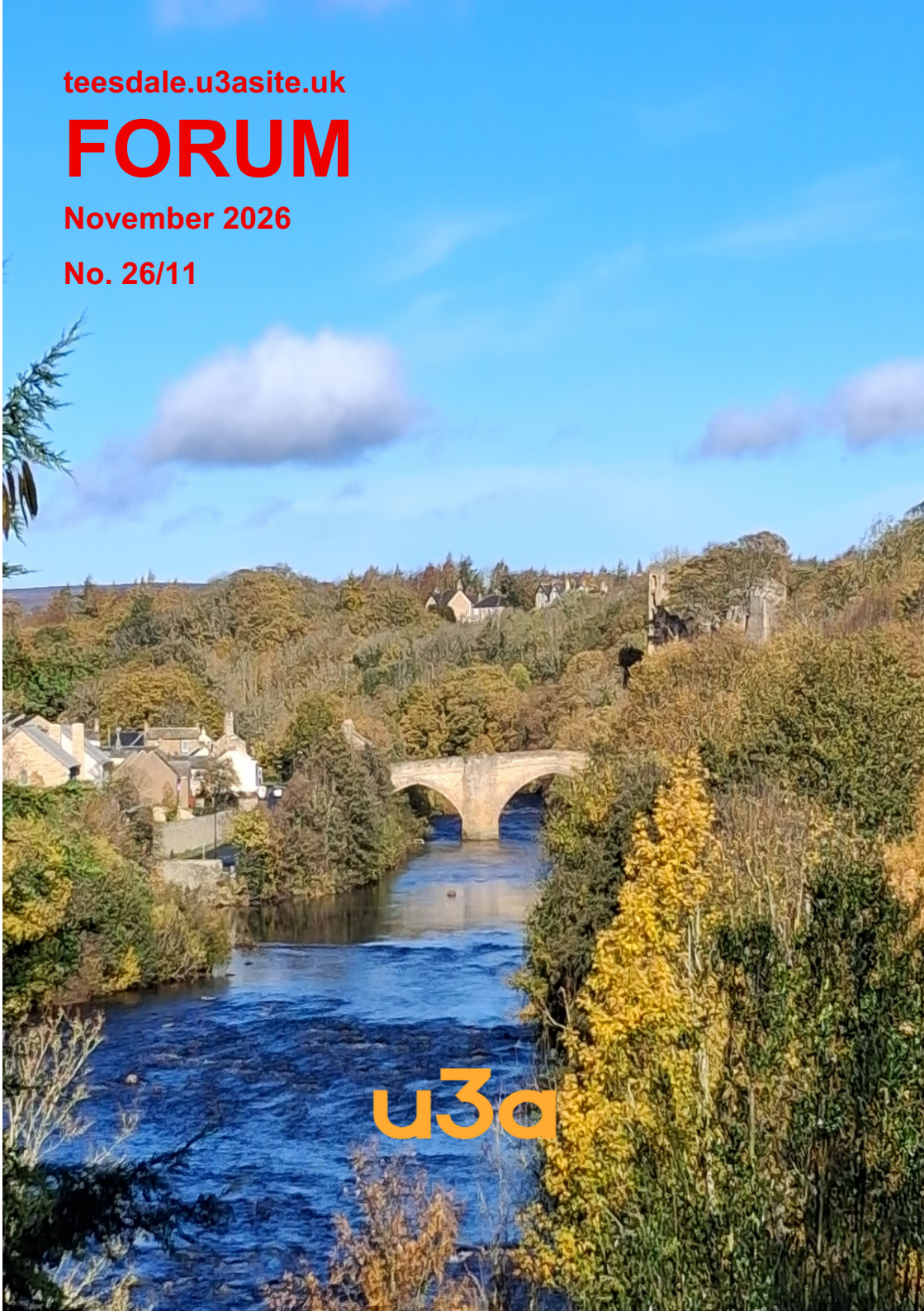
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FORUM

November 2026

No. 26/11



CHAIR'S LETTER

Dear Friends

Just recently I was with friends in west Manchester and we visited the inspirational Harris Museum in Preston. There are armchairs and sofas scattered throughout to encourage people to linger and admire the Victorian building and its collections. The library is split over the floors to allow relevant books to be housed with the appropriate collections, e.g. art books in the art galleries and history books with the archives (a section of books and computers buzzing with people doing research on the day we visited). There are long tables for reading and studying in each library section, and notices encouraging use of the books. Even the café has a collection of books for visitors to linger over, as well as a fascinating OS map collection.



We visited two wonderful current exhibitions: 'Horrockses fashions, from royalty to ready-to-wear' and 'Alternative Kids 1980 – We Met Again 2026', black-and-white portraits taken by local photographer Sam Hill. The fashion exhibition was our reason for the visit, especially for me with a family background of fashion and sewing. It was a delight (see photo), well displayed, full of background information and wonderful examples. The photography exhibition was a lovely snapshot of social history, focusing originally on 'rebel' youth in the 1980s, punks, etc. and then the same people today. I was struck by the warmth of this exhibition towards the people of Preston, a town which is struggling into today's world. I recommend a visit. The park-and-ride bus drops you outside the museum in Jackson Street, it is free to visit and the café is welcoming (https://theharris.org.uk/).

I will not be at the November monthly meeting, but with family celebrating a significant birthday!!! Hope to catch up with you all soon, either at the Christmas meal or around the town.

Julie

Front cover: **The County Bridge, Barnard Castle** ***(photo Tony Seward)***

It's *Your* Forum

Editors: Kate Bailey, Annie Clouston, Jane Kenwright, Tony Seward
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Edition No: 26/11

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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 18 January when the editor will be Annie. **(There is no edition in December.)**

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

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MONTHLY MEETING – Report by Ian Reid

Pete Redgrave, one of our own members, stood in at the last minute at the October meeting as the scheduled speaker was ill. Pete, who is an excellent photographer, had recently returned from a trip to Africa and was able to give an illustrated talk, laced with much humour, about his 'African Adventure'.

Pete flew to Kinsana in the Republic of the Congo, where he was part of a group of six photographers on a guided expedition to the Chobe River and the Okavango Delta areas in Botswana. The Chobe flows into the Zambezi whilst the Okavango Delta is a unique dry area which feeds into the sands of the Kalahari Desert rather than the sea. Both these areas are rich in wildlife, enabling Pete to enjoy his favourite pastime of photography.

Overall he took about 25,000 photographs, many during the 'golden hour', the short period just before sunset or just after sunrise when the sun sits low in the sky producing soft, warm, and golden light, enabling some beautiful photo shots.

Illustrating the Darwinian imperative of survival were photographs showing how camouflage, body maintenance, skin care, rest, reproduction, fighting, and mating for instance, play an important part in determining the features and behaviour of animals. He showed a leopard hidden in a tree, hippos submerged in the river, elephants in the mud, crocodiles with jaws wide open, giraffes eating leaves in high branches, and many birds including the Chobe darter, similar to our cormorant.



Elephants, giraffes and impala were frequently seen, cheetahs and hyenas only once, lots of baboons, several warthogs, one monitor lizard on the last day, lots of Okavango doves, half collared and striped kingfishers, carmine bee-eaters and rock pratincoles.

Pete finished with his favourite pictures, including a cheetah in long grass, a hippo breaking the water surface (above), giraffes silhouetted against the fading evening sun and the last one - a beautiful photograph of a huge elephant with baby under a full moon.

