

Drumbeat



Durham and District u3a

Issue 5, August 2024



A warm welcome to the August Drumbeat. And it is warm, too – at least at the time of writing. Let's hope this glorious, uplifting summer weather keeps up for a while longer.

This month, there are no fewer than six new members to welcome to Durham & District u3a. They are Margaret Bainbridge, Lynne Dixon, John R Graham, Monica Lawlor, Margot Lunnon and Mervyn Theobald. Lovely to have you all on board.

After the hellos, a goodbye – to Val and Alan Hodgson, long-time members and great supporters of the u3a, who are moving away. Thank you from us all for all you've done, and all the very best in your new home.

It may be the height of summer with holidays in full swing, but there's still no shortage of things happening, as this issue shows. And there's a lot to look forward to in the next few weeks. Whatever floats your u3a boat, enjoy – and make the most of the rest of the summer!

Laura Woods, editor

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NOTICES

National u3a Week takes place in September. See p.6 for more details.

Your feedback is requested on microphones and sound levels at the monthly meeting – see p.5.

Volunteers are still needed to help with various u3a. activities. The most pressing need is for a new Secretary, as Val moves on to pastures new. Get in touch with Mike or any committee member if you'd like to help. Our u3a depends on volunteers!

Save the date! This year's Christmas lunch is on Tuesday, 10 December – details following soon. (See menu on p.9.)

Quiz Groups in action!

Quizzing is an activity which has always been useful for inter-u3a participation.

On 26 June 2024, members from Quiz Group @Carrville and Quiz Group @Sacriston took part in an inter-u3a quiz event hosted by South Durham u3a for groups within the south of our region.



Don't mess with the D&D Quizmeisters

Seventeen teams took part in the South Durham event and their knowledge of Animals in Music, events in Modern Pentathlon and favourite fairy tales, were all tested.

All 17 teams scored well – however, the team from Hartlepool did best in the Wipeout round and took the trophy.



The competition in full swing

Luckily, there are 2 separate quiz groups within

Durham and District u3a – members can join either or both if they so wish depending on which meeting day and location is most convenient for them.

So, if you want to participate in regular monthly quizzes and the occasional regional event, contact either Maureen

Craik (for the Sacriston Group) or Jennifer Banks (for the Carrville Group.). You will be most welcome.

The next regional event is on 2 October at Sunnyside.

Jennifer Banks

Yes, sir, that's the Great American Songbook

July's monthly meeting attracted a record 108 people to hear from Roger Browne, musician and raconteur (amongst other things), who wowed his audience with an entertaining trip through the Great American Songbook, complete with some virtuoso musical performances.



Brought up in Salford, Roger got his first live musical experiences from bandstand

performances in the local park and by the age of four he was performing Al Jolson songs in public. A self-taught pianist, he joined a jazz band at age 15 and he's still in one, 65 years later. He's also produced 110 musicals and over 90 plays.

Roger took us through the origins of the 12-bar blues, the foundation of jazz, boogie, R&B and rock, giving us a joyful rendition of gospel blues along the way. The tempo changed dramatically when he rattled through the Twelfth Street Rag at breakneck speed to illustrate how it was played in the piano bars of the 20s. His hands were a blur as they moved across the keys – phenomenal!

We heard about the origins of New York's Tin Pan Alley, home to over 500 Jewish song publishers and their upright pianos (the name came from the sound of all those pianos banging out different tunes



at once). Many famous names started their careers there, including one Jerome Kern.

Roger described the impact of "Showboat", Kern's collaboration with Oscar Hammerstein II, the first musical with a real story and serious messages about racism, inequality and slavery, playing a medley of its music to bring it to life.

Cole Porter got his first big break there too, with "I love Paris" written in a minor key to make it sound more Jewish. It worked – he got it published and never looked back. How many people know how "Miss Otis regrets" came to be written?

Medleys from the music of Irving Berlin and George Gershwin provided a fitting ending to a highly entertaining presentation. Roger's talents as a raconteur and accomplished musician hit exactly the right notes.

An outing to Raby

The annual outing this year took place on 8th August and was a full day trip to Raby Castle and Grounds. Many thanks to

Noreen Freeman who organised the day so ably and gave us the opportunity to see all the new additions at Raby as well as spending time with friends old and new.

