

South Durham u3a

Registered Charity Number 1207225

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

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

Friday 10th October 2025

Tuesday 14th October – 10 till 12

**This talk is by local author Kathryn Streatfield and is entitled:
Croft's Crossing, an Oral History of the Village Spanning the Years 1930-90.
These books will be available for purchase.**

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIR

Welcome to our new members

Graham Brown

David Adams

Sheila Palmer

Brian Stapley

Christine Van Mourik

Ian Mackey

Diane Mackey

Janice Bennett

As we move into October, I am acutely aware that we are in a time of change. We've left summer behind now and autumn is here; we may still get sunny days, but the nights are drawing in and the temperatures are dropping.

Looking ahead to our AGM in November, four of your committee will be standing down; we are still looking for new faces to fill their places and help our group move forward. If you fear that you don't know what would be expected of you, can I reassure you that I'd never been on a committee in my life before joining the u3a – and it's been an enjoyable experience. However, after four years at the helm, it is time for me to pass the baton to someone else.

At the Regional level there is a new Chair at the helm, Wendy Dale, who came along to meet a group of local Chairs last month and was very enthusiastic about the support we offered one another. In the past the Northumbria group produced a regular magazine, Messenger, but it has been decided to stop this. All news, events and reports will be found on their website which is updated regularly – click here: [Northumbria Region](#). They offer events, days out, quizzes and online groups in which you may be interested and are welcome to join.

In the meantime many thanks to all of you who have renewed your membership and are looking ahead to another year with South Durham u3a. 2026 will mark 25 years since our group was founded and we have already begun to think how we can best celebrate our Silver Anniversary.

Ruth Beckett

LAST MONTH'S MEETING

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

The subject matter was interesting but the delivery disappointing, due to a complete lack of voice projection which our sound system was unable to overcome. This talk has been given to a u3a before – whether by the same speaker I do not know. I would like to reassure those who couldn't hear, especially any new members, that this is not typical of most of our talks.

We began with a historical run through of the main developments in modern road travel - early tarmac surfaces, an amusing speed limit, the first Highway Code in 1931. Then events we lived through popped up - the first UK motorway 1958, the Breathalyzer 1967, the smart motorway pilot 2006...A logical accompaniment was the new Institute of Advanced Motorists in 1956, now in its second incarnation and replete with courses for all driver categories. I remembered I'd had a brush with them via work, in connection with minibus driving.

These days my driving is mainly confined to the usual rat runs and a studious avoidance of rush hour. I really should do their mature driver session but probably won't, due to inertia and the deep conviction that I'm actually wonderful...

LINDA CHADD

CHRISTMAS EVENT

There are only three places left for this event which is to be held at Bowen Road Community Centre on Tuesday 9th December from 10am until 2pm

THIS EVENT IS INSTEAD OF THE NORMAL MONTHLY MEETING

PLEASE DON'T COME ALONG ON THE 9TH OF DECEMBER IF YOU HAVEN'T BOOKED AND PAID £15 TO CAROL BOYD TO CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE AT THIS EVENT.

If you are not on our list, you will not be allowed to enter the hall on this occasion – sorry.

If you are attending, you will be entertained by a local Ukulele Band and also take part in some fun in-house games.

There will be a yummy buffet from Taylors the Butchers to enjoy.

Doors will open at 10 o'clock sharp so please don't come earlier

LATEST NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

COFFEE & CHAT

The next meeting of the Coffee and Chat Group will be from 10.30 to 12.30 on Wednesday 29th October at Cafe Zest in Binns. Take a break from the shopping and come and join our friendly group. All welcome.

Pauline Noble

DOT'S JUNGAGLOW CRAFTS



This month my crafting ladies tried something new, woven Mandalas. As you can see after they had mastered the technic required some beautiful examples were produced.



CREATIVE WRITING

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



Next Meeting is 5th November from 10 until 12 noon at 15 Elton Grove.

Dot Hullah

FRIDAY WALKING GROUP



19 September 2025 Middleton-in-Teesdale – Grassholme Circular

Our 8½-mile walk began in Middleton-in-Teesdale, a town rooted in 19th-century lead mining and farming. Now it relies on tourism and farming, the latter much in evidence as we passed the bustling Mart, where a sheep auction was in full swing.

