South Durham u3a

Registered Charity Number 1207225
Active in **Darlington, Cockerton and surrounding areas**
Tuesday 3rd November 2026

AGM
Talk on future investments and planning from the Newcastle Building Society
10th November – 10 until 12
New Venue – Cockerton Club

NEWS FROM YOUR CHAIR

Welcome to our new members

Jenny Cartman
Jill Lister
Carol Musztacs

Welcome to our new members, who are joining us at a very exciting time in our u3a's journey. I hope they will be very happy with their choice to join us and find rewarding activities and events to try.

It was a sad farewell to Bowen Road last month, but we went out with a bang. Many members baked cakes for us to enjoy at the cake fest and 96 of you turned up to make the final monthly meeting a great success. As I locked the doors on Bowen Road for the final time, I had a tinge of sadness but also that tingle of excitement for what is to come next.

So, this is the important bit our November meeting is not only our AGM but will be the first one in our new home. Please DON'T turn up at Bowen Road for our AGM because we will not be there, and you will be missed. A redirection notice will be placed on the door at Bowen Road just in case any of our members or new members for that matter turn up. There will be a new central serving area for your refreshments. We will be using paper cups, this is to facilitate a quick and efficient services. All of the paper cups we use will be recycled at the end of the session.



Our Christmas Party event is NOW FULL But if you still wish to come along you can put your name down on a waiting list with Carol Boyd

Dot Hullah
Chair/Editor

Important notice for Existing and New Members of

South Durham u3a

We have moved to Cockerton Club which is next to The Travellers Rest pub and across from the library.

If you would like to join us, please make your way back into the centre of Cockerton and we will be thrilled to welcome you.

This is the redirection notice which will appear on the doors at Bowen Road for the next few months. If you forget we have moved, we have you covered don't worry. Just come back down into Cockerton to the club as stated above and we will be there to welcome you. If you are aware of anyone who is wishing to join us this is your chance to spread the word and get the word out to potential members of our new venue. I would like to thank you in advance for your patience and co-operation during this exciting time for our u3a.

Dot Hullah
Chair/Editor

Fully Booked Sorry

mas Event

On Tuesday 8th December

There are only a few places left for this event, which is to be held at Cockerton Club. We will again have a Ukelele Band, to entertain you, along with a fun quiz, games and a buffet lunch.

Doors will open at 10 am and finish at 2 pm

THIS EVENT IS INSTEAD OF THE NORMAL MONTHLY MEETING

PLEASE DON'T COME ALONG ON THE 8TH DECEMBER IF YOU HAVENT PAID £15 TO ATTEND THIS EVENT.

There will be a yummy buffet from TAYLORS the butchers to enjoy.

If you're not on our list, you will not be allowed to enter the club on this occasion sorry.

DOORS WILL OPEN AT 10 O'CLOCK SHARP SO PLEASE DON'T COME EARLIER





Entry is by signing in sheet

Firefighter – Being the Best" with GARY BANKHEAD



FIREMAN - BEING THE BEST by GARY BANKHEAD, TUESDAY OCTOBER 13

A great talk to round off our tenure of Bowen Hall, this was a blow-by-blow account of Gary's 31 years in the Fire Service, starting as an uncertain 17-year-old with a bullying boss. I never realised what rubbish equipment they had in the old days, nor fully considered the steep learning curves induced by developments such as female recruitment, Grenfell and the Salisbury Novichok incident. As his talk progressed, I realised that firefighting had given Gary the very opportunities he needed to become the nationally known Wear archaeologist - learning to dive for a start. Unusual working hours meant time to study for his M.Phil and indulge his hobby which meant a relatively seamless transition into the academic world. And to top it all he's on the lucrative cruise lecture circuit. Mind you, as someone said, he must have a very accommodating wife...



LINDA CHADD

WHAT U3A MEANS TO ME.....

I hope you have enjoyed these heartfelt sentiments from some of our members

I enjoy u3a for meetings, friends new and old

Carol Peel

Friendship, kindness and interesting things to do.

I love the talks.

Anon

I am a new member. Wonderful welcoming organisation and members. I have enjoyed my short time with everyone.

Anon

Fun! So many great activities, it's difficult to find time to be at home and do some housework!

Anon

My first visit to South Durham u3a was in December when everyone was sitting in groups for the quiz. It was very daunting for a first visit. It's easier when there are rows of chairs.

