

South Durham u3a

Registered Charity Number 1207225
Active in **Darlington, Cockerton and surrounding areas**
<http://www.sdurhamu3a.org.uk/>
Friday 7th March 2025

Tuesday 11th March 2025
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIR

I'd like to begin by welcoming more new members to South Durham u3a:

Malcolm Stokoe
Sandra Knowles
Doreen Day
Margaret Tong

We hope you find plenty of groups and activities to interest you all.

In contrast to our new members, listed above, I would like to draw your attention to a couple of our more 'senior members', who feature in this newsletter. Sandy Hood was part of the Steering Committee who set up South Durham u3a twenty-four years ago and has now become our first 'honorary member'. Lorna Wilkinson delivered this month's Local History talk – whilst controlling a clicker for her presentation, her notes balanced on a box and her walking stick! At the age of 94 that is no mean feat!!

I shall be interested to hear from the War Graves Commission who are speaking to us this month. I'm sure I'm not the only member who has visited First World War Battlefields, D Day Beaches and similar and been affected by the sight of rows of identical gravestones, always kept in immaculate condition by this organisation. Every month we are treated to a different topic and I come away having learned something new – after all, we're never too old to stop learning.

Finally, it's beginning to feel as though spring is round the corner. We've had a few sunny days and the bulbs in our garden are beginning to flower which is a promising sign. I hope that the weather warms up so we can all enjoy getting out and about.

Ruth Beckett

southdurhamu3a@gmail.com 01325 252054 + 0780 5775134



Helping Hands



As our friendly welcoming u3a is becoming even more popular, we need more help with running the Monthly Meetings. Setting out of chairs & tables & taking them in again at the end of the meeting is an obvious job. Also, help in the kitchen is always needed. Perhaps carrying drinks for some of our members who are less steady on their feet.

At January's meeting it was appreciated that members turned their hands to helping clear the hall. So, the idea arose of having a group of members who are interested in helping at Monthly Meetings, at the quiz, maybe helping organise outings but do not wish to be on the committee.

You would become our Helping Hands!

If you can volunteer to join such a merry band, we'd be very grateful...

Regards

Ruth Beckett (Chair)

Carol Boyd (Group Coordinator)

LAST MONTH'S MEETING

From Doctor to Author – Carole Tetlow

On a dull, damp morning in February it was so good to have another bumper turnout at Bowen Road to hear Carol Tetlow, 'From Doctor to Author'. She was a very entertaining speaker. We all enjoyed her talk and unreservedly admired her shoes!! She admitted to me that she hadn't driven in them, they were her 'talking shoes'.

We learned of her medical training through anecdotes: the patient wearing lilac make up to ensure a lengthy stay in hospital; the rough sleeper with maggots on his legs; the consultants who suddenly appeared when a famous face enters A&E.

We were warned never to attempt the sea crossing from Scrabster to Stromness in January should we be heading to the Orkneys where Carol had first experienced General Practice.

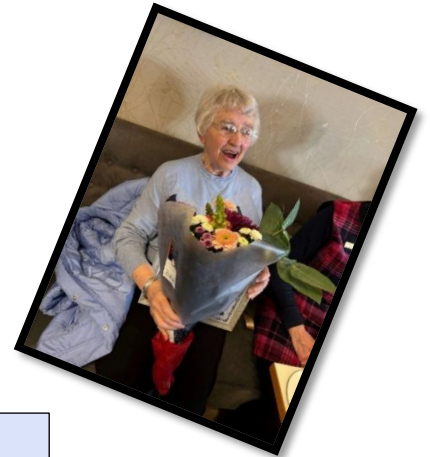
The bulk of Carol's experience is as a GP in Harrogate where she enjoyed talking to people and being faced with issues 'from the cradle to grave'. As a 'trainer' she oversaw the next generation of GPs and it was in this role she got the idea of writing her first novel which was published in 2014, 'Out of Practice'.

Since retiring she has written several novels (with a medical theme) but is now using her experience at the local Tennis Club as a background to her latest book.

Ruth Beckett



Honouring one of South Durham u3a founders



A SHORT u3a HISTORY LESSON

Back in March 2001 a Steering Committee was formed to begin the process of creating **South Durham u3a**, as Darlington u3a had a waiting list which continued to grow ever larger.

By June 2002 the new group received its official 'Certificate of Acceptance' into the Third Age Trust and the '**Stalwart Members**' who had taken it through its inception were named as: Brian Blakeley, Gladys and Cliff Evans, Judith Hall, Sandy Hood, Kay Lang, Jean Turner and Win Whitaker.

Sandy Hood remains a member to this day and regularly attends Reading Group 1, Scrabble group and the Coffee Morning in Binns for 'new (and not so new) members'! It was at the most recent coffee morning that the committee presented Sandy with a certificate to mark her becoming an '**Honorary Member**' of our group – she also received a badge and bunch of flowers to mark the occasion.