We arrived mid-morning just in time for coffee. The new cafe is large and lovely – a bit like an old-fashioned Victorian greenhouse. They serve a variety of the usual cakes and scones in the morning, and then a variety of light lunches from 12.00pm. The food is delicious and varied – and guess what – you can go and park in the car park and use the cafe without having to pay to go in. Perfect for a run out if you don't want the full experience.

The guided tour of the castle was excellent. We were divided into two groups so that we weren't continually held up waiting for people to catch up. The guide was very knowledgeable and entertaining. What a large place it is and it has been remodelled into a family home since its inception as a medieval castle in the 13th century. If you like visiting country houses, you will love Raby. There are extensive parklands that you can walk around and, of course, two deer herds, if you are lucky enough to spot them. You can even buy venison in the shop as well as partridge.



The shop is much bigger than the old one and full of nice things that are hard to resist – at least I couldn't resist! You can also buy plants that are sourced from the gardens. The contour table of the estate next door is spectacular, changeable lighting and views of the seasons and birds. Very hard to describe but a must-see.

As to the gardens, they are still to reach maturity and are all contained within the huge walled garden so they are sheltered from the worst of the weather. At the moment I think there is some way to go before they reach their best but they are well laid out and can be easily walked around. There are a couple of huge greenhouses, currently empty but apparently, they will be the next project.

If you want to bring some youngsters there is the Plotters Forest specially designed for children. I haven't visited it myself, having run out of time, but if you are doing grandparent duties this Summer, that might be a good option.

All in all, a grand day out, smooth journey and a tired but happy busload of members arrived back at Bowburn.

Thanks again, Noreen.

Tina Naples

Willington walkabout

The Walking Group continues its forays into the Durham countryside every other Friday. A recent outing found us meeting at the Jubilee nature reserve in Willington for a very pleasant circular walk that took

us east along the banks of the Wear and then north and west along tracks and footpaths back into the village. Glorious weather, lovely scenery and good craic, topped off for some of us by a well-deserved pub lunch. (There was even a surreal moment when, as we stopped for a



breather, a man on a mower appeared from nowhere and without so much as a nod proceeded to cut the grass around our feet, before pattering off into the distance again. What did it mean? Why was that patch of grass so important? We may never know.)

Open Meeting, 29 August: A brief history of magic

This month's open meeting at Bowburn sees the return of Stuart Bowie, who entertained Dunelm members last August with a talk on secrets of the magic profession.

Stuart's talk this time traces the development of the magician's art through the centuries, from the earliest known records to the present time.



Using pictures and contemporary records, Stuart shows how magic has adapted to a changing world, adjusting to new technologies and social developments as performers moved from streets and markets to the parlours of the rich and famous before eventually becoming established in theatres, television and now over the internet.

You'll be glad to know that Stuart also performs original magic to illustrate his talk. His background as both a professional entertainer and a university lecturer promises a fascinating and entertaining session.

Sound Advice

Still on the subject of the open meeting, your views are needed on proposed microphone equipment for use in the main hall at Bowburn.

At the August meeting, we'll once again be using Alan Morrison's clip-on mike (thank you, Alan) with a view to purchasing the same kit for future use. The microphone was felt to work well last month (except when the keyboard was played), so the plan is to test it again this month, and then to buy it if it meets with approval.

So do let Mike have your feedback on the mike!

Sounds of the seventies



Ah, the seventies! The thought takes you back, doesn't it, to a time when all the summers were long and sunny, the music was brilliant and absolutely everyone under 30 had long hair (or hair,

at least). That's how I like to remember them anyway, and I'm not taking these rose-tinted glasses off for anyone. (Who mentioned the 3-day week??)

A hand-picked selection from the seventies was the order of the day at the last Music Appreciation Group, when Stephen presented some of his favourite tracks. Ranging from "Hoedown", Emerson, Lake and Palmer's tribute to Aaron Copland which opened the session with a burst of energy, to the bittersweet "Who knows where the time goes?" by Sandy Denny of Fairport Convention, they were a trip down the memory lane of great music for many of us. And for Stephen too, for whom each track held a special memory – like the time he had to walk home from Newcastle to Sunderland in his treasured heeled green boots after missing the train home post-concert. You were prepared to suffer for your love of music in those days. I bet he still misses those boots.

There were some familiar tracks, such as "The air that I breathe" by the Hollies, which never fails to touch the heartstrings, Elvis's "Burning Love" and "Cavatina", the haunting John Williams melody from the film "The Deer Hunter", but also some less well-known ones, including the late John Mayall's "The Bear", a brilliant country blues number with a bit of Canned Heat thrown in, and "Harold the Barrel", a comic song from early Genesis.

