

# Drumbeat



Durham & District u3a

Issue 16, July/August 2025



The height of summer, captured in John Liddle's photo of busy bees at Craghead. I hope you're enjoying our glorious weather. The bees and butterflies certainly are.

This month's Drumbeat features a good number of your contributions. Keep them coming in!

Welcome to July's new members **David Brothers, Dorothy Fletcher, Barbara Gill, Paul Latheron, John Nicholson, Karenza Passmore** and **Gillian Skinner**. And not forgetting **Jane Webber**, who joined last month.

Finally, thanks go to **Jim Crinson**, who joins me on Drumbeat, putting the calendar together.  
*Laura Woods*

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## NOTICES

- Last reminder for the **Grand Summer Quiz on 4 August** – see p.2
- Didn't receive your copy of **u3a Matters?** Contact **Tina Naples**
- **Some groups aren't meeting in August:** see calendar for details
- **Winning Carrville Quiz Team** featured on Northumbria u3a website



Rachel was much in demand after her talk,



answering one-to-one queries. It's a subject that affects every one of us, after all.

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## Time is short

Edging in unsteady, warily she squints down at her swollen feet in their floppy slippers, which scuff the edge of the hearthrug. Frowning, a little anxious, today her breathing, often short and shallow, appears more laboured.

Rather crumpled and washed out her faded clothing hangs unevenly from angular shoulders and stiffened hips.

Only a slightly embarrassing odour, not quite neutralised by naphthaline, accompanies her into the parlour, where, wedged into too few seats and wearing fixed weekly smiles, sit daughter and family, fidgeting.

Don't make tea for us Mum,  
Thursday night gets a bit hectic.

In fact, Dear, I'm a bit pushed myself, hosting a new singles Bookclub tonight – love chewing over Classics with a glass of red. So I won't keep you as I need to tidy up, before I get my new frock and lippy on. I could give you a ring sometime.

*Mick O'Sullivan*

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## The Light of your Life

### Did You Know?

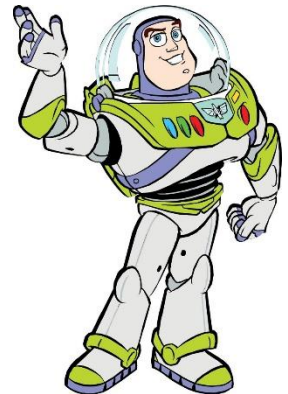
Light is a physical phenomenon – it is composed of something called 'photons', and believe it or not, its speed can be calculated.

Light is the fastest thing in the universe – nothing else travels faster. It speeds along at an incredible **186,000 miles**, not per hour, but **per second**.

Thus, light could go around our Earth seven times in one second.

Even at this speed sunlight still takes eight minutes to reach us and moonlight takes one second.

The speed of light is a constant. This helps astronomers measure the immense distances of the universe – using what is known as the 'light year'. This is defined as the distance light would travel in a year, which at 186,000 miles per second, is a huge distance (around 5.8 trillion miles).



Finally, remember that when you switch on a house light or your torch, or light a birthday cake candle, the ensuing light is heading out at the fastest speed in the universe!

**Technical bit** (see Badger for further info!)

The speed of light even affects how time works; as you get nearer the speed of light then, once again, believe it or not, time

slows down! This has been proven by a simple experiment that involved two extremely accurate atomic clocks. One



was on a Concorde that flew across the Atlantic at full chat.

The other was stationary. The Concorde clock slowed down, albeit by a barely calculable amount!

*Robert Lebar (aka Badger)*

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## Numbers

In our daily lives we are surrounded by and make use of many numbers, in order to:

- Deal with our finances (bank account numbers and PINs)
- Find out how much our groceries cost
- Make telephone calls
- Get on the right bus
- Set the oven at the required temperature, etc.

These numbers are small fry in the world of mathematics, where there are an infinite number of numbers.

Think of a number which may be the



biggest there is, add one to it and you have an even bigger number.

There are many different types of numbers in mathematics. Here are some examples:

- Real
- Rational

- Square and cubic
- Irrational
- Prime
- Perfect, etc.

Numbers help us get a feel for how big things are. For example, **one million seconds** is equivalent to **eleven and a half days** while **one billion seconds** is equivalent to **over thirty-one years**.

Mathematics has many uses in everyday life. A simple example: you are buying a new carpet for your bedroom. Carpets are sold in square metres, so you measure the length of each side of the room which you find to be four metres, so your bedroom is a square.

