

South Durham u3a

Registered Charity Number 1207225

Active in **Darlington, Cockerton and surrounding areas**

<https://southdurham.u3asite.uk/>

Friday 5th September 2025

Tuesday 9th September – 10 till 12

I AM ROADSMART Helping to make better drivers and riders through education and upskilling (formerly the Institute of Advanced Motorists (Northallerton branch))

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIR

Welcome to our new members

Jayne Davies
Norma Boyes
Lesley Brown

Welcome to the September newsletter – I trust you've all received your renewal notices and are preparing to renew your membership for another year. £12 is a very good price which gives you access to a year's meetings, events, trips and interest groups along with a monthly newsletter to make sure you are always up to date.

Looking ahead I'm pleased to be able to tell you that one of our committee members is willing to take over from me as Chair next year and will put themselves forward at the AGM in November. Dot Hullah has worked closely with me all this year and knows what is expected in the role. We are still looking for a few more new faces to join the committee as three or four have served their term and are stepping down. Please talk to one of us if you are interested in helping our group grow and prosper.

For those of you who do not know Dot Hullah she has written a short pen portrait to introduce herself.

Dot Hullah – NPQH



I am a retired schoolteacher. Whilst teaching I achieved my NPQH (National Professional Qualification of Headteachers). I became a member of u3a at the beginning of September 2023 and joined the committee in December of that year. I have enthusiastically thrown myself into u3a life and am ready to move forward with our successful group. Since retiring I have taken up crafting full time and I run many crafting workshops on a variety of subjects. I also run the successful creative writing group, and I am the Editor of our Newsletter. One of my passions, that I have been able to pursue since retiring, is story writing. To date I have twelve published books, eight children's books and four adult novels.

Finally, I'll just mention our plans for the festive season as we have decided on a change from a "Christmas Lunch" at a local hotel. The full details are outlined below and we hope you will be happy to join us for what promises to be a fun filled day!! However, places are limited so if you want to join us don't hang about, book your place.

Ruth Beckett

CHRISTMAS EVENT

This year we are planning something a little different for our Monthly Meeting on Tuesday the 9th of December.

As we have more than 80 members, regularly attending Bowen Road, we thought it would be nice to celebrate Christmas a little early and have a party. This will include entertainment from a Ukelele band, quiz, games and a buffet lunch.

Doors will open at **10.00am** (please **don't** come earlier) and the event will finish at **2.00pm**

The buffet will be provided by Taylors the Butchers and will include:

Gourmet Pie Selection,

Oriental/Indian Selection

Pate/Cheese and crackers

2 bite savouries

Scotch eggs/cooked sausage

Chicken goujons

Quiche selection

Assorted sandwiches

Cake selection

The capacity of Bowen Road for this event will be 88 members. There will be a cost, to cover catering and entertainment of **£15** to secure your place.

You can sign up for this event at the Meeting on the 9th of September. **Entry is by ticket only.**

Please indicate if you have any special dietary requirements

If you cannot attend the meeting, but would like to attend the party, please email Carol

Payment details will follow shortly

LAST MONTH'S MEETING

Aycliffe Beekeepers Association

Beekeeping - art or science? Probably both. Roger Chappel and his sidekick Brian Hooper clearly know a lot about honey bees but several times Roger said he might try doing x to solve a problem but... ultimately these are wild creatures and will do what they want, despite the many gadgets available. I took several lessons from this fascinating presentation, peppered with the odd joke. Firstly, the



importance of climate and natural resources - 'nuff said. Secondly, the role of the queen. Underperformers can be deposed by their own subjects, rather like our politicians. Thirdly, viewing a whole hive as the organism, rather than its individuals. Bees seem to organise themselves more efficiently than humans do. What would be the judgement of an impartial visitor from outer space? After the talk customers swarmed to the table like wasps to a jam sandwich, snapping up some very reasonably priced jars (I'm getting my metaphors mixed here). Go to this website to see the latest news about bees:



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c776kynn771o>

LINDA CHADD

AUTUMN REGIONAL QUIZ

Hosted by South Durham u3a

Venue: Hurworth Grange Community Centre, DL2 2BN

Date: Wednesday 26th November 2025

Time: 2pm -5pm

Entrance fee: £3 per member (6 members per Team)

Here are the details of our autumn 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

LATEST NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

COFFEE & CHAT



Everyone is welcome. Just take a break from your shopping, rest your feet and join our friendly group for a coffee and a natter.