NEXT MEETINGS AT THE WITHAM

AS USUAL, THERE WILL BE NO MONTHLY MEETING IN DECEMBER

28 January 2027. Close Encounters of The Avian Kind: Meetings with extraordinary birds from across the world. A personal selection by u3a member Andrew Lapworth of some of his favourite bird encounters.

25 February. The Border Reivers – Blood in the War Saddle. How the Border Reivers lived and died during the conflict in the borders between England and Scotland in the Tudor period. Speaker John Watson.

25 March. Sugar, Slavery, Sacrifice - and Oblivion. The Royal Navy's Part in Ending the Atlantic Slave Trade. British sea power enabled national wealth to thrive on the West Indian sugar trade in the 18th Century, an economy ultimately dependent on imports of slaves from West Africa. When Parliament forbade the Slave Trade to continue after 1807 the navy was called on to implement the ban. Half a century later its fighting prowess and maritime skills had brought this infamous traffic in human souls to an end, an achievement largely forgotten now.

MEMBERSHIP 2027/28

A reminder to those who pay membership fees by Bank Transfer/BACS or Standing Order to ensure that payment leaves your account ***no earlier than*** 1st March 2027. Members still wishing to pay by cash or card can do so from February's Witham meeting onwards. Please note that any change in membership fee for 2027/28 will not be announced until February 2027.

For those who joined after 1st September 2026 - your renewal is not due until March 2028.

FAMILY HISTORY STARTER WORKSHOP REPORT

by Alan Swindale

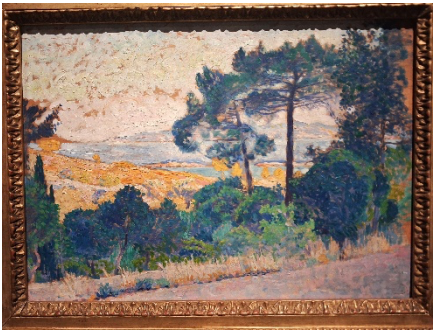
Many people interested in investigating their family history don't know where to begin. Pam Taylor of the Family History Interest Group has prepared a 'distance learning' pack for just such people, and she introduced this pack to the ten members who attended the workshop on Saturday 31 October. Those who signed up for the pack will receive the (free) distance learning course to work through at their own pace, learning where are the free sources of information on the internet and how to approach researching your family tree. Pam will be there to answer their questions by email and mentor their progress. When they have found their feet they may wish to join in the Family History Interest Group meetings which look at different topics in more depth. Anyone who couldn't attend the workshop but who wishes to receive the course should contact me.

Alan Swindale, ajs@fivenine.co.uk

GROUP REPORTS

ART APPRECIATION GROUP - Report by Tony Seward

On 4 November,16 of us assembled in the foyer of the Bowes Museum and split into two groups, in order to visit each of the two current exhibitions in turn. One group took a tea break in Café Bowes between seeing them both, while the other decided to go straight from one to the other without refreshment! In the temporary exhibition gallery on the 1st floor we saw



Impressions of Light. Masterpieces from the Museum of Modern Art (MuMA), Le Havre, and The Bowes Museum. bringing together French paintings from the two collections. They trace the evolution of landscape painting, from Pre-Impressionism to

(left) Henri-Edmond Cross, Study for Landscape with Trees, 1898 (MuMA)

Post-Impressionism, featuring well-known artists such as Courbet, Monet, Boudin and Dufy, and others who were new to many of us. At the same time, it celebrates the strong links forged by John and Joséphine with the port of Le Havre, and points up the similarities between the industrialised area around it, and the coalfields of Co. Durham.

One small quibble: the title of the exhibition was felt to be somewhat misleading, as only its small central section consists of Impressionist paintings *per se*. The exhibition has a much wider timespan, from Courbet and even earlier, to Raoul Dufy's *View of Le Havre with Rainbow* of 1936.





(above) *Albert Marquet, The Red Roofs, c. 1902-4 (MuMa)*

(left) Maxime Maufra, The Boat on the Coast. 1902 (MuMA)

On the 2nd floor, **Norman Cornish. A Life in Sketchbooks** gives an intimate glimpse into the working practices of this much-loved local artist. As well as a generous selection from the hundreds of sketchbooks he filled during his career, it includes filmed interviews with members of his family, and a historic video of Norman walking around Spennymoor highlighting the people and scenes he loved and transformed into works of art. One case also displays his painting materials, including the infamous Flo Master pen which was apparently very difficult and messy to use, but he managed to master it! We marvelled at the fluency of his sketches, and learned how he carefully assembled the various motifs into his finished compositions – scenes from the pub and the street, miners going to work, industrial landscapes. On a more domestic scale are the affectionate studies of his wife Sarah and children, including the museum's recent acquisition of 'Sarah Peeling Potatoes'.

At our December meeting, back in Enterprise House, we will explore the life and work of Stanley Spencer.

BIRDWATCHING GROUP - Report by Linda Elliott

A group of eight of us ventured out on 19 October to visit one of our regular haunts: **Low Barns Reserve** at Witton-le-Wear. The densely overcast sky did not deter us — not because we are particularly hardy, but more because this venue has plenty of hides. Andrew was away on an exotic birding holiday in Patagonia, but we had a lovely morning admiring numerous birds, including ducks and swans nearer to home. Two of the group had 'scopes, which they shared willingly and generously, making it possible for all of us to see lots of fine details about our subjects which normal binoculars simply cannot capture.

After the hot, dry summer the water was very low. Unfortunately, and unusually, we didn't see a Heron, a Little Egret, Greylags or Canada Geese, all of which are normally found here. Nonetheless we did see 30 different species of birds, including the locally common **Marsh Tit** *(left, photo by Andrew Lapworth)***.** We also watched a **Little Grebe** that caught a fish so big it struggled with it for a minute or so before it could even begin to try to swallow it. Most of the ducks were very still, as were the Cormorants and several types of gull, but Lapwings were flying. Shovelers slept soundly with their heads tucked in, except for one which opened its bill as wide as possible like an enormous yawn. It was quite a treat to see that.



As the visit came to an end, we all felt that the morning had been well spent and we had certainly seen more than we had anticipated.

BOARD GAMES GROUP– October Report by Kate Bailey

Playing board games with our friendly group, in the pub on a Monday afternoon, is always entertaining and sometimes (slightly) competitive. With reduced numbers in October we made up two tables, both playing 'Ticket to Ride'. This was a refresher for novices and experts alike in preparation for the proposed ‘Board Games Rally’ at a future u3a social event.



'Ticket to Ride' is a strategic travel game, fun to play and it tests your geographical awareness of the rail destinations in America or Europe. You don't discover the winner until the final count; this time Jane and Hazel were winners on their respective tables. The first table then played 'Rummikub', using numbered tiles to lay down runs and groups, similar to the card game 'Rummy', and Hazel won.

The second table played 'Carcassonne' which involves building out around a river landscape by placing cards to construct roads, settlements or monasteries. The scoring system is based on the players' little figures (meeples) claiming these and the territory around; Jane was declared the winner. As always it was an enjoyable afternoon of board games. New players and suggestions for new games are always welcome!

BOARD GAMES GROUP– November Report by Jane Kenwright

This was a lively affair with twelve players at three tables, competing in six different games.