However, everyone was very welcoming and still are after 14 years.

Anon

Being in the u3a has meant to me friendship, learning new skills, travel to different places, meeting people from different u3a's at the quizzes!

Anon

Friendly people
Interesting groups
Sense of belonging
Brain stretch!

Anon

I am a new member at u3a. I find them unbelievably friendly. Ann introduced me to u3a. Looking forward to taking part.

Anon

Made some great friend through South Durham u3a, as did Brian, who ran the Camera Club for years. Lots of friends through the walking, gardening and other groups. Even though sedentary now I am still doing Mahjong, going to different houses being picked up by kind friends. Just gave up Canasta as The Travellers Rest is too uncomfortable for me now apart from getting to and from the car park.
Frances Harding.

We have come to the end of our series of u3a members memories for the time being, I would like to thank everyone who has sent in their thoughts over the last few months. Keep them coming people I will print any that I receive. Thank you again.

Dot Hullah - Chair

WE SAID GOODBYE TO BOWEN ROAD



On the 13th October we closed the doors on Bowen Road for the final time. 96 of you attended our last monthly meeting. Members had made beautiful cakes for the cake fest, and one member had made a stunning bouquet of cupcakes. I think you will agree that it is amazing, well-done Sue Cairney for such a magnificent effort. It was decided that we would present this cake plus two others to some of our long serving members who were with us that day. Here you see Pat and Barry Garnett, members for 23 years, being presented with the bouquet cake. Isabel McFall and Margaret Hewitson also received cakes to take away with them. We had a great speaker, we also showcased the events which we have enjoyed over the year to celebrate our 25 years, and the final act was when I locked the door on Bowen Road for the last time. But onwards and upwards as we look forward to our next meeting which is the AGM and will be in our new home.























LATEST NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

COFFEE & CHAT



The group meets at Saltfish Townhouse in Houndgate on the last Wednesday of each month everyone is welcome. Do come along between 10.30 and 12.30 for a chat and an excellent cup of coffee in pleasant surroundings.

I look forward to seeing everyone.

Pauline Noble

DOT'S JUNGALOW CRAFTS



This month my crafters turned their hands to painting candles and also making Bees Wax candles. Two different processes for painting the candles were demonstrated and then my crafters chose which method they wanted to try.









Next they tackled making bees wax candles by shaping sheets of beeswax.

Dot Hullah

CREATIVE WRITING



This month we were writing about The Blacksmith.

However last month we tried a warmup exercise which they enjoyed and so we had another go this month. They were given an opening sentence from a book and then had to continue to write none stop taking the story in whichever direction they liked. During the ten minutes writing session I throw in 10 different random words, one a minuet, which they had to weave into the story without it changing the direction to much. I have to say they loved the challenge, hence why we will be having another go this month.

Dot Hullah

FRIDAY WALKING GROUP



On a perfect walking day 9 of us set off from Brandon near Durham for a 7.5 - 8 mile walk around the varied countryside in the area.

Starting across fields with a view of Durham Cathedral we passed through a wooded area to join the Deerness Railway Path which was once used to haul coal from the Durham coalfield. Nowadays it is used for walkers and bikes and goes to Crook from Durham. At the point where we turned off the railway path we stopped for lunch for a while. We continued towards the River Deerness and on crossing over followed a farmer's road along which, at one point, we had long beautiful views of both Durham Cathedral and Penshaw Mounument in the distance. We then hit the point where the gate to the next field was locked. Some were brave enough to climb the gate itself whilst others were able to climb a low bit of fence, those with longer legs even being able to step over it, and for the short-legged was no worse than the stiles we sometimes have to clamber over. The path then went straight back to Brandon Village. There proved to be a coffee shop in Brandon - called Bone Appertit because it's dog friendly - which was well hidden away, but we just managed to enjoy some cake and drink there before it closed.

Penny Moon

Friday 20th November.

Wendy will be leading a walk around Scorton Lakes. It will be about 6.5 miles, all on good paths, beginning at the Ellerton Lakeside Cafe and finishing there with refreshments. We will meet as usual in Linden Avenue for car sharing.

Please note the usual provisos of ensuring fitness, suitable footwear and clothing, and carry your ICE with up-to-date information.

