

# South Durham u3a

Registered Charity Number 1207225

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

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

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026

January 13<sup>th</sup> 2026

**CHRIS LLOYD ON PATONS AND BALDWINS**

## MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIR

Welcome to our new members

**Welcome to 2026 a brand new and exciting new u3a year.**

As I had hoped at the end of last year, our New Christmas Party Event, which, was held on the 9th December in Bowen Road Hall, was a huge success. I have included a selection of photographs which give a flavour of the day.

We are introducing a new section to our newsletter. In this section, called Meet your Committee, you will have the opportunity to have a little insight into the background and interests of your new committee.

I will mention again that this year it will be South Durham u3a's Silver Anniversary, so if anyone has any thoughts or ideas on how we will celebrate such a milestone please let me know. We have sometime yet to think of a suitable event, so thinking caps on everyone, let's mark this occasion in style.

I would like to give a warm shout out to those members who found the end of 2025 challenging due to ill health. My hope for you is that 2026 will see you back to full health and able to join us again at our meetings.

***Dot Hullah  
Chair***

## MONTHLY MEETING CHRISTMAS PARTY EVENT



On December the 9<sup>th</sup> we held our first Christmas Party in Bowen Road Community Hall.



88 members came along in their Christmas finery to enjoy a day of merry making. The excellent buffet was provided by Taylors the Butchers and the live entertainment was provided by a wonderful ukelale band. So lively was the band that many of our members felt the need to get up and trip the light fantastic. I was chair bound on this occasion with my troublesome knee but I have booked a slot on the dance floor for next Christmas. After lunch I provided a fun Christmas Themed Quiz and we had several raffles. Here you can see Margret Rule being presented with the grand raffle prize by Jenny Hurt. From emails and texts I have received since the event we can safely say that it was a great success, which we can build on for next Christmas.

*Dot Hullah*



## New Section for 2026 – Meet your Committee

### Chair

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 after November's AGM I was proud to step into the role of Chair. I 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.

### Vice Chair

Jenny Hurt



I relocated from South Yorkshire 5 years ago, to be nearer my son and his family. I had a very happy teaching career working in a large rural comprehensive school. My subject specialisms were Food and Textiles. I joined South Durham u3a in February 2022, to make new friends and become part of the Darlington community. I am also a member of Richmond Walking for Health, a Darlington Culture Volunteer and love dancing.

I became an active committee member in December 2023. You will see me greeting new members at monthly meetings, giving out our welcome pack. I am also involved in organising our biannual Regional Quiz at Hurworth Grange and our new Christmas event.

I was pleased to be elected to serve as Vice Chair at the AGM last November and am looking forward to how our u3a will develop in the future.

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Our bank began imposing charges on Charity Bank Accounts in November 2025.

The Committee has decided that Members who wish to make payment by cheque must cover the processing fee. This will mean that each future cheque payment to South Durham u3a must be increased by 60p. This will apply to all cheque payments, such as Membership Fees, Christmas Lunch, Social trips etc.

To avoid such charges, I would encourage all members to make future payments by BACS, ensuring your name is quoted in the payment reference field. The payment can be from your own account or that of a friend or family member. If you have any concerns setting up online banking or making such a payment please contact our Treasurer, Sue Clark, she will be very happy to provide you with assistance over the telephone or by visiting you.

## LATEST NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

### COFFEE & CHAT

We shall meet again on 28th January from 10.30 to 12.30 and I look forward to seeing everyone. If you are free on that date and fancy joining us, do please come along to Cafe Zest in Binns. You will be very welcome.

**Pauline Noble**

### DOT'S JUNGAGLOW CRAFTS



For the last craft session of the year our ladies made unusual perpetual calendar. They used a variety of materials to decorate the plywood boards. Some even had time to start putting the birthday date hangings under their calendars.

Our next meeting will be 26<sup>th</sup> February from 10 until 12 in the Newcastle Building Society community room.

**Dot Hullah**

## CREATIVE WRITING



Our intrepid group met for the first time this year on January 7<sup>th</sup>. Our theme for this session was "The Snow globe". We enjoyed a variety of stories from both inside and outside the snow globe. Our group also welcomed a new member – Jan Bennett.

Next Meeting is 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 from 10 until 12 noon.

*Dot Hullah*

## FRIDAY WALKING GROUP



Instead of walking in December, we held a meeting to draw up a provisional programme of walks for 2026.

We took the opportunity to discuss safety issues, individual walker responsibilities and role of leader. Then we adjourned for a festive lunch.

Our next walk will be on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026. It will be from Neasham to Low Dinsdale and Girsby, a circular of 7.5 miles, most of which will be on good surfaces along a road and lanes, beginning with a steep incline out of Neasham.