Our wordsmiths table played a game which was new to the group. ‘Upwords’ is a 3D word-building board game and just like in a crossword, you spell words across or down. However, the unique twist is that you can

stack new letter tiles on top of existing letters to change a word. This table also played 'Rummikub Word'. Both games were won by Jean.

The players at the second table were transported to the Pacific Northwest, building sustainable ecosystems with differing habitats and wildlife, which is to say they played 'Cascadia'. They then found themselves in medieval France in the tile laying game of 'Carcassonne'. On this table again, both games were won by the same player. Well done Chris!



The third and final table played 'Ticket to Ride', using the Europe map. Despite Pete's sterling efforts to complete the most destination tickets with the highest score, he was pipped at the post by Sue, who won by virtue of gaining the 10 point bonus for the longest unbroken chain of carriages. Three rounds of the card game 'Skyjo' completed a fun afternoon, where Sue's clean sweep was only prevented by Jane sneaking in to win the last round.

BOOK GROUP 3 (ROOM TO READ) - Report by Annie Clouston

Departing from our usual format we had an enjoyable morning discussing individually chosen novellas – which mostly could be defined as books with narrow spines.

We had two favourites in common; *A Month in the Country* by J L Carr and *Foster* by Claire Keegan, both of which have been excellently adapted for film (*Foster* retitled as *The Quiet Girl*). J L Carr's book is set in the Yorkshire Dales. It is a moving story of a man trying to find peace after his experiences in WW1 who returns from war to find his wife has abandoned him. His restoration of a mural in the village church and the relationships he makes are redemptive. Claire Keegan's novella, set in Ireland, is emotionally rich, moving and beautifully written.

Alan Bennett's *The Clothes They Stood Up In* is classic Bennett, humourful, observant of human foibles and quirky. Alice Thomas Ellis's *The Fly in the Ointment* – the third in a trilogy about impending nuptials told by three different narrators – has the same qualities with the additional ingredient of Ellis's characteristic waspishness.

We had all read *Animal Farm* by George Orwell as teenagers, but maturity brings different insights! It's a timeless allegory. New to us all was *The Testament of Mary* by Colm Toibin which describes the "astonishing, raw grief of a mother who has lost her son". Our discussion led us to talk about the grip of the Catholic church on its members and on whole cultures. So many of our authors, Keegan, Boyne, Toibin, write of its pernicious influence in the lives of ordinary people, particularly women.

Two contributions by email came from holidaying members. *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway tells the story of Santiago, a fisherman obsessed with landing an enormous marlin single-handedly from his small boat. Having vanquished the poor brute he strapped it to the side of his boat, only for it to be eaten by sharks on his way back to harbour.

Our final book was *Water* by John Boyne; "a shockingly powerful story of family catastrophe, betrayal, heartbreak and loss" but also how to deal with guilt, can it ever be alleviated? Despite its grimness, it is "balanced with moments of humour and the sense of a strong community surviving in a remote environment".

We decided against attempting to score our books in the customary way. Instead we rated our meeting with five stars.

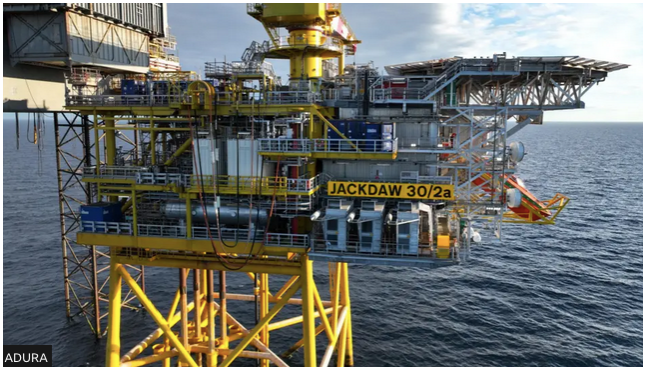
CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GROUP - Report by Kate Bailey

This month we discussed the community screening of the public information film - *The People's Emergency Briefing for Climate and Nature*. Its emphasis is on building awareness and understanding of what the climate and nature crisis will mean for ordinary people over the coming years. A recent webinar speculates about the potential impacts of the strong El Nino weather pattern in the Pacific, which is predicted to peak in December, bringing more windy and stormy weather to the UK. There is concern about

the future of the UK's imported food supplies - Rice Krispies has changed its recipe because of rice harvest failures

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFcjNseHGfw

News that the controversial Jackdaw gas field has now been given the go-ahead to start production led to an interesting discussion of the 'pros and cons' of the recent decision. Group members who had at first been horrified by the prospect of more North Sea gas production accepted that UK-produced fossil gas has some economic, employment and energy security advantages over imports from the US and Gulf states. A new UK Energy Wealth Fund is being created to channel oil and gas tax revenues into the transition to cleaner energy.



(Image credit: Adura, Aberdeen, from the BBC website)

Our 'Good News' - The UN Environment Programme says China's clean-air measures to cut coal use and industrial emissions prevented about 680,000 premature deaths between 2020 and 2025. On a smaller scale, the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street in London will make Xmas shopping more bearable by eliminating vehicle-generated air pollution.

The Marine Conservation Society has estimated that, since 2015 when charges were imposed for single use plastic bags, the numbers washing up on UK beaches has fallen by 80%. Targeted policies appear to be working.

For example, from October 2027, customers will pay a refundable deposit for certain drink containers under the new Deposit Return Scheme. The deposit will apply to all single-use drinks containers that are made wholly or mainly from aluminium or steel, or PET plastic. Milk bottles and others made from high-density polyethylene (HDPE) will not be included.

Please keep donating to support our Blister Packs recycling campaign - thanks to members we will have saved over 50 kilos of this mixed materials waste from landfill this year.

But do remember to remove all unused pills from the discarded packs before you bring them for recycling. Thank you!

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD GROUP - Report by Sue Overton

'Tempus fugit' and two sessions have taken place since my last report. The November session was a full house with 12 attendees including two new members.

Thank you Celia for the minute cryptic clue which provided a good warmup. These are daily clues found at www.minutecryptic.com We worked as one group completing a Quiptic crossword (No. 1407) and a Times Quick Cryptic (No. 3432).....not sure how they define quick!

Here are a couple of clues to try, both anagrams so not difficult:

Wild turnip scam presented in document (10)
Papa desiring changes, doing a bunk (12)

We meet again on Wednesday 9 December at 2pm in the Guide HQ, Birch Road. All welcome, from beginners to experts. Contact Sue Overton **07512 368884** or email sueoverton@hotmail.com for further information

DISCUSSION GROUP - Report by Glen Howard

A bright sunny morning saw us trying to put the world to rights. Our discussion topics included: a tourist tax; children to have offences they commit cleared when they reach adulthood; young people protesting on the streets, mainly abroad; the US mid-term elections and President Trump; Morrison stores to introduce flashing lights to help you find the item you want; the Teesdale Mercury; the need for cash; the Age of Innocence; King Athelstone (the first English King) and his well near Boldron; student loans;

the discovery of leukaemia mutations that can be spotted as early as 50 years before diagnosis.