Judith

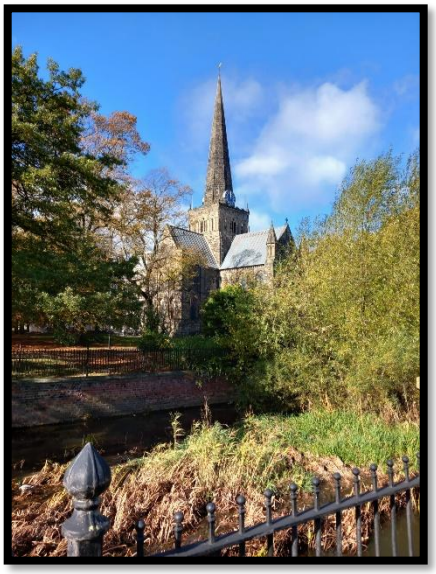
INTERMEDIATE WALKING GROUP

Nine walkers set off for a walk starting at Bedale on a mild but cloudy day. It had rained earlier, so the ground was a little softer than it has been over the summer. Our path took us around the edge of Bedale Cricket Club then out into the fields. Soon we crossed over the Wensleydale Railway and proceeded to walk in a loop through villages such as Kirkbridge and Crakehall. At Crakehall we stopped for lunch, sitting on the wall of St. Gregory's church admiring the houses on the green. Crakehall Hall was particularly striking as it was clothed in brilliant red Virginia creeper. (Currently for sale at £2.75m). After lunch we continued on through fields, recrossing the Wensleydale Railway line. There was quite a long stretch of road walking back into Bedale, but we managed it without incident. Once in Bedale, we had coffee and cake at The Courtyard Cafe, and we did indeed sit outside in their suntrap courtyard. Mileage was 5.3 miles.

Jane Laninga

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, DARLINGTON by KERRY JONAS - Tuesday October 20



Kerry may be "just a volunteer" for the current St. Cuthbert's project, but she's certainly a very knowledgeable one. She gave us a blow-by-blow historical account, starting with the life of the saint as told by the Venerable Bede and ending with the current re-ordering of this elegant "Lady of the North" built mainly in early English Gothic style at the instigation of Prince Bishop Hugh de Puiset (d.1195). Personally, I can only approve of the current changes as they should make this lovely building much fitter for purpose as a versatile community asset. The Victorians certainly stopped a lot of mediaeval churches falling down but not all their additions have stood the test of time. Removal of the pews has also confirmed the existence of the former Saxon church. It's certainly worth having a look at the church website and its YouTube video with drone footage.



Everyone is welcome to come along to our Local History Meetings. Held on the Third Tuesday in each month at Willow Road Community Hall. Doors open @ 1.15pm, refreshments available, talk begins @ 1.45pm. £2 per person.

Nov 17	Penny Moon	'Mary Ward, Pilgrim and Educator'. An historical tale with a family history link, from one of our members.
Dec 15	Richard Annis	What lies beneath the site of an Amazon Warehouse?

I would like to make you aware of regular LOCAL HISTORY events in Durham

David Butler has delivered talks to our Local History group on several occasions. He is an expert Durham history having been the county archivist, and he leads walks in the City on Sunday afternoons, which Linda, Martine and I have attended in the past.

Some of you may be interested in these, which I found advertised on the Durham Council. There will undoubtedly be a new list coming out to cover the months early in 2027 so it's worth checking regularly.

Sunday 8 November 2026	Death, Dirt and Disease in Durham City	2.00pm (2 hours) 1.5 miles, Start: Londonderry Statue, Market Place, Durham City, DH1 3NJ Local history, price of walk £4

Sunday 22 November 2026	A stroll around Barnard Castle	1.30pm (2.5 hours) 2 miles, Start: Corner of Newgate and The Bank, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NF (opposite Barclays Bank) Local history, price of walk £4
Sunday 13 December 2026	Industrious Durham: the city's past industries	1.30pm (2.5 hours) 3 miles, Start: Londonderry Statue, Market Place, Durham City, DH1 3NJ Local history, price of walk £4

David also conducts free walking tours around the market area in Durham during the week.
Durham Market Hall History Tours
Next date: Wednesday 11th November, 2026 | 10:30am

Ruth Beckett

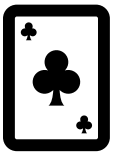
NEW MEMBERS (and not so new members) COFFEE MORNING