As usual we meet in Linden Avenue (the end of the road close to Coniscliffe Road), for car sharing or parking, ready to leave together at 9.30 a.m..

Members should be confident they are fit to participate, wear suitable clothing and footwear. It is advisable to carry some refreshments as well as drinking water. While we try to finish at a tea shop, this cannot be guaranteed.

Please ensure that you carry information to be used in an emergency. Please check that you have your ICE card with you and that the details are up to date.

*Judith Bryant*

## INTERMEDIATE WALKING GROUP



The walk on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January will be around Aycliffe. It will be approximately 5/6 miles with a coffee stop in the middle. This will be led by Dave.

The following walk on 2<sup>nd</sup> February is around Spennymoor. It will be approximately 5 miles and may be muddy. This will be led by Liz.

As usual we will meet in Cockerton car park for a prompt 10 am start. You may wish to bring a snack/drink. Although at this time of year we don't tend to sit for long!!!

Our walk on the 5<sup>th</sup> January. Despite the sub zero temperature, 12 hardy people set off from Cockerton to walk over towards West Park. Here we had a welcome hot drink at the White Heifer and a chance to see if we had lost any fingers or toes in the cold. Not sure about anyone else, but I had 5 layers on the top and 3 layers on the bottom!

We then wandered around the many paths of the park to eventually hit the black path and over to Brinkburn nature reserve. The pond wasn't completely frozen over. It was then a walk along the denes and back to Cockerton.

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)

**Could you please check and ensure that these ICE cards are up to date with all details.**

Susan

## LOCAL HISTORY



KEVIN BECKETT on TWO COUNTY DURHAM PROPERTIES Tuesday Dec 16.

This highly researched talk began as an architectural study but ended for me as a consideration of human motivations. As an employee of the County Durham careers service, Kevin had worked in both Windlestone Hall, Rushyford and what is now the Spanish Gallery, Bishop Auckland. He took us through the chequered history of each with their various incarnations - family seat, school, bank, nursing home...and their owners - established gentry, a con man, the local council, a millionaire philanthropist...there was also a burial desecration... Curiously, two of Darlington's best-known architects had designed these edifices: Bonomi at Windlestone and Hoskins at 2 The Marketplace in Bishop. Both stories wove in and out of each other but to date, the old bank appears to have done much better. Though I did spend a rather chilly couple of hours there in November watching a Spanish art film as the heat pump had broken down!

*Linda Chadd*

### Local History meetings 2026

Our meetings are open to all members, there is no limitation on size.

They take place at the Hall on Willow Road, near the Holyhurst Road junction.

Doors open @ 1.15pm - £2 per person - refreshments available - talk begins @ 1.45pm.

Jan 20	Chris Forster	Leisure and Recreation in Victorian and Edwardian Darlington
Feb 17	Kim Harding	Richard III "Benevolent Monarch or Murderous Tyrant"
March 17	Ruth Beckett	Gertrude Bell Her Life and Legacy in North East England
April 21	David Butler	'Guests' of Queen Victoria 1851 in Durham The census for that year reveals 226 prison inhabitants - we shall look at the justice system and their crimes.
May 19	Kevin Beckett	The Impact & Significance of Ladybird Books
June 16	Chris Lloyd	Of Fish & Actors - History of Darlington Hippodrome

## 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



Our French group are a fabulous team and we all really enjoy chatting and learning together! We have covered a real range of topics from politics to poetry, walking to wild-life, geography to general knowledge quizzes! This term we have started by reading about and discussing the tradition of Epiphany and next session will be sharing some recipes! Please contact if you are reasonably fluent in French and want to not forget 😊!

Jan 5 and Tuesday 20

Feb 2 and Tuesday 17

March 2, 16 and 30

and then Easter hols 😊

**Celia Howarth**

## READING GROUP 2



Next meeting is on the 9th January 2026 Our selected book for discussion is "James" by Percival Everett.

13 February 2026

The chosen book is "The Silence in Between" by Josie Ferguson.

**Judith Bryant**

## LUNCHEON GROUP



The first Lunch Group get-together of 2026 will be at

The Burtree Inn on Friday 30th January at 1pm.

See attached their "Light Bites" & Main menus - I will have paper copies at the main meeting as we need to make pre-orders & I will need choices to inform the Burtree at least ONE WEEK before our get-together. We do not need to order desserts in advance.

PLEASE REMEMBER that it is a requirement at the Burtree that we pay the TOTAL BILL rather than individually, so it is much easier to do this if we pay CASH. It is a good idea to buy our drinks as we arrive, so that we only have our food to pay for by cash when we finish our meals.