We thank Sandy for all she has done for South Durham u3a in the past and look forward to her company for many more years.



LATEST NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

COFFEE & CHAT



Our next get together will be on **Wednesday 26th March** from 10.30 to 12.30 in Binns Cafe. Do call in and have a coffee and a chat with our friendly group.

Pauline Noble

DOT'S JUNGAGLOW CRAFTS



To today we tackled Quilling which is tightly rolled paper which can be formed into a variety of shapes, these shapes were then applied to the lids of small trinket boxes.



This year there is a full programme of crafting opportunities, but these are proving very popular and there is a very limited availability. If you are interested telephone Dot Hullah 0774706005 or 01325 252460 to check availability in the classes.

30 th January	5D Diamond painted keyrings	31 st July	Silicon Casting jewellery
27 th February	Quilling boxes	28 th August	Japanese Bracelet making
27 th March	Easter egg bauble - advanced and beginners	25 th September	Mandella Weaving
24 th April	Peg Jewellery	30 th October	Snow Globes
29 th May	Glass Painting	27 th November	Bead Work Wreaths - tree decorations
26 th June	Loom Band Bracelets	18 th December	Quilted Christmas baubles

CREATIVE WRITING



The Creative writing group continues to grow. We are now full, but if you are interested in joining, I will make enquiries to move the group to a bigger venue. This week our writers tackled 500 words with the title An Italian Interlude. Exceptional short stories were written covering lots of topics. Each member getting the chance to read out their stories for the rest of the group.

Next Meeting is April the 9th from 10 until 12 noon at 15 Elton Grove.

Contact Dot on 07747060053 or 01325 252460 if you are interested in joining this group

Dot Hullah

FRIDAY WALKING GROUP



The BBC Weather App showed rain and strong winds with gusts of up to 50 miles per hour. Undeterred, a group of 8 set off from Ellerton Lakeside cafe around 10am in breezy but dry conditions. The walk, of approximately 6.5 miles, followed well defined footpaths around Scorton Lakes. We passed hundreds of geese gorging on the newly planted crops, though a wonderful site and sound to behold, a pure menace to the farmers. Scorton Nature reserve with 2 well placed bird hides, was the first lake walked past, however some flooding in the nearby fields could have been mistaken for small lakes before that. The route we took meandered through a myriad of paths and 11 lakes in total were counted. These lakes were created by Tarmac extracting gravel beginning in 2008 and have just recently been completed. The restored reserve has created a haven for a variety of birds, wildlife and in the warmer season's wildflower



meadows. The striking large prickly seed heads of the teasels gave us some winter interest as well as a good source of food for the birds. We were lucky enough to spot egrets, swans, a variety of different birds on the lakes and some rare breed sheep, which after researching I believe could be Hebridean Sheep, but I stand to be corrected!



Halfway round our walk we stopped to look at the RAF memorial bench and wind vane which is sited on part of a former airfield used in WWII. A quick lunch spot was found not far after that which we quickly vacated as the sky began to blacken and the breeze became a tad stronger. Our brisk walk back to the cafe was well worth it and cakes and savouries were enjoyed by all before a look round the interesting gift shop and well stocked Green Frog garden nursery. Timings were perfect as the rain began to pour just as we left, we were pleased we didn't take too much notice of the Weather App!

Our next walk will be on Friday 21st March.

We plan to walk from Piercebridge to Eppleby, a circuit of about eight miles, led by Dave. It will be about eight miles with a stop at the café. As usual we will meet in Linden Avenue (Coniscliffe Road end) for a prompt start at 9 30a.m.

Please bring a packed lunch/fruit/drink.

Members should be confident they are fit to participate and wear suitable clothing and footwear. They should carry information to be used in an emergency (ICE cards).

Wendy Nordmann



INTERMEDIATE WALKING GROUP



We met at Cockerton as usual. Not quite as usual, Moira turned up early! She brought a new member with her. so, a warm welcome to Carol.

On to our destination, where we parked at the Hurworth Grange, walking back towards Croft along the road. This was not usual, but given the reports of mud, very wise decision on the part of our glorious leader, Sue, who always thinks ahead and keeps us out of trouble. Much of the walk was adapted to the conditions of the day. The weather was kind, so we had a very pleasant walk and talk through Croft, along the flood barrier path, taking in the church yard and the grave of Lewis Carroll's dad, resting in peace there amongst the snowdrops. The part of the walk near Rockcliffe proved passable, given copious amounts of wood chip laid down on the right of way. We made our way along Hurworth Green, noting the Knell Gate through which the victims of the plague in the 16th century were brought to the village green for burial. History was beneath our feet, literally. Instead of the Mustard Tree, we had our break for coffee in the Croft Hotel, giving many of us our first glimpse of the interior. Very modern makeover, not at all the coaching inn look I was expecting. They made us welcome, despite the 14 pairs of not quite clean walking boots. Back on the road, we made our way along the length of the village, passing the now defunct Otter and Fish, and turning onto the back lanes where we had the excitement of viewing Stephanie's newly acquired allotment!

