

South Durham u3a

Registered Charity Number 1207225

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

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

Thursday 6th February 2026

February 10th 2026

MY LIFE AT SEA INCLUDING DISASTERS by Russel Carnelley

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIR

Welcome to our new members

Alan Bradshaw
Majorie Stapleton
Stephen Green
Rachel Wearmouth

Ann Garrad
Elizabeth Cooke
John Pottinger
Yvonne Pottinger

Alice Fewster
Fred Hartley
Karin Adams
Valerie Johnson

First of all, I would love to welcome our new members to our friendly u3a, I hope that you will be able to find groups, trips and activities that you are interested in. There is always someone around that will be able to answer your queries.

A quick update on my progress. I had a very successful knee replacement on the 14th January, and am recuperating well, sadly I missed last general meeting in January but hope to be at the February Meeting.

Thank you to all the members who have been sending ideas in for our 25th Anniversary celebrations this year. I am excited to tell you that these ideas were so good that you will be able to enjoy several events which will be held throughout the coming year. Your committee is working hard to finalise ideas and then I will be able to share with you what we are going to do to celebrate our successful u3a's 25th Anniversary.

Our new – "**Meet your committee**" section is proving popular and this month you can find out a little bit more about your Secretary – Penny Moon.

Dot Hullah
Chair

LAST MONTH'S MEETING

Chris Lloyd on Paton Baldwins

Chris informed us at the beginning of his talk, that this was his 10th visit to South Durham u3a.

We had a record turnout of 105 members; it was a very enthusiastic gathering to welcome in the New Year.

I was very much looking forward to finding out more of this iconic company with its origins in the West Yorkshire town of Halifax. My mind slipped back to my school days with the mention of Crompton's Spinning Mule and how that piece of machinery revolutionised the commercial yarn industry. The geographical area of Darlington suited wool and linen production with export links to Russia spanning the centuries. It was also fascinating to hear how the textile wealth of Darlington and its

Quaker heritage made a significant contribution to the Napoleonic wars in the productions of military uniforms. The huge profits then being diverted into the establishment of our Railways.

Chris's photographs and video clearly showed the scale of the 140-acre site of Paton and Baldwin's. With a workforce of 4,000, a lot of Darlington families would have had a

connection with this company, alongside others travelling on the 50 buses from surrounding villages.

Chris humorously informed the audience we could have been using a by-product of woollen yarn production in our skin creams (Lanolin) and there was shared laughter at the memory of getting Knitted swimming costumes wet. Who would have thought Roger Moore would have been modelling knitwear patterns designed and made in Darlington?

I am now going to search for a Bakelite Beehive for my knitting wool, such an interesting design.

Jenny Hurt



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.

New Section for 2026 – Meet your Committee

Secretary

Penny Moon



I spent my working life as a Secretary/Administrator predominantly in universities. Once a secretary, always a secretary so its not surprising I ended up in my current role.

I moved from Bradford to Darlington in 2022. I was born in Darlington and spent many a Christmas here with my grandparents, aunt and cousins and always had in mind to settle here on retirement. I joined u3a a few months after arriving as I knew this would be a good way to meet people and make friends. I got involved with the intermediate and Friday walking groups straight away and also attended local history talks and still enjoy both.

Nearly a year later Ruth Beckett asked me if I would consider standing as Secretary and I was pleased to be elected in November 2023. I take the Minutes at the monthly meetings of the committee and help with the administration of the bi-annual quizzes we offer to other u3as.

It has been great to see the way our u3a has grown in terms of numbers over the few years I have been involved, showing just how much an organisation like this is needed.

LATEST NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

COFFEE & CHAT

We shall meet on the fourth Wednesday of every month 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

As both our Reading Groups are at capacity, a third reading group has been proposed, if you are interested in attending this new reading group please contact Dave Cooke our Group Co-ordinator to register your interest.

DOT'S JUNGAGLOW CRAFTS



Due to my ongoing recovery from surgery, there was no craft group in January.

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

Dot Hullah

CREATIVE WRITING



Due to my ongoing recovery from surgery there was no creative writing group in February.

Next Meeting is 4th March 2026 from 10 until 12 noon.

Dot Hullah

FRIDAY WALKING GROUP



On an overcast day, 15 of us set off to walk from Neasham to Low Dinsdale. Along the way it brightened up and the sun came out as we passed catkins and snowdrops. Once we had crossed the River Tees we could see Middleton One Row to our left. The road then followed the Roman lined road lined with trees. I'm told that it looks magnificent when all the daffodils are out.