This will take place the fourth Tuesday of each month- in William Stead Wetherspoons Crown Street 10.30- 12.00.
Enter by the main door on Crown Street, turn right up two steps to the raised area, where you will find our reserved tables and a u3a yellow sign. Our aim is to allow new members to get to know each other in a less busy setting than the monthly Cockerton Club 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 (New member Liaison)



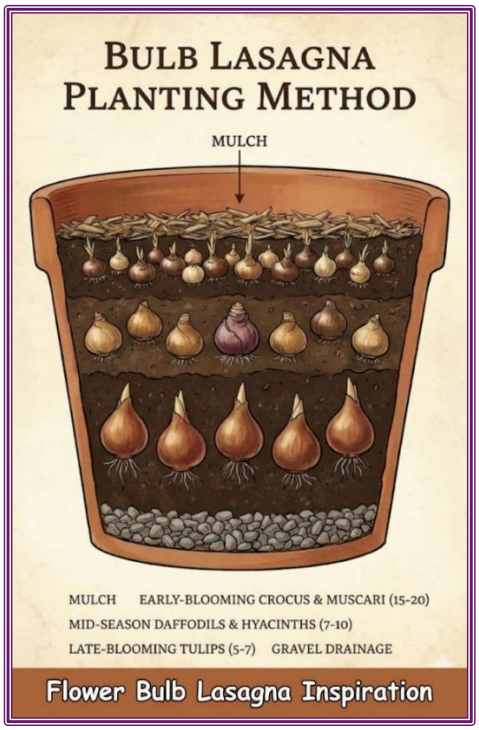
CANASTA GROUP



Welcome to our friendly canasta group. We meet on Thursday afternoon twice a month starting 2pm at the Travellers Rest Cockerton.
It's a nice friendly fun afternoon with no previous experience necessary. We, as a group, provide non stressful tuition. We have recently welcomed a new member. Why not give it a go? Tea coffee and biscuits on offer. Playing cards provided.
Contact Sylvia Elliott or Joan Sadler
Joan Sadler

GARDENING GROUP

Our October meeting was held at Elm Ridge Methodist Church and featured a varied programme of gardening activities. Members took part in making bulb lasagnas, layering different varieties of spring-flowering bulbs (tulips, daffodils, and crocus), in containers to create a succession of colour in the spring months next year. The meeting also included a gardening quiz, followed by a raffle, and a plant swap, which provided members with the opportunity to exchange plants and share their gardening interests. The programme continued with a selection of gardening videos, including useful advice on gardening in drought conditions and managing the challenges of dry weather. We also watched two videos featuring gardens visited by the group earlier in the year, Thornton Hall Gardens and Breezy Knees Gardens. One of our members suggested sharing how to make a bulb lasagna in our newsletter, so here it is!



1. Place crocks (gravel, broken pots) over drainage holes in the pot
2. Put a layer of compost in the pot
3. Plant bottom layer of bulbs (tulips)
4. Add another layer of compost over tulip bulbs
5. Plant middle layer of bulbs (daffodils)
6. Add another layer of compost over daffodil bulbs
7. Plant top layer of bulbs (crocus)
8. Add final layer of compost
9. Give the pot a good watering and then leave in the garden in a sheltered spot during the winter.

Winter plants can be added to the top of your pot to give colour during winter months

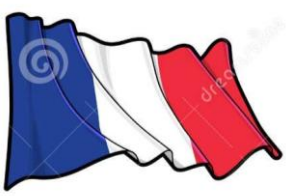
At our next meeting on Thursday, 19th November (10am) will be hosting a presentation about Hummersknott Allotments, delivered by Ted Lickrish. The presentation will provide an opportunity to learn more about the allotments, their history, and activities.



At the meeting on Thursday, 17th December (3pm) we will be hosting a festive Christmas wreath-making demonstration by Keeley Metcalfe. The finished wreath will be raffled on the day, giving one lucky person the chance to take home a beautiful festive decoration!