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 11 December and 8 January 2027.**

Glen Howard **07975 705816** glenhow31@gmail.com

FAMILY HISTORY INTEREST GROUP - Report by Alan Swindale

Eight members of the group visited The Story in Durham, the home of the Durham Record Office and Archives. Susan Shanks, the Senior Collections Officer, introduced us to the collections which can be viewed (digitally) at The Story, with emphasis on those of interest to family historians. These are all available online via https://www.thestorydurham.org/our-collections This includes births, marriages and burials in County Durham up to 1950; only the indexes are available on-line but images of the original documents are viewable in the collections room at The Story. The 'Index Search' allows you to use a single word/name or phrase to search all the collections; the returned result(s) may be information available there and then or a reference to a document which will have to retrieved from the Archives.

At the time of our visit the system was quite slow and I spent a lot of time waiting for pages to load. This was blamed on a temporary fault but I gained the impression that it was not uncommon.

Downstairs was a display area with fixed and interactive displays to interest children of all ages. Unfortunately, the expository cards were either in dim lighting or, if lit, the light reflected off the text making it unreadable.

My recommendation would be to carry out your initial research online rather than in person. Then make a personal visit with a list of any documents you want to be retrieved from the Archive.

The December meeting of the group will be held in the Dales Room in Enterprise House on the Harmire Industrial estate in Barnard Castle at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday December 10th. The afternoon will be based on a talk at RootTech2026: "Tracing Transnational Lives: Bridging Records Between Countries". Although mainly addressing emigration from Europe to the USA, it is much more widely applicable.

GARDENING GROUP - Report by Kate Keen and Julie Archer

In November the gardening group had another talk at Stainton Village Hall. Our speaker was Sue Wood with a talk about Ripon Workhouse Gardens. Sue is about to retire from her role at the workhouse museum and has worked there for 40 years.

In 1852 the Mayor, Henry Morton, confirmed the workhouse should be built to house 120 people, the whole project was funded and initiated by William and Elisha Backhouse, a family with horticultural connections to this day.

The workhouse was a two-storey building with separate spaces for male and female who were separated on entry. It was built to be self-contained with its own Chaplain and Doctor. The Master looked after the whole house and had his own family house at the entrance to the estate.

The Guardians approved whether individuals or families could have "outdoor relief" which enabled them to remain in their own homes, or whether they should be admitted to the workhouse. In 1844 around 2000 people were given temporary shelter in the workhouse and 130,00 were given outdoor relief. There were casual wards which gave vagrants one night's accommodation with a bath, a meal and a bed for the night with a task to be completed the next morning, they could not then return for another 30 days.

For those inmates on a longer term the Master decided their roles, which could be in the garden, cooking, laundry, housework etc. There was also a schoolroom and the Master would try to ensure that the children would be educated enough to be able to find work.

The workhouse is now a museum and is one of the most complete in England, with most of the buildings still standing. Over the years the museum has had grants from the lottery and others to repair the buildings and garden.

The garden now is run as far as possible on the methods used in the 1800s. Heritage varieties are grown including potatoes, cabbage, turnips, swede, parsnip and peas. There is a small orchard with heritage apples including the Dog's Snout variety.



As well as the vegetable garden, the Master's House had its own garden and this has been restored to include foxgloves, dianthus, sweet williams, hollyhocks, lupins and delphiniums. The restoration of the flower garden was assisted by Newby Hall who we heard about last month in the talk about the Harrogate Show.

This was another interesting talk which was enjoyed by the group.

In December we will be taking a trip to Ormesby Hall to see how this National Trust property has been decorated for Christmas.

In January the group will take a break, reconvening in February for a talk about the Plant Heritage scheme.

GEOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Jane Harrison

Our meeting started with a round-up of geography topics in the news. These included pyrocumulonimbus thunder clouds starting wild fires in the USA, rock formations in Scotland resembling those on Mars, and the United Nations voting to use the Equal Earth map projection, which shows the size of Africa more accurately than Mercator's map projection of the 16th century.

Richard Bothroyd updated us on El Niño, which since my previous report has been downgraded, from “very strong” to “strong”. He also mentioned the polar vortexes, which can be affected by El Niño. These are bands of fast-moving winds, which rotate at two levels above both poles. When the vortex over the Arctic weakens, large meanders can form in the westerly airstreams. This brings very cold Arctic air into North America and Europe.

Phil Johnson then outlined how mapping has been revolutionised by geographical information systems (GIS for short). These allow a complex range of data, e.g. population figures, plant species (the list is endless) to be linked to specific locations on a map, then stored and analysed.

Les Knight demonstrated the potential of GIS on the National Library of Scotland's free-to-use map website. It is a treasure trove of historic maps, which can also be looked at side-by-side or superimposed on satellite or LiDAR images to mention but two options.

GIS is widely used by many public and privately owned organisations, websites and apps. On the Historic England website, for example, you can search all its listed buildings and historic places on a map and then click to access detailed information on each individual entry.

Many websites, such as Flight Aware, work in real time. Aircraft flights and routes can be observed, as can amazingly, the altitude and speed of individual planes! Some sites, such as the Woodland Trust's Ancient Trees Inventory, allow the public to contribute by uploading photographs and information on individual trees.

The possibilities of GIS are endless and touch many aspects of our lives.

Next meetings: Thursday 17 December. The Witham. 2pm. Gerald Blake, “The Geography of the Nativity.” For our meeting on Thursday 21 January 2027 please bring along any interesting maps, plans, charts or atlases you might have. Details to follow.

HISTORY GROUP - Report by Christine Price

The Bowes Baby Murder Trial
The role of parish officials and early forensic science

It's Bowes in 1827.

George Clarkson (25) farms at North Field, just off "Long Street", on the course of the Roman Road between Barney and Bowes. Eleanor Thompson is his housekeeper. Anne Hamilton, her niece, is a farm servant and has left her daughter Mary Jane with her own mother in Kirkby Thore, Westmorland. Thomas Donald is the Overseer for Bowes Parish, elected annually under the Poor Relief Act (1601). He is also the elected Parish Constable - there was no County Constabulary in North Riding before 1856.

Anne is pregnant and goes to Thomas Donald, the Overseer, who is responsible for the support of unmarried mothers. She tells him that Clarkson is not the father, that the father is in Kirkby Thore. He places her in the care of Mrs Sarah Robinson in Lartington. On April 19th 1827 twin sons are born. William and James, described by Mrs Robinson as two fine boys, are baptised as Catholics by Michael Ellis, chaplain at Lartington.

Clarkson visits and is overheard telling Anne that he would only marry her if she disposed of the boys by lying on them, telling her that Ruth had done it and now dresses well. She did not manage to achieve this. Mrs Robinson barred him, but Anne's aunt took all three back to North Field on April 25th.

The boys did not thrive and had spells of turning blue and having convulsions. George gave them some "boily" - bread soaked in milk, with white powder at the bottom. Anne tasted it and said her mouth and throat were burned and swollen, confirmed by Anne Hammond who laid out the babies. They were buried on Wednesday May 9th - their bodies, hands and legs described as being black. After their deaths Anne Hamilton said that she would still be prepared to marry George Clarkson. Rumours started that the boys had been murdered and that George Clarkson was their father. Thomas Donald, the Constable, investigated. Remarkably, for a Parish Constable in a remote part of the Yorkshire he used methods of which the famous Bow Street Runners would have been proud. They searched Clarkson's house and found a box of white powder, which burnt the tongue of one of the searchers. It was thought to contain white arsenic, then easily

available, e.g. in green dyes, as a food adulterant (sometimes accidental), sheep dips, medicines. They tested the lath and plaster wall through which Sarah Robinson claimed to have overheard the pair arguing.