The postcode for the Burtree Inn is DL2 2XZ

Happy New Year to you all.



This book has sold over 4.5 million copies and has been published in 45 languages and a movie version is on the cards.

Our group found much to enjoy from this book and, I for one, would be happy to explore others.

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

Our December 10th meeting will be held at Lorna's and will be a social event.

**Toni Carr**

### ITALIAN CONVERSATION

Ciao tutti! Our Italian group continues to meet and have great fun while steadily improving our knowledge and grasp of the Italian language. While many are now becoming Improvers, there is always space for beginners, and we constantly look back at what we have previously covered to refresh memories! This term we are looking at describing and buying clothes and will do short dialogues saying what we want in different shops. Please contact if you fancy giving it a try!

Jan 5 and Tuesday 20

Feb 2 and Tuesday 17

March 2, 16 and 30

and then Easter hols 😊

**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 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month.

### FAMILY HISTORY

The Family History Group meeting will be at 2.00 pm the next meeting of will be Friday 9<sup>th</sup> January in the Local Studies Centre of the Library Room at the Public Library in Crown Street. If you are interested in tracing your ancestors and wish to join our group, please contact me in advance If you do not have a valid library membership card, please contact the library before the meeting to obtain this.

### OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS

#### VISIT TO ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

As St Andrew's Church in Haughton is celebrating its 900th anniversary, we thought our members would be interested to visit and learn more about it.

We have spaces on our second visit on **Wednesday 25th Feb @ 2pm.**

We shall have a talk/guided walkabout (plenty of seating if needed) for about 45 minutes with Alan Wright, then 15 minutes 'free' to look at displays, take photographs etc. followed by light refreshments provided by Muriel Jones at 3pm.

Warm clothes are essential as the church isn't heated. There is a toilet in the church. There is no charge, but donations will be welcome.

The church car park is opposite the church. Enter Salters Lane South from the mini roundabout on Haughton Road and then turn immediately right, to take the entrance through the wall, and proceed to the parking area behind the Church Hall.

THE LISTENING POST  
**QUIZ NIGHT**  
FRIDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY  
@THE GRANGE, HURWORTH  
CROFT ROAD, DL2 2BN  
**CHILDRENS MENTAL HEALTH WEEK**  
TEAMS OF SIX, SEVEN OR EIGHT  
£7 PER PERSON - 7PM START  
BOOK YOUR SPACES / TEAMS BY EMAILING  
secretary@dacym.co.uk

CREATIVE CORNER

Her first Winter

The little kitten sat on the windowsill  
As flakes fluttered down from the sky  
The ground was covered with thick white stuff  
And she really didn't know why.  
She thought it looked so soft and warm  
Like the blanket that she slept on  
And it held no marks on its clean surface  
So, it obviously hadn't been stepped on  
"I'll go out and play on that lovely stuff  
Though my fur coat may make me too hot  
But I am strong and I am tough  
So, I'll play there no matter what."  
But stepping onto the freezing snow  
Where her breath froze in the air,  
She was immediately chilled to the bone  
And the cold was too much to bear.  
So, she dashed back into the fireside  
And she began to cry,  
"I'm not going out there ever again  
Till that yellow light comes back to the sky"



Kate Brown

## Monthly Meeting Speakers - 2026

Jan 13	CHRIS LLOYD ON PATONS AND BALDWINS A multi-national company once based in Darlington
Feb 10	MY LIFE AT SEA INCLUDING DISATERS, by Russell Carnelley.
Mar 10	MARY'S MEALS Presentation by a global charity
Apr 14	THE FORESTRY COMMISSION SPEAKS
May 12	MORE COURTROOM MEMORIES FROM DAVID JAFFA
June 9	"THE PEARL OF AFRICA" REVISITED Visions of Uganda from Sarah Cartwright
July 14	A HISTORY OF CINEMA, DENIS FOX
Aug 11	BROTHER KHADIM FROM NEWCASTLE CENTRAL MOSQUE A Geordie convert speaks
Sept 8	LOOKING AND SEEING Dave Phillips on aspects of art
Oct 13	GARY BANKHEAD ON HIS TIME AS A FIREMAN
Nov 10	SADDAM HUSSEIN, MY PART IN HIS DOWNFALL By our very own John Sloss
Dec 8	tba, hopefully musical

## Groups on Offer

Bridge – David Dixon	Travellers Rest	1.30 -4pm every other Tuesday from 10th December
Current Affairs – Gill Turnbull	Members' homes	10am-12 noon on the 3rd Monday of the month
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
Family History – Jane Laninga	Crown Street Library	2-4 2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month
French, Advanced Celia Howarth	Above Newcastle Building Society, Market Place	11.15 on 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3rd 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 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3rd 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