From here we walked to Girsby where we sat in the church grounds for our lunch with splendid views over to Sockburn. Helen then told us the story of the Sockburn worm. Moira told us that the Alderson sisters who were famous artists lived at Girsby Farm. They worked together on each painting. One painting from the left and the other from the right.

We then crossed the river again via the griddle bridge of iron girders erected in 1870 by Theophania Blackett. A plaque informed us it was in compensation for the closing of the right of way past Sockburn Hall.

From here we followed the path to High Sockburn and then back to Neasham.

Not only did we have a good day walking we also learnt some local history!



Tony Storey

INTERMEDIATE WALKING GROUP



Despite the dull and dreary weather, fifteen walkers met up in Cockerton car park and set off to meet up with Dave at Newton Aycliffe railway station for our walk. Dave led us along by the fast flowing Woodham Burn and by the ponds in the park full of ducks, seagulls and geese, before walking up Burn Lane. We called at the Pioneering Care Centre café for a welcome hot drink and scones before

setting off along the pathway towards Woodham. The path was very muddy in places but we saw a metal sculpture of a giant spider along the way and a metal dragonfly on a tree. We turned along to Bluebell Corner then followed the path to Greenfield Way and back along to the railway station car park after an enjoyable walk despite the misty damp weather.

Christine Walker

The walk on 16th February is from North Road, along the River Skerne to Haughton and back via Darlington golf club and Green Lane.

The following walk on 2nd March is around Hurworth and led by Wendy. Both walks will probably be muddy in places.

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

Members should be confident they are fit to participate and wear suitable clothing and footwear. You may wish to bring some refreshments and drinking water.

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.

Susan

Liz

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



LEISURE and RECREATION in VICTORIAN and EDWARDIAN DARLINGTON - Chris Forster, Local History Jan 20.

The alternative title for this was "Minnie Clarkson Goes To The Theatre". Chris had taken a real person who lived from 1879 to 1982 and imagined what entertainments she might have had access to during this period. As a woman she wouldn't have played cricket or rugby, perhaps the first town sports clubs officially recorded, but she almost certainly attended the Theatre Royal whose last incarnation was the Odeon Cinema, North Road. 19th/20th century legislation governing working hours, along with technical advance, encouraged a plethora of leisure opportunities in town. These included another theatre (the Hippodrome, 1907), circuses (not exactly leisure for the animals involved) and at one point later in the 20th century, nine cinemas. From 1885 we had a library, then cycling and football became popular for women and men. A coherent use of photos from the net. Thanks to Chris for this entertaining talk about entertainment.

Linda Chadd

There will be a further visit to St Andrew's Church on Wednesday 25th February. There is still some space should any members wish to join us. Please contact Ruth

LOCAL HISTORY VISIT, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 28, HAUGHTON-LE-SKERNE

No, church stalwart Alan Wright isn't pointing out the location of God but one of the many fascinating features of St. Andrew's, the oldest place of worship in Darlington. A great visit plus refreshments, courtesy of our very own Muriel

Jones. A duplicate jaunt follows in February.

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.



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

GARDENING GROUP



The new Gardening Group got off to a good start with a well-attended first meeting in January. We chatted about upcoming trips, garden visits, and ideas for the 2026 programme.

At next month's meeting (19th February) we will have a talk by Roy MacDougall from Elm Ridge Methodist Church, about the church gardens and nature area. Weather permitting, we'll also spend some time exploring the gardens with the option of a nature-trail walk.

Membership of the group is limited to 30 people, and a reserve list is now in place. If you'd like to join, please speak to Ann Robinson. The summer visits however will not be limited to 30 people so watch this space for details of future trips!

Ann Robinson

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 😊!

Feb 2 and Tuesday 17

March 2, 16 and 30

and then Easter hols 😊

Celia Howarth

NEW DIY GROUP

The DIY group held its first meeting in January when members detailed relatively simple tasks they would like to have the knowledge and confidence to tackle in the home but felt they needed some guidance.

There are still some spaces in the Group anyone interested should contact the Group Leader: Sue Clarke to register their interest as numbers are limited.

A Speaker has been appointed and the next meeting will be above the Newcastle Building Society in Houndgate, Darlington from 10 am until noon on Wednesday 11th March 2026.

PLAY READING



With a fuller group meeting we tackled another murder mystery: 'Deadly Nightcap' by Francis Durbridge. The name of the author brought back memories of Paul Temple, Do you remember the plays on radio in the old days and also a television series? One or two of us began humming 'Coronation Scot', the theme tune of the series, another memory from the past. Our present reading didn't involve Mr. Temple but it did involve a body. So, having finished Act 1, we look forward to unravelling the duplicity shown by some of the characters at our next meeting which will be on Tuesday 13th February at 2pm .