The bodies were exhumed and Thomas Kipling, a Barnard Castle surgeon, carried out post-mortems on them. He tested the stomach contents and suspected that they contained arsenic. Samples were sent to John Davies, a chemical lecturer in Manchester who performed seven different tests for arsenic and concluded that they were positive. This was five years before Marsh's definitive test was introduced.

George Clarkson was arrested and taken to York Castle prison. The trial for the murder of James Hamilton, held at York Assizes, under Sir John Hullock, a judge who lived at Thorngate House in Barnard Castle, was widely reported in detail in newspapers in London and even in Ireland. *The Star* and *Morning Herald* were quoted. Evidence appears to have been well presented by all the witnesses, though John Davies was hesitant, and finally Sir John summed up. The jury retired, returned after one and three- quarter hours and found the defendant "Not Guilty". In view of this the trial for the murder of William was not pursued and George Clarkson was acquitted.

It is thought that the evidence of women was not taken as seriously as that of men. Anne Hamilton may have been seen as a woman who already had one illegitimate child and was trying to entrap George Clarkson into marriage. We will never know. Both appear to have disappeared without trace after the trial.

iPAD and iPHONE GROUP - Report by Mike Sweeting

Scams and Wallets

Having heard about two attempts to perpetrate scams against u3a members, we started by looking at the types of scams involved. One was a bank transfer scam where an individual is persuaded their account is at risk and the funds need to be protected by transferring them to a 'safe' account. The other was an attempt at a SIM Swap scam whereby the scammer tries to gather as much information about the potential victim as possible with the aim of persuading the victim's mobile phone provider to cancel the existing SIM card and issue a new one to them. This then means they can potentially

carry out fraudulent online transactions and get access to authorisation codes using the new SIM card.

We moved on to look at the caller options available on iPhone. They are useful in stopping some nuisance calls but care needs to be taken as the moves can prevent some organisations, e.g. hospitals, getting in touch when it might be important.

In the interests of lightening our wallets and purses, we then looked again at Apple Wallet and a less comprehensive but still useful app called Supercards. These apps can store information such as loyalty cards, tickets, boarding cards, etc. Wallet can additionally be used to make secure payments in shops, restaurants, etc. allowing the user to keep close track of expenditure.

Our next meeting was not originally scheduled but will now take place as usual in Enterprise House on 24 November at 1:30pm.

NEEDLECRAFT - Report by Hilary Dunnighan

This month we were hosted by one of our members in her own home.



People were working on their own projects, which involved mainly knitting but some crochet. The photo shows hand knitted hats modelled by Sheila and Doreen! While crafting, the discussion veered from taking a Norwegian cruise, via the price of apartments at Grove Park to the pricey drop-off charges at airports. We were quite sceptical about a media report that claimed some people could do a 1000-piece jigsaw in 1 hour 40 minutes and wondered what possible enjoyment could be had from completing them so quickly! As a group, we all agreed with an article in the *Daily Mail*, stating that knitting is good for one's peace of mind and wellbeing. We all commented – "tell us something we don't already know"!!

While enjoying tea and cake, we agreed to check the availability of the Golf Club as a venue for our annual post-Christmas lunch.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 7 December 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 Wallace Anderson

Are there any true values?

"God is dead."

These are the most famous words attributed to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). In fact he pinched them from Hegel (1770 -1831). But how could God die? God is supposed to be immortal. Immortals don't die. That's why God's death sounds so odd: Nietzsche wasn't saying that God had been alive at one time and now wasn't; rather that belief in God had stopped being reasonable and that it left us without a basis for morality. Our ideas of right and wrong and good and evil make sense in a world where there is a God. They don't in a godless one.

A starting point may be Kant (1724-1808) who pre-dates Nietzsche and was held in the highest regard by many philosophers. Kant insisted that although we cannot prove the world has a purpose, we must look upon it as if it had. He did not deny evil, ugly and apparently purposeless aspects of the world, but thought they counted for a lot less than their more uplifting opposites. Human reason cannot prove the existence of God because God exists outside the physical world that our minds can perceive. We must rationally assume that God exists to ensure that justice, virtue and happiness ultimately align in an afterlife. Without God the moral purpose of the highest good would feel pointless or irrational.

Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and then Nietzsche took this point of view, challenged the underlying premise and came to depressing conclusions. Schopenhauer's most famous work was *The World as Will and Representation.* The Will is not God but a blind, directionless, meaningless force: 'Life is painful and it would have been better not to have been born' Only Art and particularly Music can make life bearable.

Nietzsche was heavily Influenced by these ideas and was to meet Wagner, who held similar views. We then went on to discuss the extent to which we are influenced by parents, upbringing and the time in which we live. According to Seneca, a Roman philosopher of the first century AD, 'The values of whoever in his thinking takes note of only his own age will influence just a few'. Remember Nietzsche and Schopenhauer were German, living in 19thcCentury Germany. And they both had odd upbringings.

Nietzsche went insane when he was 56 and his works were taken over by his sister. She took control and edited his writings, turning them into propaganda for the Nazis.

Come and join us for the next philosophy group meeting on the 4th Tuesday of the month at Enterprise House 10–12 noon. All are welcome.

PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP - Report by Alan Kenwright

In November, nine members of the photography group met up at UTASS in Middleton in Teesdale. We were lucky to have found as a venue a large room with windows on two sides, allowing plenty of daylight in and allowing us to practice our art indoors even when the weather has turned inclement. We spent part of the meeting discussing possible themes for the group's 2028 Calendar and part of it discussing tips and tricks for portrait photography. Finally, the group got to have a play putting some of what had been discussed into practice.



(photo by Val Reynolds).

Next meeting yet to be confirmed but probably the beginning of February, when we will finalise our schedule of events for the coming year.

POETRY GROUP – October Report by Mike Catling

This month the Poetry Group was awash with a variety of poems exploring the theme of 'Water.' There were contributions from well-known poets such as Gerard Manley Hopkins, his alliteration in full spate in the poem 'Inversnaid,' (Degged with dew, dappled with dew / Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through), and Alfred Lord Tennyson, whose poem 'Crossing the Bar' is used as a metaphor for dying (For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place / The flood may bear me far, / I hope to see my Pilot face to face / When I have crost the bar.)

Traditional folk lyrics in 'The Water of Tyne' reminded of us of being separated from a loved one by the river and the need for a 'boatman' 'To ferry me over the Tyne to my honey, / And I will remember the boatman and thee.'

David Scott, writes of listening to the music of the Cumbrian beck, 'The orchestra, liquid in its tumbling / responds to the rocks by escaping down . . . over rock and into pool.' Whilst on the other side of the world from New Zealand, Selina Tusitala Marsh tells of the Te Awa Tupua river becoming the first to receive the status of a 'legal person' and hence environmental protection and support. In her poem she goes on to contrast this to the river Clyde, which is still in the process of struggling to recover from industrial pollution created in the mid-1800s.

From India we had 'New Rain' by Rabindranath Tagore, which celebrates the arrival of the Indian monsoon and the emotional awakening it brings to both nature and the human heart.

One of our members, without telling the rest of the group, had taken a prose description from one of Charles Dickens's novels describing fog and reordered it into blank verse without changing a single word. It spoke of the effects of fog in a broad number of settings including rivers, marshes, ships and people. Maybe someone in a U3A book group can name the novel?