Ann Robinson

FRENCH CONVERSATION



What an enjoyable time we've had in French sessions these last few months! We've learnt and discussed about: French exhibits in the Bowes museum; a working trip to Algeria; a dabble into French politics; French heritage and famous sites; gastronomy; and so much more, including games of Scrabble in French and other things that have made us all laugh! We're not perfect in our French but we're all eager to learn and have good chats! Our sessions for the Autumn are on Mondays from 11.15-12.15 in the Newcastle BS.
9 & 30th November and 14th December

Celia Howarth

DIY GROUP

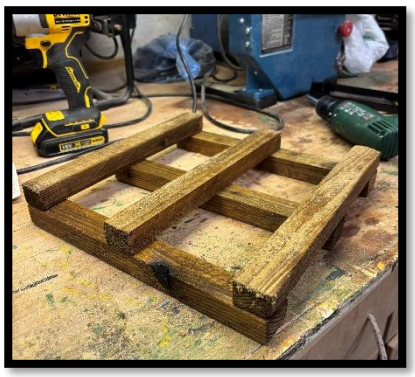


We had another fun morning with some members completing their projects. A planter, a stand for a planter and a sliding seat which fits onto sleepers surrounding a raised flower bed, can all be seen in the photos. One member has been shaping, sanding and staining an attractive piece of wood to hang coats on and will be adding the hooks at the next session. Another member is attempting a bird table which will take some time to complete, as can be seen in the photos. Some members will be starting new projects at our next meeting. After a morning in the workshop most of our members remained to have a chat and to enjoy some delicious homemade pea soup followed by coconut and jam sponge pudding and custard. Good wholesome warming winter food!



Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday 18 th November 2026 at 10 am. At The Well.







FAMILY HISTORY

After our lay off over the Summer I am pleased to annouce that the Family History Group will begin meeting again in the Centre for Local studies at Darlington Library in Crown Street. As before this will be from 2pm until 4pm on the second Friday of the month. The next meeting will be on the 9th October.

Jane Laninga

READING GROUP 2

Our book choice for October was “In Memoriam” by Alice Winn. Set during World War 1, it is a work of historical fiction. It tells a story of an enduring relationship between two young men who met as pupils in boarding school when homosexual relationships were illegal. They went on to serve as officers in the Army. The author depicts the dreadful conditions experienced by those on the front line, and the eagerness and futility of youngsters signing up to fight. Most of us enjoyed the book, though some found it disappointing and an overload of war fiction.

Next meetings: 13th November. “Gabriel’s Moon” by William Boyd

11th December. Our Christmas get together. No book for this month. ***Judith***

Are you interested in forming a 3rd Reading Group

It has come to my attention that some of our members would like to attend the reading groups. Unfortunately, the two reading groups we have are full at the moment, but if any member wishes to form another reading group, please contact Dave Cooke our Group Co-ordinator and he will be able to get you started.

Dave Cooke

Possible new group - Beginners Spanish (for travellers)



We have an opportunity to offer our members a Spanish speaking programme beginning in the new year. These would run alongside the very successful French and Italian Classes which are run by Celia Howarth. Alan Bradshaw one of our associate members, would be the trainer for these sessions and below is the outline of the sessions he would give.

Beginners' / early returners' Spanish (for travellers)
Emphasis on listening, speaking. Fun activities: games and competitions
Structure: following a BBC course with coursebook, audio/video
Starting early 2027, possibly at the Newcastle Building Society, Market Square
Fifteen/sixteen sessions of two hours
Cost: £2 per meeting plus buy your own coursebook
Reply to Alan Bradshaw

If this is something you would like to get involved in, please email Alan at the address above.

Dot Hullah

BRING YOUR OWN CRAFT & NATTER



We met up at Newcastle Building Society for some knitting and crochet work along with a hot drink and a lovely chat. As we will all be busy over Xmas and New Year, we decided to have our final session for the year on 25th November 2026. We will have a break over the winter months and will meet a little later in future at 10am instead of 9.30am. As Newcastle Building society is already booked for March and April 2027, we have arranged to meet on 31st March and 28th April 2027 at the Hippodrome Theatre Coffee Lounge at 10am. From May to November 2027, we will meet at 10am as usual at Newcastle Building Society.
Please contact me if you have any queries.
Christine Walker

Do You need help with appointments



We have been told that if ever you need help getting to hospital appointments the Friends of Darlington Memorial Hospital do a volunteer car service taking people to and

from appointments. The service relies on donations given to the driver. To book the telephone number is 01325 743866.

LUNCHEON GROUP



For our October get-together 20 members returned to Tre Amici, one of our favourite restaurants. It was the first time we had visited in Darlington Restaurant Week & some members took advantage of the 2 courses for £18 offer - excellent value for large portions & delicious food.