Muriel Jones

READING GROUP 2



Our choice for discussion at the January meeting was "James," a novel by Percival Everett. It is the story of Jim, a slave, who runs away to escape being sold on to another slave owner. He takes a long and dangerous journey along the route of the Mississippi river accompanied by his young friend, non-slave Huck. This is the reimagined story of Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn from the perspective of Huck's companion. In the context of brutal slavery, the buying and selling of slaves, and a move towards the abolition of slavery, Jim wants to return and free his wife and daughter. Jim is self-educated and his language puzzles and scares some of the slave owners. Attitudes towards and cruelty to slaves are shocking. As with so many of our choices, views were mixed, but whether we enjoyed the book or not, it was thought-provoking and disturbing.

Next meetings

13 th February. A Perfectly Good Man by Patrick Gale.

13 th March. The Silence in Between by Josie Ferguson.

Judith Bryant

LUNCHEON GROUP



We started the year with a get-together at the Burtree Inn with 25 members in attendance. 4 new members attended along with our "regulars" and I have received excellent feedback across the group regarding the food, the venue and the ambience. A great way to start the year!

The February Lunch Group will meet at the Bay Horse, Middridge (between Shildon & Aycliffe) at 1pm on 27th February. We DO NOT have to make our menu choices until we arrive so I just need to take names at our monthly meeting on 10th February when I will be in the annexe of Bowen Hall. I'm aware that it is half term so we may have fewer attendees, but I hope that we get a good response as it is so nice to eat together.

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

READING GROUP 1



“The Love of Dangerous Men” by Tony Nicholson.

The author of this book, a retired lecturer, is well known in local history circles and his two talks to SD U3A on the subject matter of this book were well received. The book builds on the success of his talks and provides a fascinating insight into the England of the late 1890's and the early years of the 20th century.

While overseeing renovations of a newly acquired house, the author discovered, together with dead birds and other detritus, a cache of letters, photos and memorabilia belonging to a long dead woman named Annie Bowen. Annie lived in Gainford when, one balmy summer night, at a soirée in a vicarage garden, she met the love of her life, Gus Bowen, bad boy son of the local vicar.

This discovery led to a quest by Tony and his wife Gillian to learn more about the lives of these people and others featured in the letters.

To achieve this end, Tony made contacts with individuals around the world who helped to provide a coherent picture of Annie's somewhat sad history.

To say she had terrible taste in men is quite an understatement. Despite years of neglect by Gus, she fell in with Frank, a violent serial bigamist who left her to live out her life as a lonely lodger in a single room.

In addition to revealing the wonders of internet research since the advent of online census data, naval, military and prison records, the book also sheds light on the social habits, the entertainments, maritime and prison life in the 1890's.

Those of you whose interest was piqued by this month's excellent U3A talk to the local History Group by Chris Forster would find much more to interest them in this book.

The book sparked a lively discussion within the group. Some thought it was dry, focusing too much on the research side. The title was disputed. Were these men really dangerous? Others felt there was a great deal of conjecture and lack of structure in the writing, but no one could help but admire the dedication and perseverance of the author.

Finally, who would have guessed there was so much fun to be had in 1890's Gainford?!

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

Our next meeting will be hosted by Lorna on 11th February when we will be discussing “Still Life” by Sarah Winman.

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!

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 1st Monday of the month.

FAMILY HISTORY

The Family History Group meeting will be at 2.00 pm the next meeting of will be Friday 9th 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.

CAN YOU HELP?

This year's rota for helping in the kitchen at our monthly meeting will be on the refreshment table. If you would like to volunteer, can you please add your name to the list.

To allow time to clear and sort out the kitchen tea and coffee can only be served until 10:15our meeting does start at 10:30 . It also helps if you can return your mugs to the hatch.

Thank you*Pat West* .

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.

CREATIVE CORNER

February 14th

Valentine was a man who talked too much
So, folks kept out of his way.
He wanted a friend to listen to him,
He hoped to find one someday.
On February 14th he happened to see
Someone who would be just right
And she was quite beautiful
In the early morning light.
Her large dark eyes were calm and clear,
She had an air of mystery
And so, he took her home with him
And the rest, as they say, is History.
He had this friend for many years
And that had been his wish.
So, he celebrated each Feb 14th.
With his beautiful little goldfish.



Kate Brown

PROGRAMME OF UPCOMING VISITS/OUTINGS FOR MEMBERS

Sorry members no coach trips from me this year unless I book in with Lee's. I do have outings organised.

March waiting confirmation for Georgian Theatre, Richmond.