We also read poems by Dennis O'Driscoll, D H Lawrence, Philip Larkin, Gregory O'Brien and Stevie Smith's famous 'Not Waving but Drowning,' with its salutary final verse, 'Oh, no no no, it was too cold always / (Still the

dead one lay moaning) / I was much too far out all my life / And not waving but drowning.'

By way of contrast the poems the members of the group share each month bring us nearer to each other into a shared warmth.

POETRY GROUP - November Report by Marilyn Normanton

Working our way through poems relating to the four elements, this month's theme was Air, which at first didn't seem to have proved an inspiring choice of subject for many poets. However, nothing daunted we managed to find an interesting and thought-provoking selection.

In Simon Armitage's "In Praise of Air" he describes being awoken to the magic of air by "a conjurer" as a young child, proposing that "air be a major god" with "Both dragonfly and Boeing" dangling "in its see-through nothingness…"

'Spell of the Air' by Elizabeth Jennings personifies Air, writing "I am the impulse of all whispers" and states categorically "I am your life breathing in and out".

We imagine a still summer's day in Katherine Mansfield's 'Voices of the Air'. When "The little throats that sing and rise" and the "little voices: the bee, the fly / the leaf that taps" can be heard above the background sounds of "sea and wind".

Listening to Neil Young's 'Prairie Wind', we were transported to a different landscape as he revisits "the prairie where the winds blow long and hard". He feels the "Prairie wind blowing through my head / Trying to remember what daddy said/ Before too much time took away his head". A disquieting image.

In 'Wind', Ted Hughes' powerful description of a storm begins "This house has been far out at sea all night". He describes "The woods crashing…Winds stampeding" as "The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guyrope". " Now deep / In chairs, …We watch the fireblazing /And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on ".

Our meeting being on the 11 November, 'High Flight' by John Magee, a WW11 fighter pilot who sadly died in 1941, was an appropriate choice. His joy evident, he slips "the surly bonds of Earth" dancing in "the skies on laughter silvered wings". He has "wheeled and soared and swung/ High in the sunlit silence", treading "the high untrespassed sanctity of space", feeling he "touched the face of God."

Tupak Shakur's poem 'The Rose that grew from Concrete' shows a sensitivity and use of language that belies his difficult life and violent death. "Proving nature's law is wrong it/ learned to walk without having feet" / Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, / it learned to breathe fresh air. / Long live the rose that grew from concrete / when no one else ever cared".

What might these two young men have achieved if they had lived.

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.

This month all the members had played before so we could launch straight into the games. Again there were 9 of us and we split into 3 groups of 3. Jeanette and Edna both won 2 games each. Each group played either 3 or 4 games.

Halfway through we had a break for refreshments, with a range of cakes and biscuits.

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 Jeanette's house for this month's meeting, there were 10 of us and we split into 3 groups, a 4, and 2 x 3. We divided up as follows, Lillian, Minorca, Ray and Judith. Regina, Jeanette, and Regina, Paula, Kate and Deborah.

Judith won her game with a score of 123 points. Kate won her game with a score of 231 including a 7 letter word INTERNE for 70 points. Phil won his game with 265 points including a 7 letter word STENTED for 60 points.

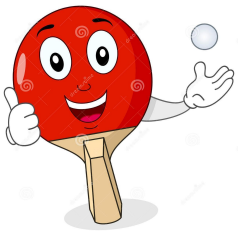
We paused for a refreshment break with tea, coffee, delicious home-made cakes and biscuits provided by Jeanette.

In the second round the 3 winners played together, which Phil won with a score of 195. Deborah, Lillian, Paula and Jeanette played together and although Paula had a 7 letter word OVERCAST for 65, Lillian won that game with 210 points. Ray, Monica and Regina played their game and Ray won that with a score of 227.

Our next meeting is on 9 November at Lillian's house. Thank you Jeanette for hosting this month's meeting and for the lovely refreshments

Please call **07790 407152** if you need any information.

TABLE TENNIS GROUP - Report by Peter Singer



"Whoops! Aargh! What was that? For heaven's sake! Oh no, not AGAIN!" These are some of the more printable exclamations often emanating from our Friday afternoon table tennis sessions. Sometimes it just seems impossible not to keep hitting the ball into the net or over the end of the table. Why is this and how can we change it? Well, perhaps surprisingly, according to coach Tom Lodziak, it's usually more to do with the angle of the bat rather than the force with which the ball is hit. Just pushing the ball back seems as if it should be fairly simple but first you need to know if the ball you are returning has top-spin or back-spin on it, so it's important to look at your opponent's bat before they hit the ball to see what spin they are applying. If they are hitting underneath and down the back of the ball, it's back-spin and

if they are hitting over and up the back of the ball, it's top-spin – and essentially your return should mirror their shot. If it's back-spin, open the face of your bat (i.e. with the top edge of the bat tilted slightly back towards you) and hit under the ball. If it's top-spin, close the face of your bat (i.e. with the top edge tilted slightly forward and away from you) and hit up and over the ball. Equally, when serving, the golden rule is always to assume that the ball will be returned, be ready and look at your opponent's bat to see what type of spin they are applying. Then you can adjust the angle of your bat accordingly.

Of course, if it was that easy, we would all be draped in medals, signing autographs and competing for Sports Personality of the Year. It isn't easy but with practice it's certainly possible to improve and to land more shots over the net and on the other side of the table, which can be very satisfying and also reduces the urge for ever more clamorous exclamations, much to everyone else's relief.

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

What is Classical Music?

This month's Understanding Classical Music session looked at Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concert No. 5, "What is Classical Music?", filmed at Carnegie Hall over sixty years ago. It was the fifth of 53 programmes in the series.

Bernstein opened with Handel's *Water Music*, declared it classical, and then asked why. Everyone knows it isn't jazz, folk or rock, but the obvious labels fail. "Good" and "serious" apply to other genres. "Highbrow" ignores the millions of non-intellectuals who love the music. "Art" won't do, since jazz devotees claim that too. "Orchestral" excludes solo, chamber and other forms.

His answer was “exact”. A composer writes down the notes, the instruments, and detailed directions for tempo and dynamics. Yet some composers were famously vague and left interpretation to conductors and performers. Bernstein’s examples, among them Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21 and Haydn’s Symphony No. 102, showed that personality shapes the result, even if classical music allows less latitude than jazz. Popular songs, he added, are shaped far more by the performer and the setting.

Bernstein disliked the term, but noted that the “classical period” is usually dated 1700-1825: an age of culture and elegance in which art and music set rules and conforming to them meant perfection. Bach and Handel established those rules, as the fugal writing of Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 shows. Haydn and Mozart then added form, shape and refinement. The tune grew in importance, and Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* and Haydn’s teasing themes offered memorable, witty examples.

Beethoven closed the era. His music was loud and big, a “wall of sound” long before Phil Spector. Where Haydn and Mozart had toyed with emotion, Beethoven’s was raw and personal, and Bernstein illustrated this with the *Egmont* overture.

Romanticism followed, though many would still call Schumann and Tchaikovsky “classical”. Perhaps the best definition, we concluded, is music that has stood the test of time and will last for ever.