Our Lunch Group meeting on 27th November at 1pm is at Bannatyne's & was advertised in the last Newsletter. 30 members are attending & have paid in advance & made their food choices as it is part of the hotel's Christmas Fayre offering.

If any member who hasn't reserved a place would like to do so, then could they see me at the main meeting or text or email me for further details.

* **There will not be a meeting in December as we are having the Christmas Party at our new venue.**

Stella Barnes

An important reminder. If you sign up to come to the Luncheon Club and then find you can no longer attend, please let me know in advance so appropriate cancellations can be made.

SCRABBLE GROUP



Held on 2nd and 4th Mondays at The Travellers Rest in Cockerton. All abilities are welcome. We are currently almost full, but if enough people are interested a second group could be formed.

Brenda Ellidge

ITALIAN CONVERSATION



We have 16-17 in the group and find learning Italian fun, rewarding and interesting - though sometimes quite challenging! Over recent sessions we have learnt how to: describe clothes; talk about aches and pains; describe our daily routines; book a room at a hotel. We can have short conversations in Italian - and usually have lots of giggles!
Our sessions in the Autumn are in the Newcastle BS on Mondays from 10am to 11am on these dates:
9.11.26 - 30.11.26
14.12.26
The group is now better for Intermediate rather than Beginner learners of the language.
Celia Howarth

BRIDGE CLUB

Our friendly Bridge Group meets in The Travellers Rest in Cockerton at 1.30 on 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month. We are a noncompetitive and supportive group. If you would like to improve your play by joining our group, please contact Kay Walker or Jackie Roberts

Exciting News about Trips in 2027

In 2027, I will be working with Lee's Coaches to source some exciting trips for our membership. This is how it will work – members who are interested in any of the trips listed below will register with me. I will transfer your names to Lee's Coaches. You will then me when you need to make payments. If we have 8 members or over, we will receive a small discount. All trips will be a Lee's Coaches visit not an exclusive u3a trip so they will give you all the instructions you will need to enjoy the day. Pick up and drop off will be at the Dolphin Centre.

Day	Date - 2027	Trip	Cost
Sunday	May 16th	Haworth 1940'2	£25
Saturday	June 5th	Temple Newsome House & Museum Leeds. Includes admission & Guided tour. Optional extra cream tea and sandwich, scone, jam & cream, tea or coffee £10	£38
Thursday	June 17th	Seahouses & Farne Islands	£45
Wednesday	June 30th	Yorkshire lavender & Helmsley	£32
Saturday	July 3rd	Alnwick Castle & Gardens	£53
Thursday	July 15th	Great Yorkshire Show	£58
Tuesday	July 27th	Holy Island	£23
Thursday	August 5th	Cragside House & Gardens	£45 non-national trust member £23 National Trust member
Thursday	August 19th	Harewood House	£43
Wednesday	August 25th	Cannon Hall Farm	£37
Sunday	September 19th	Grassington 1940's	£25
Thursday	September 23rd	Bridlington	£23
Saturday	October 16th	Saltire & Salt Mill	£24
Tuesday	November 23rd	Christmas at Caste Howard	£58
Thursday	December 2nd	Bamburgh at Christmas	£44
Thursday	December 9th	Alnwick Gardens Winter Light Trail	£40

Carol Boyd

Opportunities for members from Regional

St. Nicholas Cathedral, Newcastle with Organ Recital - 16 November 2026

The u3a Northeast Region Events Team have arranged a visit and tour of St Nicholas Cathedral, Newcastle with the opportunity to attend an afternoon organ recital.

For over 900 years, Newcastle Cathedral – originally the Parish Church of St Nicholas – has been at the pulsing heart of Newcastle, as a place of worship and community. From its creation, rebuilding in the Medieval era and the drama of the English Civil War to the extensive remodelling across centuries, the Cathedral echoes stories and history from every corner.

The interior of the Cathedral is a visual feast of stained glass, monuments, memorials, military colours and other sculptures. Each tells a story. Following a guided tour of the Cathedral at 11am, you can further explore the Cathedral or have lunch at Cafe16 which offers lunches as well as lighter snacks.