A good time was had by all, and our new member seemed impressed!



Alex Bailey

The next walk on **Monday 17th March** will be led by Penny.

It will be from Coxhoe, parking at the recreation centre (Active Life) on Linden Grove, DH6 4DW. It will pass through Kelloe and pause to look at the memorial to the miners killed at Trimdon Grange Colliery in 1882 and look at St Helen's Church (12th Century). Distance just over 5 miles on good paths which may be a little muddy. There is a fairly steep descent back to Kelloe, but this should not be too difficult if wearing suitable footwear.

If you have any queries, please contact Penny on - 07948374190

The following walk will be on Monday 7th April. This walk starts from Wynyard Woodland Park, off the A177. Postcode TS21 3JG. Approximately 5 miles.

For both walks please meet at Cockerton car park, behind the shops. We will set off promptly at 10. You may wish to bring a drink/ fruit/packed lunch.

Members should be confident they are fit to participate and wear suitable clothing and footwear. They should also carry information to be used in case of an emergency. (ICE cards)

Susan - T- 01325 252713

Liz - T- 01325 359921

LOCAL HISTORY



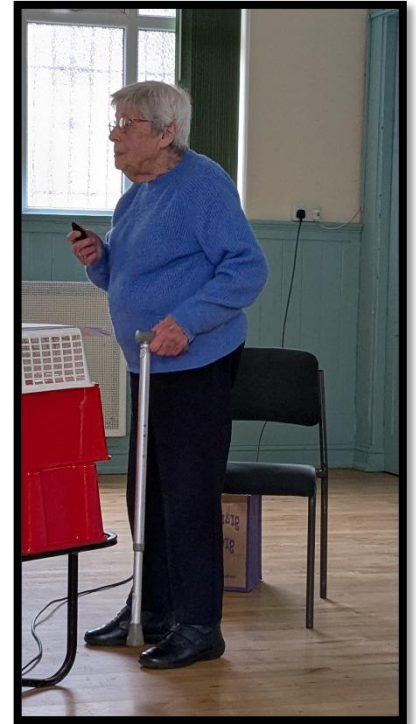
COCKERTON SOLDIERS OF WORLD WAR ONE - LORNA WILKINSON - Tuesday February 18th.

Lorna's interest in this topic began with a commemorative plaque in Cockerton Methodist church. In the typical manner of these projects, over time she was able to use her local contacts for research and a spark turned into a fascinating hour's talk for us.

Lorna concentrated on four ordinary men named on the plaque, all killed in the final year of war. What they had in common was probably their attendance at the church's Sunday school. Their stories illustrated many of the tropes familiar to us from that war like trench foot, conscription, shell shock or an identifiable body missing for decades, then suddenly turning up in road works. War statistics are one thing, but individual stories bring them to life. It turned out Lorna had known the daughter of one soldier personally. Her talk was an apposite introduction to our main event in March, a presentation by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Next meeting on Tuesday 18th March at Willow Road Community Centre- Dave Hogg will be talking to us about Darlington's Buildings and Builders.

Doors open @ 1.15pm and the talk begins @ 1.45pm. £2 including refreshments and plenty of room for all members! Come and join us.



LINDA CHADD

Jan 21	William Armstrong's Legacy <i>Ruth Beckett</i>
Feb18	Cockerton Soldiers of WW1 <i>Lorna Wilkinson</i>
March 18	History of Darlington- builders and buildings <i>Dave Hogg</i>
April 15	Tees Pumping Station <i>George Beautyman</i>
May 20	Excavations @ Auckland Castle <i>John Castling</i>
June 17	Looking at Hopetown <i>Ruth Beckett</i>
July 15	Gibside in the Derwent Valley <i>David Butler</i>
August 19	Highlights of Roman County Durham – <i>David Mason – county archaeologist</i>

If you wish to attend **Darlington u3a's History** group – this is their programme for the year – contact Steve directly to let him to know you'll be attending from our group.

Darlington U3A History Group, 2025 - Programme of Wednesday 2pm meetings (doors open at 1.30pm.)
St Thomas Aquinas Church Hall, 249 North Road, Darlington.

<i>Jan. 29th</i>	<i>Chris Forster</i>	"A county at war- life on the home front 1939-1945." Chris returns to give us what I am sure will be another interesting and informative presentation.
<i>Feb. 26th</i>	<i>Kathryn Streatfield</i>	"Crofts Crossing" Meet author Kathryn who will also inform us on the resources and research involved in publishing a local history book .
<i>Mar. 26th</i>	<i>David Reynolds</i>	"William Denton" Born in Darlington in 1823 he was a self taught geologist, preacher and a promoter of occult practices. Learn more about this amazing character.