Next meeting will be at 10.30 on September 24th August

Pauline Noble

DOT'S JUNGAGLOW CRAFTS



This month my crafting ladies revisited the Japanese art of Kumihimo Bracelet making. This is an ancient form of plaited cord which produces lovely effects.



A couple of the ladies decided to make their bracelets with very fine cord which is a challenge in itself.

CREATIVE WRITING

This month's focus title was "Solitude" for some of the members this proved a challenging topic, but again they rose to the challenge.



Next Meeting is October 1st from 10 until 12 noon at 15 Elton Grove.

Dot Hullah

FRIDAY WALKING GROUP

15 August 2025 Reeth Circular. As with many of our walks this summer, the conversation beforehand was whether to cancel because of the high temperature that was forecast. Instead, Judith modified and shortened the route to make it less taxing. In the event the weather, although hot and sunny, was made bearable by the cooling breeze. We left Reeth heading upriver on the high-level path across fields to the hamlet of Healaugh, where we rested awhile on benches in the shade for mid-morning refreshments.

From there, our path dropped down to the Swale and ran alongside it downstream to the Swing Bridge. But why the name, when is it very evidently a fixed suspension bridge that doesn't swing? According to the website, 'Swaledale History', the original 1920s bridge was a popular spot for children to play. They would rock the bridge back and forth causing it to swing. This playful tradition led to it being nicknamed the Swing Bridge and the name stuck even after the original bridge was washed away and replaced by the current one. Once over the river our path continued downstream on the south bank as far as Grinton. To u3a walkers, Grinton means one thing only. Tea and scrumptious home-made cakes at the Dales Bike Centre. After a leisurely stop and fully refreshed we made our way back to Reeth and then home. Thanks to Judith for a lovely day out.



Next walk: Friday 19th September led by Gail Bishop. A circular walk of around 8 miles from Middleton-in-Teesdale via Grassholme Reservoir comprising a grassy, uphill path over the shoulder of Harter Fell above Kirkcarrion (around ½ mile of ascent), then a gentle downhill to the reservoir followed by low level field paths back to Middleton. Some stiles. You may wish to bring a packed lunch and fruit and plenty to drink. Members should be confident they are fit to participate and should wear suitable clothing and footwear. Please carry information to be used in case of an emergency (ICE card).

Gail Bishop

INTERMEDIATE WALKING GROUP



Shildon to Heighington via Redworth

We proceeded from Locomotion Museum on field paths and farm tracks towards Redworth. The first place of note was Middridge Grange, a large Elizabethan manor that was home to Captain Robert Byerley and the famous Byerley Turk, one of three stallions that were founders of all modern thoroughbred racehorses. This fine animal was taken from a captured Turkish officer at the battle of Buda in 1688 by Captain Byerley and served as his war horse, including at the Battle of the Boyne. After Byerley left the military the Byerley Turk was retired to stud. Moving on, our morning refreshment stop was in Redworth, best known for its 1690s Jacobean Hall, now a hotel but previously a residential school and before that home to the Surtees, one of south Durham's finest, and sometimes controversial, families. Among other ancient landscape features, Linda Chadd pointed out that the Redworth estate has a fine example of an Iron Age hill fort. A series of field paths took us to Heighington where plentiful benches made a convenient lunch stop. We were curious about the stone structure on the green, which turned out to be the village 'pant', or pump head. It was built in the 19th century by the vicar to have water piped from the distant St John's Well up to a 10,000-gallon cistern in the village to save villagers having to carry their water. Among Heighington's famous residents was Captain William Pryce Cumby who played a major role in securing victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. He captured two French warships while in temporary command of Bellerophon after her captain had been killed. Back at Locomotion we rounded off the walk with refreshments in the museum café and learned something of Shildon's illustrious railway history, not least as the starting point for Locomotion No 1's groundbreaking journey in September 1825. In addition to famous engines, visitors to the museum can see the original Gaunless Bridge (the world's first iron railway bridge, designed by George Stephenson), the world's first coal drops, S&D engineer Timothy Hackworth's house and many other historic railway buildings, all recently



restored. Why not add Locomotion to your list of places to visit during the 200th anniversary celebrations.