Friday May 22nd Glasshouse Gateshead was the Sage. 10am guided tour. 1hr/1& half hr. Making own travel arrangements. Cost £15

Friday May 22nd Trinity House home of Maritime education, artifacts, etc. Group tour 2pm between 1hr to 1& three-quarters hrs. Cost £8. Plus, tea coffee for £3 person. Unfortunately, very steep steps to entrance & steps inside.

Thursday June 11th Guided tour Sion Hall then Tennants Auction House for Lunch, Guided tour & coffee & scone before departing. Awaiting final details.

Wednesday July 15th Teeside Princess Afternoon tea £24-95.

Sail from Stockton Quayside Boarding from 1-30 to sail at 2pm returning at 5-30 pm.

Thursday August 20th Harrison & Harrison organ repairs 10 am Meadowfield Industrial Estate. Car Share. Tour 1 HR to 1-30mins. A donation at the end goes to their chosen charity .

October Amazon Gateshead waiting confirmation.

November Lee's Coaches are going to Hardwood House at Christmas. Not Castle Howard. Details later.

Carol Boyd

REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS



Northumbria Region u3a Events Team
Redhills Durham Miners Hall, Flass St,
Durham, DH1 4BE

A second chance to book this tour has been arranged for u3a members. Another chance to attend a guided tour of Durham Miners Association, known as Redhills Durham Miners Hall. The Grade II listed building was opened in 1915 and has recently reopened after an extensive £14 million refurbishment. Explore the extraordinary history of Redhills – a place where working-class

community power helped shape Britain. Alongside its proud past, discover how Redhills is being reimaged as a centre for culture, learning and social action.

Date: 14th April 2026 Tour: 10.30 - 12 noon.

Cost: £6.50 per person includes tour and refreshments.

Please contact Cecilia Coulson to register who will advise if there is a space available and then payment is to be made to The Region's bank account – details will be given on confirmation of a registered place.

A Northumbria Region u3a Golf Event



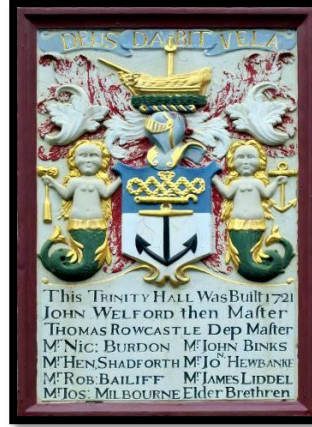
is to be held at this golf club for both ladies and men on Friday 10th July 2026.

On offer would be either:

- a round of golf over 18 holes with buffet - cost £40. Tee off arranged 12 noon – 2 pm
- a taster session on the 28 bay driving range with buffet – cost £24. Any time.
- a bit of fun on the 18 hole mini (crazy) golf course with buffet - cost £20. Anytime

Equipment and balls are supplied for crazy golf. Members would have to bring equipment for the golf course and driving range. Buggy hire (limited) would also be available. The buffet is available from 6.30 pm Please contact Mike Wallace: for any further information and/or if you are interested in this u3a Golf Event and following your commitment a registration form will be sent to you.

A Visit to Trinity House, Newcastle Northumbria



Region Events Team have arranged a tour of Trinity House, Broad Chare, Newcastle on Monday 30 March 2026 at 10:30am.

The construction of

Trinity House began in 1505 and has, since that date, housed the headquarters of a unique maritime organisation, The Corporation of the Newcastle upon Tyne Trinity House, which has been dedicated to the welfare of seafarers on the North-East coast since the Charter of Incorporation granted by King Henry VIII in 1536. The buildings include the 1505 private Brethren's Chapel, the 1800 Entrance Hall, the 1721 Banqueting Hall and Board Room, all built around a secluded courtyard. Paintings, models, a library and other memorabilia reflect centuries of England's maritime traditions and heritage, which are maintained here by the Brethren in a unique setting.

Cost is £11 per person (inclusive of tea and coffee)

Please note that the listed buildings do include steps which may present difficulties to less mobile visitors and there is no dedicated access for wheelchairs or those who use mobility walkers

To book a place contact Moira Stokoe –Meet at 10:20am in the courtyard of Trinity House, Broad Chare, Newcastle NE1 3DQ

Monthly Meeting Speakers - 2026

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 nd Friday of the month
French, Advanced Celia Howarth	Above Newcastle Building Society, Market Place	11.15 on 1 st & 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
Gardening Group Ann Robinson	Harroway Room – Elm Ridge Methodist Church	October to April 3 rd Thursday of the month – 10 - 12
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 st & 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