After the break we watched David Munrow’s 1976 video on flutes and whistles. Fashions and haircuts amused us, but the biggest laughs came from his exuberant playing of recorders and flute precursors some 500 years old. Whistle-type instruments are prehistoric (only bone ones survive), and Hamlet mentions a recorder. Easy to make and blow but hard to play, the recorder declined into a rustic folk instrument as true flutes emerged, perhaps influenced by pan pipes. He closed with a Schmelzer piece for recorder consort, lute and theorbo.

Our next meeting is at Startforth Community Centre on Friday 27 November at 10:00.

WINE GROUP TOO - Report by Jane Mardon



The October meeting was hosted by myself and focused on wines that I associate with my travels over the past 20 years. Each wine had an accompanying anecdote and paired relevant food. This is a lively group with plenty of good conversation and personal wine preferences leading to chats about food, books, music and places to eat and drink in the UK and abroad. It is, in a word, fun!



To start we tasted two Cremant de Bourgogne – one from Intermarché. Honour Louis 12% and a snip at £4.50. Not available unless you cross the channel. The other from Nadine Farrand in the Loire Valley available to buy through Ratcliffes in Norfolk at an eye watering 6 times the price! Interestingly it was joint bottom of our 'likes' for the evening. Comments were - had a medicinal taste, a strange sherry taste et al.

White wines

France - No 3 Cotes de Gascony - 11% £6.50 Columbard/Sauvignon blanc. Gascony wines available at all supermarkets but not this particular one. Well-liked by the group. Red wine is also booming in the area and rivalling Bordeaux. Who doesn't love the Gascony region and culture? - the winning white wine this evening.by one vote

Greece – Kirke Goddess Blend of Georgian wines.13.5% £14.90 Drinkmonger Pitlochry stock this. Special note: grapes are harvested during a full moon and stored in a cellar till sunrise when they are crushed and pressed. But this fact did not sway our votes - we were not keen!

Austria - Funkstille Gruner Vettliner 12%, Cambridge Wine Merchants £14.99 Name means 'radio silence'. People thought it would work well as a pre- or post- meal wine. I tried to get the orange Skin Contact Funkstille and finally tracked it down but too late at Field and Fawcett in York.

Red wines

Uruguay - Finca Traversa Tannat Grape 12.5% Inglenook Wine Bar £13.99 also available at some Co-ops. Smooth and tasty. The grape was introduced by Basque settlers and the bottle label is a representation of Casa Pueblo by renowned Uruguayan artist Carlos Paez Vilaro. We all look at the labels!!! Rather nice we all thought and by one vote **the winning red wine** this evening.

France - Ile de Re Terre Rouge, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot grapes 13.5% £6.50 bought in Le Blois Plage de Re, but several UK retailers including Vinatis UK stock the island's wines. Easy drinking but not special. A small growing area of 600 hectares known for salt production, oysters and cycling..

Canada - Cave Spring Cabernet Franc. 14% £12.50 Inglenook Wine Bar Barnard Castle. Located close to Niagara and owned by the Pennachetti family. An interesting fact is that one of the family has a place here in Barney so that's why the wine is available locally. Also sold by Yorkshire Vintners. Well-liked by us all.

Our next meeting is on November 24th and will be hosted by Nuala.

WIMMIN' SWIMMIN' GROUP - Report by Annie Clouston

I bet you didn't know Saturday 24th October was International Swimming Day – no, me neither. So it was quite a coincidence that nine wimmin swimmers turned out in possibly the most hideous weather we've had this year to experience the zen of being supported by the water to either knock out some laps or just float about a bit.

Meanwhile in the more turbulent waters of the Pacific a 33 year old woman called Catherine Breed has been swimming the coast of California, dodging hurricanes, sharks and riding eight-foot waves. She swam for five hours a day and when it was really tough she tried to focus on technique and taking each 30 minutes at a time. Her most memorable moments were: "In Morro Bay, a humpback whale and calf swam right next to me. In Santa Barbara, a pod of bottlenose dolphins played with us. From Humboldt to Point Conception we probably saw 5-10 whales a day. The most we saw in one day was 50". Should this be on our bucket list wimmin swimmers?

In 2018 she swam the Channel – no wetsuit allowed – and in 2019 swam across the North Channel between Northern Ireland to Scotland. Silicone swim hats off to you Catherine!

I swam with dolphins at Kaikura in South Island New Zealand some years ago. We had to get up at 5am to get the boat in which we got into heavy duty wetsuits to manage the cold. When the pod was sighted the boat headed in their direction and we were quickly in the thick of it. Shoved off the back of the boat and told to sing to them as this would bring them closer, I readied my best Maria Callas and through a snorkel I belted out a bubbly Marseillaise (can't think why). Must have been like a mermaid playing a kazoo. Incomprehensibly this was very attractive to these wonderful, skittish, gentle creatures. I so wanted to be in their gang. Too soon we were ushered back on to the boat.

However, we settle each fourth Saturday of the month for human female company, which is very pleasant and sociable. If you'd like to join us for our last swim of the year you will be most welcome. To book contact Sue sueoverton@hotmail.com and for a chat about swimming call me **07988 625738.**

WALKING GROUPS

SHORTER WALKS - Report by Liz Colley

Whorlton Bridge

The October walk actually took place on 2 November due to the stormy weather at the end of October. We were all glad to have moved the date as it turned out to be a much better autumnal day, with high pressure dominating it was calm and dry with glimpses of the sun.

We assembled outside Whorlton village church which being open most of us took the opportunity to have a look inside. We then headed off through the churchyard to walk down to the river through the woods. The trees along the river were a real feature, looking glorious in their autumnal colours.



On reaching the newly rebuilt Whorlton Bridge, we were able to appreciate the construction in detail. Crossing over the bridge we took the steps down to a stile and then the footpath along the river that leads to Wycliffe. Although the riverbank is fenced off you can still enjoy views of the river, the geology and the delightful colours on the trees.

The footpath goes through the field where the Thorpe Light Railway runs in the summer months. The grandparents amongst us were recommending a

visit for young grandchildren. A few of our walkers were also reminiscing about the long gone Whorlton Lido.

On reaching the village we admired the recently built property on the riverbank and then headed to the historic church of Wycliffe. The church is well worth a visit as it has many interesting features including “Mouseman” pews, Anglo-Saxon stone relics and, most helpfully, toilets!

We returned to the bridge back along the footpath to complete our figure of eight walk. The second leg on the Whorlton side took us along the Teesdale way down to the river using the stepping stones over Whorlton Beck to the lifebuoy. We then headed up the hillside to take the path back to Whorlton

Next month’s walk will be on 23 November (weather permitting).

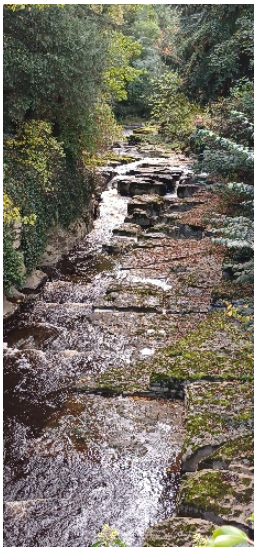
4-6 MILE WALKING GROUP - Report by Paula Taylor

Tuesday 10 November was a lovely autumnal misty morn when 14 of us set out on our way from the bridge in Middleton-in-Teesdale along the river Tees towards a fine footbridge linking the North bank of the Tees with the South bank at Mickleton and curiously with 3 names: Beckstones Wath Bridge, also known as Millennium Bridge and Lord Ethelburger’s Peace Bridge. The footbridge is 80m long and was opened in 2002 to connect Mickleton to The Teesdale Way, thereby creating some marvellous circular walking routes in the area.The river felt very tranquil and as the mist cleared we were treated to hazy sunshine for a time as we ascended and descended the various flights of steps and scrambled over a few trees which had fallen across the path.