To find the amount of carpet needed, you must calculate the area of the floor, which is  $4 \times 4 = 16$  metres squared.

Similarly, you have bought a large paddling pool for your grandchildren and want to find out how much water is needed to fill it. You find that the length, width and depth of the pool each measure three metres. The volume of water needed is  $3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$  metres cubed.

**Square numbers:** 16 is an example of a square number. Others are: **4** ( $2 \times 2$ ), **25** ( $5 \times 5$ ), **100** ( $10 \times 10$ ).

**Cubic numbers:** 27 is an example of a cubic number. Others are: **8** ( $2 \times 2 \times 2$ ), **125** ( $5 \times 5 \times 5$ ), **1000** ( $10 \times 10 \times 10$ ).

**Now over to you:**

- 1) Can you think of a number which is both square **and** cubic?

- 2) Which of these numbers is the biggest (you do **not** need Google or a calculator)?
- Hours in a year
  - Seconds in a day
  - Days in a decade
  - Minutes in a week

Stephen Brand (Answers in next issue)

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## Durham Fringe

Have you been enjoying the Fringe events? Here's Mike Forrest's blog of the first two days.

### Day 1

This is the fifth year of Durham Fringe, and as a fan of the Edinburgh Fringe, I like to support local. I'd booked 10 shows for myself and a friend.

The first performance was The Last Hurrah, about "a family of ordinary people – in one pivotal week of their lives".

We arrived at Durham Students Union 10 minutes before the 3.30 start time.

While we waited, I related the story of students hanging a mini from Kingsgate Bridge sometime in the 60's, and of the classic Free song, *Alright Now*, being composed in the Union.

A party of teenagers joined us. Come 3.40 there was still no sign of the play starting. At 3.45, a Fringe volunteer signalled the teenage party to move downstairs. We joined them. However, they went into Vane Tempest Hall – our venue was the Fonteyn Ballroom.

I was then told that the play had started at 3.30. We declined the offer to go into a performance already a third of the way through. A Festival director offered us a refund, which I accepted.



Next was Tom Bolton & Friends, magicians, in the Assembly Rooms.

There was a large crowd outside the theatre. We managed to get seated in an almost-full auditorium.

The audience was composed of a wide range of ages, with well-behaved children 10+ along with parents, grandparents and well-behaved oldies like me, 75+. One of the more puzzling tricks had the audience choosing digits to form a mobile number. A random card was then selected from a pack and not shown to Tom or the audience.

The number was then called and an unsuspecting member of the public was asked to think of any card. After a bit of convincing he chose one card, which turned out to be the one selected beforehand.

I've got no idea how this, and most of the other tricks were done.

But then, that's magic.

### Day 2

Our first event, at the City Theatre, had signs warning of audience participation, so we sat at the back.

"No Dreams are left in this Head Overnight" was a one-man performance by Paul Richards, playing a socially

awkward man, ready for a New Year's Eve party at his house. He reflects on his career as an office worker in charge of pencils, his liking for jazz and his lost love, Meghan, whose voicemails he keeps on an old-fashioned Nokia.

He is so inept he forgets to let in his guests, most of whom are called Tim.

Funny in parts, it was typical of many solo theatre pieces at Fringe festivals. One audience member slept through part of it.

Let's just say, it was interesting.

Next was "Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act" at the Students Union. After the previous day's debacle, we made sure we were notified of the start.

To a 40-strong audience, Nigel Miles-



Thomas played Sherlock Holmes and thirteen other parts, as he recalled his collaboration with Dr John Watson, from

their first meeting, through some of their greatest cases such as the Speckled Band, his "death" at Moriarty's hands and their last case, the Hound of the Baskervilles.

We also got an insight into his troubled childhood, although the writer seems to have taken some artistic licence here. This was an excellent performance delivered with authority, enormous presence and accomplished acting. There was no chance of falling asleep.

The last performance by Sunderland-based Theatre Space NE was in the stretch tent on Palace Green.

Their Shakespeare offering this year was "The Taming of the Shrew".

A cast of 20+ young actors filled the stage for a musical opening of "You Look Good on the Dance Floor"



by The Arctic Monkeys. The play then largely followed the original story, although I don't remember Katherina being won over by Petruchio so easily. But then it's over 60 years since my schooldays. The cast gave very enthusiastic and enjoyable performances.

We have another five shows to see over Saturday and Sunday. Another blog report to follow.