Apr. 30th	David Dean	"History's greatest clangers" Be entertained and informed as Powerpoint expert David returns determined to set the record straight.
June. 25th	Carol Dean	"Age of the suffragette" Women's long and bitter struggle to win the right to vote. This fascinating and dramatic story expertly told.
July 30th	Darren Billingham	"Ringtons" The history, background and development of this iconic local business whose Head Office remains in Newcastle.
Sep 24th	Richard Annis	"A Roman settlement at East Park Sedgfield." The story of discovery and excavation (partly by the Time Team) of this settlement on the line of Cade's Road.
Oct 29th.	Members day Ken Bowman	Come early for tea, coffee and biscuits, Before being entertained by Ken's "Local tales of South Durham" Folklore, myths and memories.
Nov 26th	David Butler Former County Archivist	"Drunken midwives and common strumpets" Great title for a great talk by a great speaker.

Steve Keeney U3A History Group Leader

01325 258162 mob: 07539 47503

Email: steve.keeney@hotmail.co.uk

PHILOSOPHY OF YOGA



We had a good attendance this month requiring quite a few additional chairs crammed into our lounge. We generally discussed and demonstrated the effects possible to our breathing through hand positions (Hasta Mudras) and from varying ratios of breath rhythms.

Our next meeting will be **Wednesday 19th March** at 10:00 as usual

Barry and Pat Garnett

LUNCHEON GROUP



February's Luncheon Club on Friday the 28th of February was held at the Bay Horse in Middridge. 20 of us attended and as usual we were well looked after by the staff, and everyone enjoyed the food and time to chat.

March Lunch Group get-together. This will take place at 1pm on **Friday 28th March at the Blackwell Grange Hotel**. We will be choosing from the bar/lounge menu but will be eating in the main restaurant.

Stella Barnes

NEW MEMBERS (and not so new members) COFFEE MORNING



This will take place the fourth Tuesday of each month- in Café Zest Binns 10.30- 12.00



Our aim is to allow new members to get to know each other in a less busy setting than the monthly Bowen Road meetings. There will be committee members present should you have any questions to ask. We hope that this will help you make new friends and meet with our recently joined members in a relaxed environment. No need to book, just turn up.

Jenny & Brenda

PLAY READING



February's meeting saw us complete Colette's 'Gigi' – a happy ending as Gigi, at sixteen, is proposed to by long term friend, Gaston, instead of being trained to be his courtesan. Such was Parisian life of certain classes of society in 1900. Colette wrote very interesting characters in this play, five female and two male, and servants also had their time to shine in the script. We enjoyed reading and comparing these characters in Anita Loos' translation. We've not yet read a murder mystery so that's on the agenda for next month. Again, many thanks to Richmond Amateur Dramatic Society for lending us the copies.

Next meeting will be on **Tuesday 18th march** at 2 pm at Isabel's.

Muriel Jones

FAMILY HISTORY



Our future meetings will be held in the Local Studies Room at the Crown Street Library. The library staff will reserve some computers and records for us where possible and will be available to answer questions and assist in finding information when required.

Would you like to discover who your ancestors were and how they lived? Come along to our meetings and find out how to trace their information and build your family tree. Or maybe you would like to discover who else has called your house home, or what Darlington and the local area was like during previous centuries. The library has lots of information about the local area and can also access some information about other areas.

Our next meeting will be at 2.00 on **Friday 14 March** and future meetings will be at 2.00 on the second Friday of each month. If you would like to join us, please contact me at paulinenoble70@gmail.com and I shall reserve your place.

Pauline Noble

READING GROUP 1



At our February meeting the group discussed "You Are Here" by David Nicholls.

At first sight, this story might have seemed a popular choice with members, as many of us have meaningful connections with the Lake District, the setting for this book. However, some of us were disappointed as there was less description of the landscape and terrain than might have been expected from a tale which takes place on Wainwright's famous "Coast to Coast" walk.

"You Are Here" is Nicholls' sixth novel and he has had great success as, in my view, the chronicler of Generation X, which may explain why some in the group had difficulty in relating to the characters.

The story tells of Marnie, a copywriter and Michael, a geography teacher, who are reluctantly brought together by a mutual friend on a walking weekend. Both are suffering loneliness and loss and the story tells of their eventually continuing the walk together beyond the weekend, when everyone else drops out. Amid some awful accommodation, weather conditions and misunderstandings they develop a connection which may or may not develop into a lasting relationship.

There is much humour and quite a bit of swearing and references to 1990's and early 2000's music, but as I mentioned, we are in 2024 in the company of 40-somethings here, so hardly in Jane Austen territory.

For those who might be interested in acquiring the book, it has a novelty cover. A balloon shaped aperture reveals a map of the walk with all the relevant locations, thus enabling the reader to keep up with the protagonists as they make their way along, and possibly complete the "Coast to Coast".

With many thanks to Lorna for hosting the meeting and providing the delicious refreshments.