With personal anecdotes to illustrate the soundtrack of his youth, Stephen took us all right back to those halcyon days of great music. In fact, it's hard to know what stopped us all from pushing the chairs back and getting on down with the music – a highly enjoyable afternoon.

Apple Summer: A poem

*I want to sleep the sleep
of apples drowsy under summer sun.*

*I want to dream the dreams
of breezes riffing by,
of butterflies on buddleias
where all is well.*

*But I sleep the sleep
of endless exclamations,
of wakings and driftings away.*

*I want to sleep the sleep
of apples drowsy under summer sun.*

Ivy Hudson

Regional news

Turner at the Laing

Northumbria Region are running 2 final tours of 'Turner: Art, Industry and Heritage' at the Laing Art Gallery, on Friday September 6th at 10.30 and 12.30. Numbers are limited so it's first come first served.

Register with [Catherine Stevenson](#) (click to send email). Please include your name and local u3a name and your preferred tour. If you have a place, it will be confirmed by email.

Cost : £4 (only payable when place confirmed)

Northumbria networks

Don't forget the networks you can take part in at regional level. As a reminder, here's the list:

Art Appreciation/History (Zoom):
[Catherine Stevenson](#)

Birdwatching: [Colin Freeman](#)

[Creative Writing](#) (Zoom): [Cecilia Coulson](#)

Geology (Zoom): [Elizabeth Devon](#)

[iPad Users](#) (Zoom): [Sue Willoughby](#)

[IT \(Information Technology\)](#): [Mo Brown](#)

[Real Ale Appreciation](#): [Nigel Collins](#)

National news

u3a Week

u3a Week, an annual event celebrating the u3a movement, takes place from 21 to 29 September. Many u3as, including our own, will be marking the week with activities and events. Durham & District will have a stall in the marketplace promoting the many benefits of membership, with pride of place given of course to group activities. And on Thursday 26 September, the open meeting will be a special event to formally launch the new u3a, and to showcase it to potential new members.

Volunteers are needed! If you're able to help, get in touch with Mike, group convenors Marion and Paul, or any committee member.

Online speaker programme

As part of u3a Week, there's the opportunity to join a number of online talks – see [here](#) for details.

Point your smartphone camera at this QR code for the Durham & District u3a website



August/September calendar

Date	Time	Place	Group	Contact <i>via u3a website</i>
AUGUST				
Mon 19th	10,30am	Lanchester Garden Centre	Monday Crime Club: <i>To the Hilt (Dick Francis)</i>	Tina Naples
Mon 19th	1.30 pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Photography: <i>Don McCullen</i>	Deborah Blindt
Tues 20th	10,30am	Gala Theatre	Theatre: <i>Discussion and Planning</i>	Nancy Gemski
Wed 21st	2.00pm	Gala Café	Français Amical	Mike Gibb
Wed 21st	7.00pm	Lynn Jordison House, Belmont	Wine Tasting: <i>Portuguese Wines</i>	Cynthia Bolton
Thur 22nd	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thur 22nd	10.15am	Gala Theatre	Reading Shakespeare	Sue Childs
Fri 23rd	10.00am		Walking: <i>Tudhoe and Spring Wood</i>	Richard Dennis
Mon 26th	12.00pm	Waddington St URC Church	Environmental Group	Charles Jolly
Tues 27th	10.00am	Belmont Community Centre	Art Appreciation: <i>Diego Velasquez – giant of western art</i>	Carol Tritton
Tues 27th	2.00pm	Gala Café	Spanish	Mick O;Sullivan
Wed 28th	2.00pm	Gala Café	Français Amical	Mike Gibb
Thur 29th	1.15 for 2.00pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Open Meeting: <i>The History of Magic (Stuart Bowie)</i>	Rob Page
SEPTEMBER				
Mon 2nd	10,00am	Member's home	Book Club: <i>Bleak House (Charles Dickens)</i>	Lyn Bilsborough
Mon 2nd	1.30pm	Carrville Methodist Hall	Quiz at Carrville	Jennifer Banks
Tues 3rd	10.00am	Broomside Park Beefeater	Topical Discussion	Janis Goodson
Tues 3rd	2.00pm	Sacrison Methodist Church	History at Sacrison	Group Leader
Wed 4th	1.30pm	Member's home	Craft	Marion Lotts
Wed 4th	2.00pm	Gala Café	Français Amical	Mike Gibb
Thur 5th	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thur 5th	10.15am	Gala Theatre	Reading Shakespeare	Sue Childs
Thur 5th	2.00pm	Sacrison Methodist Church	Circle Dancing	Linda Murdie