On reaching Mickleton we followed the course of the old railway line back towards Middleton, eventually dropping gently back down to the river and once again back at Middleton-in-Teesdale Bridge having covered around 5.37 miles.

7-9 MILE WALKING GROUP - Report by Nicky Grace



Twelve of us met by the village green in Whorlton. Our 8 mile circular walk was possible for the first time in over five years due to the reopening of Whorlton bridge on 25 September. I had fond memories of the route to Egglestone Abbey and back as it was the very first u3a walk I went on in 2015.

We set off on the north side of the River Tees, skirting newly seeded agricultural land. There were lovely views down to the river through the trees sporting their autumn colour. After a bit of up and down crossing gullies it was an easy route. We declined the permissive path down to the viewpoint of the Meeting of the Waters preferring to retain height and the option to look at the Meeting on the south side *(right)*. We had a welcome refreshment point at Egglestone Abbey helped by chocolates provided by Phil's granddaughter from her Bournville trip.



We returned to Abbey Bridge and walked beside the River Tees on the south side, enjoying seeing magnificent trees and goosander in the water. After a short road section we reached the Meeting of the Waters (much admired by poets, artists and the walking group).

The group photo on the bridge records the occasion. We passed in front of Mortham Tower which we had also viewed from the other side. Described as one of the best-preserved and most picturesque medieval fortified manor houses in the North of England it is a fine Grade I listed fortified courtyard house and pele tower dating from the time of King Henry

VII (1485-1509), formerly part of the Rokeby estate. The previous house was burned down by a Scots raid after Bannockburn.

Walking on the ridge with fine views I recalled from an earlier walk that someone mentioned an erratic along the path. We then indulged in a game of hunt the erratic and failed miserably – can any other U3a member verify this?

We stopped for our lunch break, followed by a brief shower. We reached the edge of the magnificently restored bridge where two of our party peeled off and the rest of us walked along the south side of the river to Wycliffe. En route we met an enthusiastic fellow U3A member from Cheshire who loved this area. Wycliffe church is in a charming tranquil spot. It was built 1150-1250, although of Saxon origin, and is associated with John Wyclif. It is reputed to contain more mediaeval stained glass than anywhere else in County Durham – except the Cathedral.

Returning along the same route we experienced what was the first crossing of the renovated bridge. A very steep set of steps was the final part of the walk. A lovely autumn ramble with some interesting historic sites along the way.

FELL WALKING GROUP - Report by Peter Singer

The October fell walk was one that had previously been cancelled owing to adverse weather conditions. As we drove westwards along the A66 over Stainmore, in heavy rain, low cloud and fog, hearts began to sink once again. Fortunately, on arriving at the delightful village of Dufton, with its splendid fountain on the village green, pub and tearoom (sadly closed for the off-season) the rain stopped and the cloud lifted. With morale duly restored, we set off for a circular walk to High Cup Nick, an iconic rock formation in the North Pennines. Heading out through the picturesque Ghyll Wood and past an old quarry, we soon crossed a rather



mucky farmyard (where the leader unerringly sank ankle deep in a sea of the aforementioned muck) and, with some relief, emerged onto a pleasant stretch of field paths. A short section of quiet country lane and more field paths took us to a coffee stop beside Trundale Beck, before we entered High Cup Gill, a near-perfect, U-shaped glaciated valley, with a relatively small beck running along its length and the imposing cliff-face of the Nick at its head *(photo by Peter Singer).* We negotiated a sizeable boulder-field with care and an occasional hop, skip and jump, before starting the ascent to the top, about 100 metres above us. Hands and knees (but definitely no boomps-a-daisy) came in useful for the steepest section, after which we traversed right above more boulders to a gully and up onto High Cup Nick itself. The view down the valley was spectacular and certainly made our exertions worthwhile. We sat for a while to have our picnic lunch, surveying the massive columns of the Great Whin Sill (a volcanic rock forced up between limestone beds around 295 million years ago and also forming High Force).

Our return was straightforward, along a well-established part of the Pennine Way, passing the unlikely pillar of rock known as Nichol's Chair (allegedly named after a Dufton cobbler who scaled it and soled a pair of shoes while he sat on it). Having regained the village, we stopped off in Appleby for essential refreshments and the only low point of the day was a lengthy traffic tailback into Barney, caused by the closure of the A66 at Bowes. A rather tiresome ending to what had been a challenging but thoroughly enjoyable day.

COFFEE AND CHAT

There will be no meeting in December. The next meeting will be on Thursday January 14th, 2027, at 2.30 in Henry's Bar at The Witham.

The Woodman and his Dog

Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcerned
The cheerful haunts of man; to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve his solitary task -
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropped short, half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow; and now, with many a frisk
Wide scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powdered coat, and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for aught,
But now and then with pressure of his thumb
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube,
That fumes beneath his nose: the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.



from 'The Winter Morning Walk' *by William Cowper (1731-1800).*

Watercolour by Richard Westall (1765-1836)

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 01833 631639
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 Dunnighan 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

6 NOV - 5 DEC

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

















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

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

Alan Carr: Work in progress (14+) SOLD OUT
Wed 11 Nov | Comedy | 7.30pm | £20

National Theatre Live: Golden Boy (15)
Thur 12 Nov | Encore Screening | 7pm | £13-£15

China Crisis: Warped 2026
Fri 13 Nov | Pop Music | 7.30pm | £30

John Lydon: Talk Tour SOLD OUT
Sat 14 Nov | Spoken Word | 7.30pm | £35-£85

Festive Fun with Peppa Cinema Experience (U)
Sat 14 Nov | Screening | 11am | £3-£12

Teesdale Operatic Society: Sing for Victory
Wed 18 & Thur 19 Nov | Musical Theatre | 7.30pm | £17

Bob Fox and Stu Luckley
Fri 20 Nov | Folk Music | 7.30pm | £21

Mark Simmons: Jest to Impress (14+)
Sat 21 Nov | Comedy | 7.30pm | £20

The Comic Strip Presents...
Screening & Live Q&A
Wed 25 Nov | Comedy | 7.30pm | £20

Alfie Moore: Acopalypse Now (14+)
Thurs 26 Nov | Comedy | 7.30pm | £21

A Christmas Carol with Guy Masterson
Fri 27 Nov | Theatre | 7.30pm | £19

Tom Hingley of Inspiral Carpets: Solo Show
Fri 27 Nov | Acoustic Music | 7.30pm | £21-£23

Dom Joly: Trigger Happy TV 25th Anniversary Tour
Sat 28 Nov | Comedy | 7.30pm | From £28

Jazz Noel: The Christmas Sessions
Thurs 3 Dec | Jazz Music | 7.30pm | £21-£23

Winter Wonderband
Fri 4 Dec | Folk Music | 7.30pm | £17-£19

Barnard Castle Soul Club: Northern Soul Night
Sat 5 Dec | Disco | From 7pm | £7

Box Office: 01833 631107

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