Gail Bishop

It is always mildly hysterical that any group leader would ask me to describe a walk, given that **I Have No Sense Of Direction Whatever**(a bit Trumpy there, sorry) However, I am saved by the fact that there were at least three experts on all things Shildon, so I do not have to know any relevant facts and anyway, you can all Google it these days.

We did indeed start off from the Locomotion, and it is strange to see such a modern sleek building up close and personal to so much 19th century history. The statue of Robert Stephenson is particularly striking, clearly a snappy dresser back in the day. He is there on loan and will be making a return to Euston at some time, perhaps by train? Just a few yards further we are confronted by The Coal Drops. If you have yet to see these you are missing out. Our resident experts were able to bring them to life for us, but what they told me was how practical and imaginative engineers were in those days.



It was also heartwarming to realize that many of us on the walk remember steam engines as part of our lives. This enables you to feel ancient and knowledgeable at the same time.

In Shildon itself there is an original Chaldron Wagon, once used to haul coal to Stockton, with wooden brakes! Pity the poor horses. A former Railway Coach House still stands, dated 1831, with the name Daniel Adamson carved into the lintel, with railway lines running right outside. How convenient is that?

The Timothy Hackworth residence where the great man lived and worked is being "done up" and will soon have a new lease of life, as yet undetermined. It was originally called Soho House, which caused a few smiles in the group.

On the way we passed through Coronation, a Victorian era village, and soon were looking at the huge scar on the landscape which is the line of the pipework's which will bring water from Barnard Castle area to Shildon and beyond, a sign of the new kind of industry taking place in the region. Talking of water, yes, it did rain.

Past, present and future, it is all there in and around Shildon. You just have to look.

Thanks to Liz for leading, and Gail for keeping us in the loop,

Alex Bailey

The next walk will be on Monday 15th and is circular from Middleham, along the gallops to Coverham and back along the River Cover. Approximately 5.5 miles. There are stiles, some high, and some inclines and declines. Also, a short bit of road walking and it may be muddy.

The following walk is on Monday 6th October. This walk is along the old rail track from Cotherstone to Romalldkirk and back across the fields. Approximately 5 miles. There is some road walking, a few stone steps uphill, tree roots and it may be muddy.

For both walks you may wish to bring a packed lunch/ drink/ fruit

We will meet at Cockerton car park for a prompt 10am start.

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)

LOCAL HISTORY



There was a good turnout of 35 for the August meeting where we listened to **Dr. David Mason who is currently the Archaeology Manager for Durham County Council**. He took us through his last 21 years involvement with local archaeological sites in the county – predominantly Roman forts along the route of Dere Street, the main north/south route.

I understand that David regards **Binchester** as the ‘Pompeii of the North’ a fort which, at its largest, covered 20 acres and would have housed 2,500 Roman Soldiers. He claims it would have been the most important Roman site in Northern England – and we were shown ‘geophys’ images, reconstructions, pictures of items which had been found there (including ‘Boris’). The fort walls would have been 8 feet thick, with a double ditch system for further protection. Evidence of bath houses and hypocausts for underfloor heating were excavated by Hooppell; there was a Laconium which used dry heat, similar to a sauna. The settlement was further expanded by the traders, craftsmen, wives and children who lived alongside the soldiers.

Lanchester was another fort in the county which yielded many finds, now on display in the museum on Palace Green in Durham. **Piercebridge** is a more complicated site where the evidence of three bridges crossing the river has attracted visits by Time Team (they seem to have popped up regularly to see what David was up to).

Further east was **Cade’s Road** passing near Sedgefield where in 2002 Time Team visited the extensive settlement and between 2005-8 David ran summer excavations using students from Durham University. There was also evidence of Iron Age dwellings in the same area.

David whizzed through 183 slides to illustrate his talk which was both fascinating and exhausting. *Memo to myself – go back and visit Binchester!* As a parting comment he pointed out that this site is being passed into the care of the Auckland Trust alongside their other attractions in the area. **Ruth Beckett**

Meetings are held at the Hall on Willow Road – doors open from 1.15 with refreshments available. Talk begins @ 1.45pm. £2 per head .