Leaving town, we joined the Pennine Way and climbed steadily to the shoulder of Harter Fell. To our left stood Kirkcarrion, a Bronze Age burial mound said to be the resting place of Prince Caryn, a Brigantine chief. But his Brigantine links are debated as the tribe was from the later Iron Age. A 19th-century excavation revealed a funerary urn with charred bones—now lost—possibly taken by Lord Strathmore. He enclosed the site with a wall and planted the iconic fir trees, visible for miles around. Crossing the bridge between Teesdale and Lunedale, the weather cleared, revealing sweeping views of both valleys and Lunedale's twin reservoirs: Selsset and Grassholme. As we descended over rough fields to Grassholme Bridge for a picnic, our route was blocked by a flooded beck, which we managed to skirt. It was a minor inconvenience for us, but a relief for a local farmer whose borehole had dried up in July, leaving them reliant on water pumped from the beck. The reservoir's low water level had exposed the rarely seen ruins of the old Grassholme Bridge, poking through the surface like a ghostly relic from the past. We followed the south shore of the reservoir past the sailing club and the Grassholme dark skies observatory. Beyond this a short stretch of road and fields led us to the Tees Railway path and back to Middleton. Before heading home, some of us indulged in delicious home-made cakes at Samuel James' café—a perfect end to a memorable walk.

Gail Bishop



Next walk: Friday 17th October. To Peshaw, 7- 8 miles. Moderate difficulty with a short very steep climb. 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).

INTERMEDIATE WALKING GROUP

Monday October 6th

After a stormy weekend the weather had calmed and the sun came out as we were driving to Cotherstone to start our walk along the old railway track to Romaldkirk. 14 walkers set off in the sunshine along the track for 2 and a half miles to Romaldkirk enjoying the autumn colours in the hedgerows. Although it was breezy it was quite warm walking and we had to shed our coats before arriving at the quiet village of Romaldkirk to have our picnic lunch on the benches outside the Kirk Inn and a welcome sit down. It was decided that as it wasn't too muddy we would return to Cotherstone over the fields and along by the River Tees. We walked through several farmer's sheep fields and after passing through a farmyard saw a lovely orchard with pear trees and with stone walls all round. We continued along by the fast flowing River Tees until we came to the point where it is joined by the River Balder then over an old moss covered stone bridge. Arriving back in Cotherstone we admired an apple tree full of lovely red apples in someone's garden before heading for the Old Chapel. The Chapel has been converted into a nice café and community centre and we enjoyed a welcome hot drink and slices of home-made cake before setting back to Darlington after another lovely walk

Christine Walker

The next walk is on Monday 20th October from Piercebridge to Mansfield and back. Approximately 4.5 miles. There may be cows in one field and may be muddy.

The following walk is on Monday 3rd November, from Walworth to Ling Bridge and back. Approximately 4.5 miles. Again it may be muddy with cows in a field. Also low stiles and some walking along quiet roads.

For both walks we meet in Cockerton car park for a prompt start at 10am.

At times we only have a few people who are able to drive and therefore, I am uncertain if we have sufficient transport. Up to now there hasn't been a problem. I would however be grateful if people could inform me if they are coming and are if they are willing to drive.

Obviously if there are more passengers than seats in cars, then I will have to prioritise those whose names are on my list.

You may wish to bring something to eat and drink.

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

LOCAL HISTORY



THE CHURCH RECORDING SOCIETY, LOCAL HISTORY GROUP SEPTEMBER 16. Retired doctor Rosalind Platts and our own Vivien Clear did a charming double act on this volunteering subgroup of the nationwide Arts Society. Its ultimate aim is to make a record of the contents and assets of all our places of worship - a permanent national historical source. Rosalind concentrated on the Recorders' history (from 1973) and their method of working with its common template including sections for furnishings, stained glass, memorials etc. This is a highly co-operative venture with perhaps a dozen volunteers working on one church at a time. Vivien gave us her personal experience of working at St. Cuthbert's Church, Forcett, during which her school Latin came in very useful. But her experience of doing family history drew her down various rabbit holes via the North Yorkshire Archives in Northallerton. So she entertained us with scandalous stories of those mentioned somewhat blandly on the church memorials. Just google the Society for more info. And if you get involved, remember to look under the carpets!

LINDA CHADD.

Next Local History Meeting on Tuesday 21st October @ Willow Road. Refreshments from 1.15pm, talk begins @ 1.45pm. We have Caroline Hardie coming to talk about 'Women of the Stockton & Darlington Railway'. She's a prominent figure in the Friends of the S&DR, and was on TV with Michael Portillo recently.

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>Oct 29th.</i>	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.
<i>Nov 26th</i>	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:

November 3 and 17
December 1 and 15.

Please contact me if you have any queries.

READING GROUP 2



For our September meeting we read Kate Atkinson’s novel “Death at the sign of the Rook.” This is another story about her regular detective Jackson Brodie.

Set in large country estate, his investigation began with the theft of a picture from the house, then merged with a group of actors presenting a “fictitious” murder mystery event at the same time, as well as a “real” murder.

We all found the vast number of characters confusing as well as the plot. Generally, however, the author’s style of writing, particularly her witty asides more than made up for our negative criticisms. Those who hadn’t already read most of her novels are likely to try more.