Our next meeting on **March 12th** will be held at Ann's and we will be discussing "Small Things Like These" by Claire Keegan

Toni Carr

READING GROUP 2



We met on Feb 14th to discuss "Holy Island", LJ Ross, this book opens with a ritualistic style murder that brings DCI Ryan to Holy Island, and there follows more similar style murders on a closed off Island. Group feedback was mixed, generally enjoyed, but some of us finding the descriptions of murder quite gruesome, the story farfetched in places, and DCI Ryan's romance with Dr Anna Taylor ranging from delightful to too treacly. Some lovely description of Holy Island!

Our next meeting is Friday **14th March** and we're reading "Blue sisters", Coco Mellors. Another detective story, this time by Ann Cleeves, entitled "**The Long Call.**" This is not on the library group list either. Meeting at Kate's.

Pat Robson

FRENCH CONVERSATION



With about 12 members, the dynamics of our group change a little every fortnight as some may go on holiday and others return - always creating new topics of conversation! We had fun recently looking at slang words and deciding which ones, if any, we would ever use ourselves.

There is no real long-term plan for what we will talk about in French but we always have plenty to chat about and everyone contributes! We have the luxury of fabulous coffee and tea provided by the Newcastle Building Society which is very much appreciated. Please contact cj.howarth27@icloud.com if you are interested or would like any further information.

SCRABBLE GROUP



This is a fairly new group, and we need some new members. We are a mixed ability group so whatever your level you're sure to fit in. Held on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month in The Travellers Rest, in Cockerton

Interested? Contact Brenda Ellidge - brenellidge50@outlook.com

TRIPS WITH SOUTH DURHAM U3A – Advanced notice of what's to come

Wednesday 2nd April

[Wentworth Woodhouse](#) near Barnsley

Wednesday 7th May

[Harewood House](#) near Leeds (1 seat available)

Thursday 3rd July

[Scampton Hall & Gardens](#), Malton (5 seats available)

Unfortunately I will not be attending the Monthly Meeting at Bowen Road but if you are interested please contact:

Home – 01325 496153
Mobile - 07790584120

Monday 8th September [Walking with Alpacas](#) – Leven Bank near Yarm

Friday November 14th Morning: [Lit & Phil](#) – a guided tour of the largest independent library outside London @ 10.30am
Afternoon: [Victorian Tunnel](#) – tour 1.30–3.30pm

November 18th 2025 Lees Coaches: Christmas at Castle Howard. Ring Lees Coaches to book seats on 01913780653 - Saying you are South Durham u3a

[Replacement Trip for Harlow Carr and Gardens – Harrogate](#)

A replacement trip for Harlow Carr Gardens – Harrogate has been made due to lack of interest. I have therefore changed the venue to Scampton Hall & Gardens in Malton. It's a 1-hour 25mins journey and marks a new adventure for South Durham u3a. The guided tour of the house and gardens is £18.50 plus coach fare.

The House is wheelchair accessible, but no lift, there are chairs in rooms for members to sit down, if you are unable to manage the stairs everything is available for members to view the upstairs via a video link. Historic House Members are free.

Carol Boyd

[GROUP TRIP TO KIPLIN HALL – Wednesday 12th February](#)

A Journey Through Time: Our Visit to Kiplin Hall

Members of the South Durham U3A recently visited Kiplin Hall, an historic Jacobean house nestled in the heart of North Yorkshire outside Richmond. The remarkable hall stands as a testament to four centuries of British history, a living museum that offered us a unique window into its past.

Kiplin Hall was built as a hunting lodge in the early 1620s by George Calvert, the First Lord Baltimore, who later founded Maryland in America. Throughout its 400-year history, the Hall has been home to various prominent families; starting with the Calverts until 1722, then the Crowes until 1868, the Carpenters until 1904 and ending with the Talbots until 1971 when the last family member, Bridget Talbot, gave the Hall and estate to a charity to preserve Kiplin for the Nation.

The tour started with our guide, Ian, leading us outside to appraise the stunning architecture, a harmonious blend of Jacobean and later Georgian additions. We moved indoors to explore the many rooms each containing an eclectic mix of antiques, artwork, and personal artifacts; the library was of particular interest to members, with its vast collection of books and cozy reading nooks. The tour culminated in the Great Hall, an impressive space adorned with portraits and tapestries, as well as new museum displays to commemorate the Hall's 400th Anniversary this year and narrating the Hall's storied past.

Kiplin Hall's allure extends beyond its walls to the beautifully landscaped gardens that surround it. Unfortunately, due to the cold weather, we will need to explore the gardens another time.

New for 2025 was the Visitor Centre, shop and cafe where we were able to enjoy a light lunch before departing for home. I personally found it to be an unforgettable experience and will be sure to return.

[GROUP TRIP TO The Oriental Museum – Wednesday 26th March](#)

The trip will comprise a guided tour of the galleries, highlighting some of the Museum's newest acquisitions. The tour will commence at 10.30am and will be followed by an object handling session which enables members to get hands on with museum objects. These sessions are conversational with members sharing their own thoughts.