At 1:05pm there is an opportunity to listen to an organ recital.
The organ, parts of which are over 350 years old, is exciting and colourful. Its magnificent case in the North Transept catches the eye of all who visit and serves as a striking reminder of how essential music is to the daily rhythm of this sacred space. Today's organ has over 5,600 pipes and 94 speaking stops, making it one of the largest in the North of England. Please note there is a retiring collection after the organ recital.

Meet at 10:45am outside the Cathedral's main door, St Nicholas Square, Newcastle NE1 1PF



A Festival of Fun, Music and Learning.

The Festival of Fun, Music and Learning held on May 12th 2026 at Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens, DH7 7DW was such a resounding success that The Regional u3a Events Team and Committee have decided to organise a similar day in 2027.

This special day at Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens, DH7 7DW is on Wednesday 19th May 2027.

To enable this day to be a success we rely on members to contribute to the day. We had a great response from members for 2026, but we would like others to put their names forward.

Can any member, or a group of members, offer to present a workshop or an activity for everyone to enjoy? Is your expertise in eg history, geography, crafts, such as card making, genealogy, photography, calligraphy, playing an instrument, singing in a choir etc. Could you lead a walk from Ushaw Historic House? Could you give a taster session about carpet bowls, any genre of dancing, ceramics and so the list goes on.
The staff of the historic house will also be able to offer tours of the house giving an insight into its history.

Tis the Season

The season of mellow fruitfulness

Is upon us once again

With russet hues and crunchy leaves

Leaving an untidy trail

But just as we were getting tucked up

For the long winter nights

Along comes Halloween to give us all a fright

Ghouls, Skeletons and spiders

Cobweb draped hedges and zombies

With scary broomstick riders

Miniature figures trick or treating

Parents in tow

Hoping for candy there faces a glow

But soon they will be gone

As the season moves on

To my favourite time of year

Yes..... Christmas is coming with only

Seven weeks to go

Dot Hullah





Clouds

I like to watch the fluffy clouds

Floating in the air.

You can see pictures in their shapes –

A castle, a flower, a bear.

But as I sat the other day

A cup of tea in hand,

I saw something unsettling

I found hard to understand.

Instead of all the pretty things

That I can usually see

There appeared a presidential face

From a country just over the sea.

His wrinkly face with its white hair

Glared across the sky

Frightening a flock of birds

As they went wafting by.

I tried to forget what I had seen

But, alas 'twas all in vain ...

But I tell you now, this much is clear,

I'll never watch clouds again

Kate brown

We went to Amazon – Tuesday 8th October



Nothing can prepare you for a tour of an Amazon Fulfilment Centre (or **FC** as it's known!). A group of us gathered at Follingsby Park, Gateshead for such a tour on Thursday 8th October where we entered into a world controlled by bar codes, QR codes, Acronyms and quantities where everything seems to be measured in thousands or millions!

This immense building is identified as **NCL1** – taken from the code for the nearest airport and is one of 35 FCs in the UK, which are not all identical. This centre does not deal with any 'Hazmat' products (alcohol, fireworks & perfumes) but it is robotic (thus not a Legacy centre which will deal with large, oversized products such as TVs).





After an initial introduction where we were issued with headphones (to enable us to hear our leader Donna as she took us around) we entered the FC which stretched endlessly in every direction. To walk the periphery of one floor would be over a mile; there were nearly 7 miles of conveyor belts; we visited two floors but there were others above us; 2000 people work there regularly with an additional 1000 for the Christmas period.

It was the Hercules 'robots' which captivated me. They are mobile drive units which are guided across the floor by QR codes being read by 3D cameras. They each carry a pallet on which stands a 'pod' - a tall yellow unit with openings into which stock has been placed (I couldn't understand the logic to this, but I didn't need to). They can each move around independently to the 'sorters' (people) who are putting together orders. 18000 pods were contained in the caged area we viewed – no workers were allowed in there without special equipment. It was like watching a library where the shelves had taken it upon themselves to move around silently, gliding over the floor, always in straight lines.





I think we were prepared to be critical of Amazon but the staff there seemed happy with their jobs and the additional perks (healthcare, education courses paid for, variety of shift patterns, flexitime). The company is very focussed on Health & Safety, Personal Development and Charitable/Voluntary work within the local community. It is clearly a successful business, which started with a man selling second-hand books from his Dad's garage and then grew and grew. Our town centres are shrinking because of the number of people who now shop online and it is unlikely we shall ever reverse the trend whilst Amazon is around. It is a phenomenally well organised system they have in place – bringing goods in, sorting and storing them, then responding to orders seamlessly and efficiently in these enormous fulfilment centres.