Next meeting
Friday 10 th October “Keeping Mum” by James Gould-Brown
Friday 14 th November “Precipice” by Robert Harris.

Judith

LUNCHEON GROUP



22 members met at one of our favourite restaurants, Tre Amici, in Skinnergate. We appreciate the speed of service and food quality and the fact that we do not have to pre-order so that we can choose whatever appeals when we arrive. One of our newest members gave very positive feedback, saying that she appreciated the food and the lovely company, which was great to hear.

October Lunch Group - this will take place at
1pm Friday 31st October at The Bay Horse Middridge.

Whilst we went there in July, we were a small group & were accommodated upstairs due to a clash with a large funeral wake group who took up the entire ground floor. I have been promised our usual downstairs area this time which is more suitable for any members with mobility issues. Again, I just need numbers attending as we choose our meals when we arrive. I hope that some of our new members will give it a try.

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



The first drama of the day was brought about by a dead car battery. This delayed our first session of the autumn season by a couple of hours, but it was good, finally, to get together again and begin a new drama. This was 'A Bunch of Amateurs' written by Ian Hislop and Nick Newman, our first of the new batch borrowed from Gainford Players. Nick Newman, in the Author's Note, writes that it is 'a love-letter to amateur dramatics' as both he and Ian Hislop owe their writing to school and village hall productions where they began their collaboration. The amateurs of this play are the Stratford Players - no, not Stratford-on-Avon but Stratford St. John in Suffolk. Their current production is 'King Lear' and they have engaged a fading Hollywood star to play the lead who actually thinks he is going to act in Shakespeare's hometown. No doubt personalities will clash. Let's see . . .

Muriel Jones

READING GROUP 1



"The Ship Beneath The Ice" by Mensun Bound.

Born in 1953 in the Falkland Islands, the author is a renowned British maritime archaeologist and has enjoyed an illustrious career exploring ancient wrecks and discovering treasures, being described by the Discovery Channel as "The Indiana Jones of the Deep".

However the expedition for which he is best known provides the subject of this book and chronicles the two attempts to discover the Endurance, the ship which carried the polar explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton and 27 crew to the Antarctic in 1914.

The ship, crushed by ice, sank on 21st November in the Weddell Sea leaving Shackleton and his crew in great peril, marooned on the Ice to face a daunting journey to safety.

The first expedition led by Bound in Jan 2019 was fraught with difficulties and disappointment. Covid 19 regulations were in force and their ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) disappeared. However, much scientific work was achieved.

The second expedition was mounted in 2022 and the expedition finally found its Holy Grail. The ship was well preserved in the clean, icy Antarctic waters, 3 kilometres down on the sea bed. With a rapidly deteriorating weather situation the team raced to take thousands of photos before their ship too became stuck in the ice.

The story is told in the form of diary entries, those of Bound himself and members of Shackleton's crew.

The technical information is leavened by human stories of football matches on ice, tales of penguins and whales and the daily life of both crews. The book features photos, both of Shackleton's and Bound's expeditions.

The group found much to enjoy in this book despite an excess of technical information.

Many thanks to Ann for hosting the meeting and providing the delicious refreshments.

Our next meeting on October 8th will be held at Gillian's, when we'll be discussing "Rogue Herries" by Hugh Walpole.

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:

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 3rd November at 1.30 in the Travers Rest

FAMILY HISTORY

The Family History Group will start again at 2.00 on Friday 10th October in the Local Studies Room at the Public Library in Crown Street. If you are interested in tracing your ancestors and wish to join our group.

If you do not have a valid library membership card, please contact the library before the meeting to obtain this.

Pauline Noble

Walking with Alpacas



WALKING WITH ALPACAS 8 SEPTEMBER 2025

The first U3A outing to Leven Valley Alpacas near Yarm was so popular and successful that Carol organised a second visit. A group of around 15 of us made our way to the pretty riverside valley where the farm is located to meet the alpacas and learn something about them.



After introducing us to our camelid companions we set off walking up the valley. With each halt on the walk our guide gave us further information about these

charming creatures. Did you know a baby alpaca is called a cria, and that when alpacas give birth they are said to “unpack”? We all had a chance to feel the alpacas famously soft fleece, and some of us purchased items made from alpaca



wool in the farm shop. Many of us were surprised to learn that the alpaca shearer is a skilled specialist who travels annually from New Zealand to work in the UK during the southern hemisphere off season.



I think most of us wanted to know what the difference between an alpaca and a llama is. Helpfully, they had a couple of llamas on the farm, so we were able to compare the two side by side. The llamas are bigger and have curved ears and were used as pack animals in their native South America. Alpacas are bred for



their very fine wool. Although well known for spitting, our guide informed us they only rarely do so, and even less frequently spit at humans. We did not have any problems with the alpacas spitting.