The formal part of the trip will end by 12.30pm, when you will have free time to look around and/or get some lunch. The Museum has a small cafe where you can get hot/cold drinks, biscuits and flapjacks, no sandwiches or fresh cakes. The closest place to the Museum is the Botanic Gardens with a large cafe.

Accessibility - There is seating in most of the galleries, and rest stools available for those less mobile. There are lifts to all levels, and an accessible toilet.

Transport and Parking - Travel is to be arranged independently by car share. If you are able to offer a car share place to another member(s); please let me know your email and indicate that you are happy for it to be shared. Members are welcome to use the Museum's free carpark, additional car park spaces are available in the Teikyo car park which is up a ramp on the approach to the museum.

Travel is to be arranged independently by car share. If you are able to offer a car share place to another member(s); please let me know your email and indicate that you are happy for it to be shared. Members are welcome to use the Museum's free carpark, additional car park spaces are available in the Teikyo car park which is up a ramp on the approach to the museum.

Cost - The Museum doesn't generally charge for the gallery tour. If you want to make a donation, there is a donation box at the reception desk. There is a charge of £1 per person for the object handling (payment instructions to follow). To maximise visibility, **numbers are strictly limited to 15**. If you are interested, contact Helen at helen.swannell@gmail.com; places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis, Further details can be found at [Oriental Museum - Durham University](#)

Helen Swannell

ITALIAN CONVERSATION

We've been practising using higher numbers and recognising prices recently - all very useful for that favourite activity of going to the cafe, bar or restaurant! The group has created their own short cafe dialogues which we look forward to hearing next session! Then we'll be going on to learn some words for different fruits and foods so that we can practise shopping. Some of the groups are off to Italy on holiday soon, and looking forward to using some of what they have learnt. Another lady has been so enthusiastic she has just returned from a week's study visit to develop her language skills! The lessons are fun - and who knows what doors they will open!!

Celia Howarth

MUSING ON CRUISING, by Linda Chadd.

Thoughts on a recent P&O 35-day no-fly cruise to the Caribbean aboard MS Iona.

Initial impressions...a floating Butlins for old people, mostly avoiding inheritance tax...what a clever if ruthless business plan P&O has...why have I brought so many earrings? A steep learning curve in the first couple of days on a megaship with capacity for 5206 passengers and approximately one member of crew for every three of those.

On the first day a man with a white stick showed me the way. He'd been on before... Outnumbered by Brit coupledom! I don't feel like this in my ordinary life. Of course it's cheaper to share a cabin. The 200 or so solos on board had special meeting times but soon coalesced into a garrulous gaggle of 20 or so women, forming a clique. By this time, I'd palled up with another solo (Lynda!) from Hove, actually. We met each night at six for cocktails but didn't necessarily do the same thing afterwards...The dashing Latvian: I needed a serious lie down after this Adonis of a for'ard chief officer had explained his mooring technique on the Behind-the-Scenes tour. Being a fickle soul, I later transferred my affections to the cute guide on St Lucia who gave me some really indigestible leaves to eat, for my cough.



Missing underwear (nothing to do with the previous paragraph): for 3 days I thought I'd lost half my knickers, only to find them stuffed into one of the many cubbyholes in my superbly designed cabin, ready for the launderette on my deck...

Talking of the launderette, I soon learned to avoid it as an overcrowded potential source of aggro. Feel free to ask me about the Chocolate Bar Incident after which 2 women were expelled at the first stop, Tenerife. There were rumours of fights but nothing concrete. Crowded lifts were also potential hotspots. In one, I saw a man lose patience and storm out...

Mortality: not surprising as the average age of us punters was 68. I wouldn't be surprised if there were half a dozen deaths. Of course, these were not announced but word gets around. We certainly had two helicopter medevacs, a broken arm and a lady who fell out of a bus in Tortola and fractured her femur. End of holiday...

People watching is a great sport, but others of course are watching me. I spotted a woman with an enormous eye tattooed on each of her shoulder blades. I wonder if she remembers she's still got 'em?

Once horizontal on a spa massage table, I was bombarded with irresistible offers. Could've got a whole new face. Trust me lads, you haven't lived if you've not had foot exfoliation...

Entertainment: apart from an excellent folk/shanty group called the Privateers, all a bit showbizzy and not stuff I'd enjoy at home. Some interesting u3a-type talks, however.

Favourite trip: Despite the exotic Caribbean, the best was surely the observatory visit on Tenerife where a real astronomer showed us round the many different telescopes. Tenerife specialises in solar observation whereas its sister observatory on La Palma is more active at night. Nb, modern astronomers don't personally operate big telescopes! 40 school age children on board. Some plainly have special needs, and some may be home educated. What about the others? The teacher in me disapproves... Here is a load of mainly white, larger people being served by mainly non-white, smaller people. So, what exactly has changed?



New things tried: line, salsa and Bollywood dancing, Clarendon Fine Art unveilings (free bubbly), silent disco, gym, choir, murder mysteries, deck quoits, shuffleboard and pickleball. I was rubbish at a lot of this except pickleball which I put down to playing tennis when younger.