Kevin & Ruth Beckett

UPCOMING CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAYRES



Christmas Fayre

at

All Saints Church – Ravensdale Road

From 10.00 am until 3pm

On the 14th November

Monthly Speakers

Nov 10	AGM and Talk by Newcastle Building Society
Dec 8	U3a Christmas Party

Groups on Offer

Bridge – Jackie Roberts/Kay Walker	Travellers Rest - Cockerton	1.30 -4pm every other Tuesday
Current Affairs – Gill Turnbull	Members' homes	10am-12 noon on the 3rd Monday of the month
Coffee & Chat - Pauline Noble	Salt Fish Town House	10.30-12.30am last Wednesday of each month
Creative Writing – Dot Hullah	Leader's home	10-12am first Wednesday of each month
Canasta	Travellers Rest - Cockerton	Every other Thursday
Own Craft and Chat	Newcastle building Society Community Room	9.30 untill 11.30 – last Wednesday of the month
DIY Club		Variable check with leader
Family History – Jane Laninga	Crown Street Library	2-4 2nd Friday of the month
French, Advanced Celia Howarth	Above Newcastle Building Society, Market Place	11.15 - Fortnightly
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 3rd 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 until 11 - Fortnightly
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	William Stead Weatherspoon's	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

Useful email addresses if you need to contact us

NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS	REASONS
Dot Hullah		Anything to do with the running of our u3a or advise and help in general.
Dot Hullah		Anything you wish to contribute to the monthly newsletter
Penny Moon		Administration queries
Sue Clark		Any financial queries
Ann Robinson		Anything to do with Membership including yearly fees
Jenny Hurt		Any queries with regards to social events
Dave Cooke		Any queries to do with our groups, including new groups and availability of groups
Carol Boyd		Any welfare matters

U3A SOUTH DURHAM – RECOMMENDED TRADESPEOPLE

TYPE OF TRADE	NAME	CONTACT
Builder	CPC Construction (Chris Coates)	07976 751813
Carpenter/woodworker	Bradley Hawke	07701 091552
Computer repairs	Aardvark Computers (Bill Leafe) Performance Computers	07800 740505 01325 267333
Electrician	William Paterson Bradley Hawke Naylor's Electrical Services (Richard Naylor) Michael H Gorman	07861 985922 07701 091552 07779 557148 01325 351986
Flooring	Bradley Hawke	07701 091552
Gardener	Green Guerilla Gardening Tony Mansfield West End Landscaping (Chris Pearson) PMD (Mark and Andy) Gareth Hughff	07872 389446 07773 492269 07974 970338 07356 203557 07870 155924
General handyman	Paul, Helping Hands Handyman PMD (Mark and Andy) Jamie	07583 515107 07356 203557 07469 721529
Joinery, Timber suppliers	Bradley Hawke (joinery)	07701 091552

	Fletchers Joinery, Whessoe Road (joinery) Darlington Timber (timber suppliers)	01325 357347 01325 462901
Media walls	Bradley Hawke	07701 091552
Painter and Decorator	Gary Wrangham	07870 585576
Plasterer	JLA Plastering (Jason Jackson)	07545 061100
Plumber large installations	Bradley Hawke Curtis Russell Badger (Keith Everson) Orchard Heating & Plumbing (Richie Griffiths) Ignite (Phil) Bambridge Heating, Coniscliffe Road, Darlington Anthony Greenwell	07701 091552 07971 127150 01325 460500 07791 432154 07779 136343 01325 804914 07921 575039
Plumber small jobs, repairs	Bradley Hawke Curtis Russell Ignite (Phil) Ian Waller MWS (Michael Stephenson) Ross Coteman	07701 091552 07971 127150 07779 136143 07388 018412 07808 719262 07535 006032
Roofer	Alistair Macmillan	07999 821716
Solar panels	Bradley Hawke	07701 091552
Watch repairs	Aardvark Computers (Bill Leafe)	07800 740505

Please note that these recommendations are all from our U3A members. Those who had health problems, were too busy, had retired, or simply did not answer calls and texts have not been included but thank you all for your contributions. If you know of someone you would like to recommend, please get in touch via U3A and we will add them to the list.
List checked 27 October 2026.