16 th Sept	Church Recording	Vivien Clear & Rosalind Platts
21 st October	Women of the Stockton & Darlington Railway	Caroline Hardie
18 th November	Looking closely at Hopetown	Ruth Beckett
16 th December	Dilapidation & Rejuvenation – how two County Durham buildings have changed	Kevin & Ruth Beckett

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.**

Sep 24th	Richard Annis	"A Roman settlement at East Park Sedgefield. "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 Darlington U3A History Group Leader

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

FRENCH CONVERSATION



We have talked about Mother's Day in France and had some quick speed- dating conversations! We all love to learn from each other and really enjoy trying to improve our French conversation. We would welcome new members to the group! Our sessions are from 11.15-12.15 at the Newcastle Building Society and in the Autumn will run on Mondays:

September 8 and 22

October 6 and 20

November 3 and 17

December 1 and 15.

Please contact me if you have any queries.

Celia Howarth

Soirée à la Française

A delightful evening was had by all at an event rich in French conversation and wonderful French specialties. including endive salad, stuffed tomatoes, home-made quiche, tarte tatin and walnut cake.

Despite a rare downpour we were comfortably installed in the summer house of our hostess and tutor Celia Howarth.

The conversation sessions, held in the meeting room at the Newcastle Building Society have been both enlightening and very enjoyable and we look forward to resuming them in September.

Toni Carr

READING GROUP 2



For our August meeting we read "You are here" by David Nicholls. It is a novel based on a group of people, brought together by a mutual friend, to walk the 'coast to coast' long distance path across the country from St Bees on the Cumbrian coast to Robin Hood's Bay on the Yorkshire coast. Marnie and Michael complete the walk while the others leave much sooner. Both previously alone and

resistant to their friend's attempt to draw them into social events, develop a relationship as they walk and we are left wondering if it will continue after they return home.

Views were mixed though mostly positive. We enjoyed the references to familiar stretches of the walk in this part of the country, and enjoyed how Nicholls developed the characters and kept us guessing. Some were really irritated by the story.

Next meeting

Friday 12 th September

Book chosen "Death at the sign of the rook" by Kate Atkinson

Judith

LUNCHEON GROUP



Having had a break in August due to my holiday, the September Lunch Group will meet at Tre Amici, Skinnergate, Darlington at 1pm on

THURSDAY 25th SEPTEMBER, the last Thursday of the month instead of the last Friday of the month. I am aware that this will start one hour after Dot's Craft class ends, so I chose the venue accordingly, as some members attend both.

Many apologies for this change but I have to travel to a family wedding in the south that weekend.

I will just take names of members interested in attending at the next main meeting - food choices are not required in advance.

Stella Barnes

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

PLAY READING



We did not meet in August, so our next meeting is on 16th September at 2pm at Isabel's.

Muriel Jones

READING GROUP 1



Our August meeting took the form of an enjoyable lunch at the Spotted Dog, High Coniscliffe

In September we'll be meeting at Lorna's to discuss "The Ship Beneath The Ice" by Mensun Bound, which chronicles the discovery of Shackleton's ship, Endurance.

Toni Carr

ITALIAN CONVERSATION

Our group is always fun and everyone is very supportive! We have learnt how to say some phrases about the weather. The group is continuing in the Autumn, and we will learn how to talk and understand about health and illnesses - often useful on holiday! Our sessions will be from 10.00-11.00 at the Newcastle Building Society on Mondays:

September 8 and 22

October 6 and 20

November 3 and 17

December 1 and 15

Celia Howarth

BRIDGE CLUB

Starting up again after their Summer break is the Bridge Club. They meet in the Travellers Rest in Cockerton at 1.30 on the 1st Monday of the month.

This New session begins on the 9th September at 1.30 in the Travers Rest

CREATIVE CORNER

You're Not Old!

	No need to worry 'bout getting old 'Cos age is just a number Don't fall into the dismal trap And spend your time in slumber. Go skydiving, or water ski, Or slide down a zip wire, Join 'Strictly', dance a Rumba And set the world on fire. Or travel to the Rockies and Go catch yourself a bear... And while you're doing all that stuff I'll be dozing in my chair	 
		

Kate Brown

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

MONTHLY MEETING SPEAKERS

Monthly Meeting	Speaker & Title
9 th September	I AM ROADSMART Helping to make better drivers and riders through education and upskilling (formerly the Institute of Advanced Motorists)
14 th October	Kate Streatfield: Croft's Crossing- her experience of researching and writing a book
11 th November	AGM & Stuart Miller – Lee Miller war photographer

GROUPS ON OFFER

Bridge – David Dixon	Travellers Rest	1.30 -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
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
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