Fri 6th	10.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	Singing for Fun	Mike Forrest
Mon 9th	10.30am	Bowburn Hall (conservatory)	Coffee morning <i>All welcome</i>	Val Hodgson
Mon 9th	2,00pm	Gala Café	Poetry appreciation: <i>Animals</i>	Ivy Hudson
Tue 10th	2.00pm	Gala Café	Spanish	Mick O'Sullivan
Wed 11th	10.00am	Member's home	Creative Writing	Irene Wilkinson
Wed 11th	2.00pm	Gala Café	Français Amical	Mike Gibb
Thur 12th	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thur 12th	10,00am	Waddington St URC Church	Poetry Reading: <i>Michael Rosen</i>	Pauline Butler
Fri 13th	10.00am	Bowburn Community Centre	Walking: <i>Smiddy Shaw Reservoir</i>	Mike Forrest
Mon 16th	10.30am	Lanchester Garden Centre	Monday Crime Club: <i>The ritual bath (Faye Kellerman)</i>	Tina Naples
Mon 16th			Photography: NO MEETING	Deborah Blindt
Mon 16th	2.00pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Quiz at Sacriston	Maureen Craik
Tues 17th	2,00pm	Gala Theatre	Theatre: <i>Discussion and planning coffee morning</i>	Nancy Gemski
Wed 18th	2.00pm	Gala Café	Français Amical	Mike Gibb
Wed 18th	2.00pm	Member's home	Scrabble	Maureen Craik
Thur 19th	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thur 19th	10.15am	Gala Theatre	Reading Shakespeare	Sue Childs
Thur 19th	1.00pm	St John's church hall, Meadowfield	History at Meadowfield: <i>John Lambton & Penshaw Monument</i>	Audrey Adams
Fri 20th	10.00am	Bowburn Community Centre	Singing for fun	Mike Forrest
Mon 23rd	10.00am	Sacriston Methodist Church	History Too: <i>The Jacobite Rebellion of 1745</i>	David Wilock
Mon 23rd	12.00pm	Waddington St URC Church	Environmental Group	Charles Jolly
Tue 24th	10.00am	Belmont Community Centre	Art Appreciation: <i>Open session Coins, gold and personal wealth</i>	Carol Tritton
Tue 24th	2.00pm	Gala Café	Spanish	Mick O'Sullivan
Wed 25th	2.00pm	Gala Café	Français Amical	Mike Gibb
Thur 26th	1.15 for 2.00pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Launch event/Open Meeting: <i>From Barrow to Baghdad (Philip Caine)</i>	Rob Page
Fri 27th			Walking: <i>Frosterley</i>	Richard Dennis
Sat 28th	2.00pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Music Appreciation: <i>Robert's selection</i>	Stephen Brand

Groups/activities with no fixed day include:

Cinema – normally Mondays, but depends on film being shown

Paul Newby

Lunch Group – meets once per month for meals at local venues

Rita McGarr

Pub Lunch Group – no fixed days

Sylvia Buxton

Bus Pass Safari – bus trips in the region

Tina Naples

The following groups are currently full:

- Discussion Group
- Français Amical
- French
- Reading Shakespeare
- Spanish

But that needn't hold you back, if you're interested in any of the above, or any topic not covered by this calendar – it's perfectly possible to start another group! Contact Paul Newby or Marion Lotts, group coordinators, if you think you'd like to set one up.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH MENU

Yes, it's that time of year again! Save the date in your diary and get back to enjoying the summer. Lunch is booked for 10 December at the Bowburn Hall Hotel. More details to follow soon, but as a taster, here's the menu:

Mains

Traditional Turkey Dinner with Seasonal Vegetables, Dauphinoise Potatoes and Pigs in Blankets.

Pan Fried Salmon with Crab, Lemon and Lime Tarragon Butter

Leek, Mushroom and Potato Goulash with Fluffy Rice. (Vegetarian)

Desserts

Traditional Christmas Pudding with Chef's Brandy Sauce

Homemade White Chocolate and Raspberry Cheesecake

Cheese and Biscuits

Teas and Coffees with Chocolate Mints