I would not have made a good Ancient Mariner and got cabin fever over the 6 returning sea days, wishing for a storm if only to see how the vessel responded. Sadly, the sea state never got beyond moderate to rough even in the Bay of Biscay and was easily dealt with by stabilizers.

We all have our snobberies. In the ongoing game of Who's Been Where, my trump card involved five words - "Two years in West Africa". Expats versus tourists...

Gala nights saw an explosion of bow ties, kilts and medals. Many women were done up like fourpenny hambones, as my mother used to say. I relied on a little black dress, £15 in a sale and then tarted up. Others ignored the whole thing and stuck to the buffets.

Homeward bound: Hawaiian shirts disappeared faster than poinsettias after Christmas, and southern wimps started complaining about the weather. Final verdict: an experience. I enjoyed the Caribbean but wouldn't do this journey again. P&O have a cunning loyalty plan however, and many people booked up on board for a very similar holiday next January...

SUMMER QUIZ

SOUTH NORTHUMBRIA REGIONAL QUIZ

Hosted by South Durham u3a

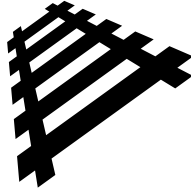
Venue: Hurworth Grange Community Centre, DL2 2BN

Date: Wednesday 18 th June 2025

Time: 2pm -5pm

Entrance fee: £18 per Team (6 members per Team)

Here are the details of our summer quiz, it's a fun filled afternoon shared with quiz teams from other u3a's. We are looking for quiz enthusiasts to represent South Durham. There will be a sign-up sheet at the monthly meeting, if you would like to take part or alternatively, please email Jenny at sdu3asocial@gmail.com.



Fool hardy in February

Winter walls were claustrophobic,
A day out beckoned.
February storm clouds
Faint-hearted sun and a
Fresh North wind were no deterrent.

The rain began at Staindrop,
The wipers slip-flow slip-flow
In arcs, on glass, mesmeric.
Rain-soaked sheep
Still graze placidly
Swollen with lambs.

We stop for coffee in the
Deserted High Force car park,
Sipping and gazing into the slanting rain.
Grey clouds slide silently in
Large sullen swathes bringing
Heavier drops
Wind buffets the car and sways
Firs trees making their heads dance.

A family of four drives in
They battle against the wind
To visit the damp cold toilets.
We smile at their necessity,
Pleased that others are foolhardy in February

Higher still we take the
Moor road to Alston
Misty swirls of white hide the way.
We are isolated in low clouds,
Solitary in silence.
Until I sing,
If you were the only boy in the world"
Then suddenly the cloud clears
And there is Weardale!

Margret Rule

The Silent Thunderer

Majestic you stand
Solid and true
A silent thunderer
Just passing through
Brick upon brick
The brick layers toiled
Creating a train
For our great town
With your plumes of brick smoke
Carved into the hill
You show your speed
And the Scottish artist skill
Although you go no where
As your silent journey goes on
The thankful bats
Safely tucked up inside, dream
Of their Des Res hidden unseen

Dot Hullah

At the Doc's

If you're going to see your doctor
Don't get into a flap
You'll have to wait for weeks before
You can see the chap
Don't fret and tear your hair out
Because it does no good
'Cos you would end up bald
Oh yes, I'm sure you would.
You've just got to chill a bit
To remain calm is vital
You've got to be quite patient
That's why "Patients" is our title.

Kate Brown



The following trips and visits are offered by our Regional u3a.

You are welcome to attend, just follow the instructions given on the trips or events.

u3a Learn, Laugh, Live.
Northumbria Region u3a
An Afternoon Of Music
North Biddick Social Club,
Bonemill Lane,
Washington, NE38 8AJ
Thursday June 5th 2025
2pm-5pm
Come Along And Support Your Fellow u3a
Members Who Will Entertain Us With Their Music.
Entrance Fee: £2 At The Door
Buffet £7 (Optional)
Please Contact Bob Pullen Of Prudhoe
u3a For More Details:
robertgipullen@gmail.com

Northumbria Region u3a Event Team



THE RIVER TEES AT STOCKTON: APRIL 17th, 2025

In the company of Teesside Archives guide, Christine Corbett, come with us for an afternoon walk along the river Tees.

Christine will tell us of the history of the industry that sprang up along the river; the Tees Barrage; the wildlife that has come back to its waters and the Portrack Marsh after the clean-up of the river, and much more.

Starting at 1.30 pm we will assemble at the Barrage on the north side of the river and walk to the Newport Bridge, crossing over (there are steps!) and returning along the south side of the Tees back to the Barrage. Approx. 3 miles and 2 hours in duration.

£5 pp to pay on the day. Maximum 30 places available.

To book a place please contact:

Patricia Marcus on patricia.a.marcus@gmail.com

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NORTHUMBRIA U3A EVENT HOPETOWN DARLINGTON JUNE 13TH 2025



We couldn't let the 200th anniversary of the first railway pass by without marking it with some event, so a day at Hopetown Darlington has been arranged for you.