After a very enjoyable time at the farm, we moved on to the Fox Covert Inn for lunch. Many thanks to Carol Boyd for organising such a lovely day out.

Jane Laninga

Advanced Notice of the November Luncheon Club

This will take place at Bannatyne's Hotel on *Friday 28th November* at 1pm.

Surprisingly, it will be the Christmas Lunch menu (I thought that it was only offered through December). I have made a provisional booking for 40 members, but it can be more or less. Final numbers, menu choices and payments must be made by 31st October.

3 courses - £30 2 courses - £25

The menu is as follows:-

STARTERS.

Sweet Plum Tomato & Basil Soup, crusty bread roll.

Traditional Prawn Cocktail, Marie Rose served with brown bread.

Duck & Orange Pate, Toasted Brioche, Fruit Chutney.

Trio of Melon & Fruit Platter served with Elderflower Syrup.

Korean Red Chilli Vegetable Bao Bun.

MAIN COURSE.

Roast Turkey Crown, Pigs in Blankets, Sprouts & Bacon, Yorkshire Pudding, Roast Potatoes, Honey Roasted Carrots & Parsnips, Pan gravy.

Slow Roasted Sliced Feather blade of Beef, Mashed Potato, Honey Roasted Carrots & Parsnips, Red Wine gravy.

Baked Sea Trout, Coconut & Sweet Chilli Sauce, Baby Potatoes & Roasted Greens.

Vegan Nut Roast served with Roast Potatoes. Honey Roasted Carrots & Parsnips, gravy.

DESSERT.

Christmas Pudding, Brandy Sauce.

Jamaican Ginger Cake, Rum Infused Custard.

White Chocolate & Raspberry Cheesecake, Raspberry Coulis.

Santa Eton Mess, White Chocolate Marshmallows, Winter Fruit, Cream & Crushed Meringue.

***NB this is our regular monthly Lunch Group meeting & will be the last of the year.**

I will be taking names & menu choices & providing payment details at the October 14th meeting or if you aren't attending then you can text/email me with your choices.

Stella Barnes.

Day Begins

On this Sunday morning in September
 Sun lifts through the beech trees in the lane
 Sends small rays of glow past dithering
 leaves
 She lights up twigs and thorns along the
 Hawthorne hedge
 And wakens each hidden insect lazily
 Contemplating the long sleep
 She seeps across the fence posts
 Making vertical shadows on the dewed lawn
 And sparkles gently in her own light
 Our friendly robin takes note, he hops
 Twittering near the bird box under the
 clematis
 Insects beware! The red-breasted peril is
 foraging
 The garden slowly lightens, brightens with
 the last Summer rose.

Margaret Rule



Waiting

She sits,
 It's early, barely light
 Watching the world filing by
 Pulling their small pieces of cabin
 luggage
 Faces full of anticipation
 Children crying, tired already
 Slumbers lost
 Stags and hens dressed to impress
 Already loud and chatty
 Still, she waits
 Will they every announce the
 departure gate?



Dot Hullah

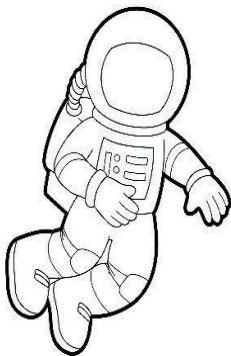
The Astronaut (Pride Goes Before a Fall)

He was brainy, he was strong
 The master of all he surveyed
 As in his rocket he zoomed along
 And the earth below started to fade.

No one could beat him, he was the best,
 His vanity was supreme.
 He told everyone how perfect he was,
 And was held in high esteem

But he had to speak to Mission Control
 "Houston, we have a problem, I've left
 The map on the dining room table...."

Kate Brown



It was all good beer

When I was 17, it was all very good Beer
It was a very good beer for getting tight,
We'd put the world to rights
Then we'd get into fights
On the village green,

When I was 17.....

When I was 21, it was all very good beer
It was a very good beer for parties and
more

There were girls to adore
We sometimes slept on the floor
Then we were done,

When I was 21.....



When I was 35, it was all very good beer
Award winning beer, some artisan ales
Both browns and pales
We'd drink and regale
Then home we would drive,

When I was 35.....

But now the days are short of both time
and beer

And I think of my life as the best of
meads

From the best breweries
From the heads to the lees
And I'm very sincere,
It was all very good beer

Ian Oulsnam

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



Thursday 6th November 2025
 6.00pm - 8.30pm
 Carmel College
 The Headlands, Darlington,

TICKET PRICES
 £3.50 - Adults | £3.00 - Concession | Under 16's free
 Ticket price includes a complimentary glass of wine or soft drink