Hopetown Darlington, previously known as Head of Steam and formerly known as the Darlington Railway Centre and Museum, is a railway museum located on the **1825** route of the **Stockton and Darlington Railway**, which was the world's first



steam-powered passenger railway.

The newly refurbished 7.5-acre museum site reopened to the public in July 2024.

The day will include a 45 to 60-minute tour of the site plus a visit led by the A1 Steam Loco Trust where one of their volunteers will show you around their premises.

To book a place, please contact patricia.a.marcus@gmail.com

Start: 11am

Lunch break: 12 - 1pm

Next: 1.30 pm A1 Steam Loco Trust presentation (approx. 1 hour)

There will be time for further exploration as you wish, before you return home.

Cost: £5 pp - refreshments and lunch not included

Parking: plenty on site @ £4 all day

Train: It is on the Saltburn to Bishop Auckland line - see local timetable for more information.

ANOTHER LOCAL OPPORTUNITY

Gainford Drama Club
Presents
a **farce** by
Brian Clemens, Dennis Spooner

Will You Still Love Me in the Morning?

April 2nd to 4th 7:30pm & Sat 5th 2pm
April 9th to 11th 7:30pm & Sat 12th 2pm
Academy Theatre, High Green, Gainford, DL2 3DL
Tickets include programme - £12
www.ticketsource.co.uk/gainford-academy-theatre
or Gainford Box Office - 07770 351244
Monday to Friday 6pm - 8pm

A great opportunity to go along to Gainford's Academy Theatre for this Brian Clemens and Dennis Spooner farce.

"Will you Still Love Me in the Morning?"

Joan Saddler

MONTHLY MEETING SPEAKERS

Monthly Meeting	Speaker & Title
14th January	Chris Lloyd: <i>Suffragettes</i>
11th February	Carol Tetlow: <i>From Doctor to Author</i>
11th March	Commonwealth War Graves Commission
8th April	Darlington Assistance for Refugees
13th May	John Thorley: Cern and after: The Large Hadron Collider
10th June	Denis Fox: History of Cinema
8th July	Alex Mitchell: VOICE: UK National Innovation Centre for Ageing at Newcastle University
12th August	Aycliffe Beekeepers Association
9th September	I AM ROADSMART Helping to make better drivers and riders through education and upskilling
14th October	Kate Streatfield: Croft's Crossing- her experience of researching and writing a book
11th November	AGM & Stuart Miller – Lee Miller war photographer
9th December	TBC

GROUPS ON OFFER

Bridge – David Dixon	Travellers Rest	2-4pm every other Tuesday from 10th December
Canasta – Sylvia Elliott	Travellers Rest	2pm alternate Thursday of the month. £2 each – includes refreshments.
Coffee & Chat - Pauline Noble	Binns cafe	10.30-12.30am last Wednesday of each month
Creative Writing – Dot Hullah	Leader's home	10-12am first Wednesday of each month
Current Affairs – Gill Turnbull	Members' homes	10am-12 noon on the 3rd Monday of the month
Family History	Members' homes	2nd Friday of each month
French, Advanced Celia Howarth	Above Newcastle Building Society, Market Place	11.15 on 2nd & 4th Monday of each month
Friday Walking Judith Bryant	Park cars in Linden Ave (nearest Coniscliffe Rd end)	9.30am on the 3rd Friday of each month
Intermediate Walking Susan –	Cockerton car park	10am on the 1st & 3rd Monday of each month
Italian for beginners Celia Howarth	Above Newcastle Building Society	10-11am on 2nd & 4th Monday of each month
Jungalow Crafts – Dot Hullah	Above Newcastle Building Society, Market Place	10am-12pm Last Thursday of the month
Local History – Ruth Beckett/Linda Chadd	Willow Road Community Centre	1.30pm on the 3rd Tuesday of the month
Luncheon Group - Stella Barnes	Pubs/restaurants	1.00pm on the last Friday of each month
New Members (and old) coffee morning Jenny Hurt	Binns café	10.30-12 on 4th Tuesday of each month
Philosophy of Yoga Barry and Pat Garnett	Members' homes	10am-12 noon on 3rd Wednesday of each month
Play Reading – Muriel Jones	Members' homes	2pm on the 3rd Tuesday of the month

Reading Group 1 – Toni Carr	Members' homes	2nd Wednesday of each month
Reading Group 2 – Judith Bryant	Members' homes	10.30am on 2nd Friday of each month
Rummikub – Liz Kay	Members' homes	10am-12 noon on the 1st Friday of each month
Scrabble Brenda Ellidge	Travellers Rest Cockerton	2pm on 2nd & 4th Monday of each month

Send your creative gems to the Editor Dot Hullah at sdu3aeditor@gmail.com

If you love writing poems or stories, why not send one in to be included in our new look creative corner.