*Mike Forrest*

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## A Day Out

*(The Creative Writing Group's theme for July was "Something unexpected".)*

It was a balmy summer Saturday in 1979. I had recently passed my driving test, in my very own car, a second-hand, blue Austin Maxi. And here we were, all set for me to drive my friends and family on our very first outing.

There were eight of us altogether; me along with my husband and two small sons, my friend Kate, husband Alan and



their two boys. (Kate had been helping me to practise before I'd taken my test). As her family didn't have a car, as a thank you, I'd invited them to join us on our trip to the North Yorkshire Railway, near Whitby. I was very confident, as I drove, hands steady on the wheel, enjoying the company and the beautiful countryside on a perfect summer's day. The North Yorkshire Railway didn't disappoint: We all enjoyed exploring the railway station and the exciting ride on the steam train. It was indeed proving to be a great day out.

In the late afternoon, we set off on the road home, winding over a lonely expanse of gorse and heather-covered moorland; mysterious and beautiful, lit by the slowly setting sun in the western sky.

Suddenly the car sputtered, coughed, and then stopped. Silence fell. I turned the key, nothing happened. I glanced at the dashboard and realised, to my horror, that the petrol gauge was on empty. We were stranded in the middle of the moors, miles from help, no other cars travelling in either direction, and not a petrol station in sight.

What an idiot I was! I hadn't even thought about topping up the petrol in the car

before we'd set off – and nobody else had either!

Panic simmered while we debated our options—walk to the nearest village (miles away); wait for a passing car; hope for a miracle?

Suddenly, a van appeared on a distant curve of the road. It slowed down and then pulled up beside us. The driver stepped out.

“Got a problem?” he asked. I sheepishly explained our dilemma. After listening kindly to our tale of woe, he nodded, then strode over to his vehicle, took a length of pipe from the boot, and proceeded to syphon petrol from his own tank into ours. We all watched in awe .

“There”, he said when he'd completed the operation.

“That should get you to the Shell garage. It's about twenty miles down the road.”

We thanked him profusely and offered him some money for the fuel. He refused with a dismissive wave, got into to his van and drove off.

And we never saw him again .

To this day, whenever I recall my first family day trip as a qualified driver, it is not just the laughter, or the landscape that stays with me, but the reminder that sometimes, in the loneliest places, the unexpected kindness of strangers can find you– and light your way home!

*Irene Wilkinson*  
*Creative Writing Group*

## Bank Scams: What to do

### Important announcement from Badger

If someone calls you and says they are calling from your bank (they may even tell you your bank account number) – **be on the alert for a scam**. A scammer will then ask for further details of your account. They may say that your bank account has been ‘hacked’ and offer to transfer your money to a ‘safe account’.

### Act upon your suspicions and politely end the call, then phone: 159

This number will connect you to a secure service that will ask you (in a robotic voice) for the name of your bank. This system will then connect you to your bank’s fraud department.

Give them full details of the attempted scam. This is very important if you have told the scammer details of your finances and money has been or is about to be taken. Your bank will attempt to stop any such transactions before they have been completed.

Additionally, you can report the scam to the **Action Fraud** website or call **0300 123 2040**.

Please note that 159 cannot be faked so 159 will never call you. It ranks alongside 101 for police and 111 for the NHS.

### STOP, HANG UP, CALL 159



Robert Lebar

## Regional News

### Events

Click on the links below to find out more about future events:

#### [Raby Castle & Gardens Visit](#)

**4 September**. Contact Moira Stokoe ([moirastokoe@gmail.com](mailto:moirastokoe@gmail.com)).

#### [Durham Cathedral and Magna Carta](#)

**15 September**. The cut-off date for registering for this trip is **25 August**.

#### [Victoria Tunnel Visit](#)

17 September.

#### [Holy Island Excavation Field Trip](#)

**27 September**. Final chance to be shown around the site by Dr. David Petts of Durham University and visit the ‘finds’ store.

#### [North Northumbria Regional Quiz](#)

**15 October**.

### Summer School

On **26 May, 2026**, there’ll be a [Special Day at Ushaw Historic House](#), a day of fun, music and learning for all u3a members in the Northumbria region. Can you offer to present a workshop, activity or taster session, to help make this day a success? Get in touch with Northumbria Regional Events Team at [cecu3a@gmail.com](mailto:cecu3a@gmail.com).

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## National news

The monthly **u3a Friends** newsletter helps you keep up to date with news, events and opportunities – and gives you access

to discounts on products and services. You can sign up on the [u3a website](#).

### Online learning

These are just some of the online talks available over the next few weeks at : [u3a - Online Learning Events](#) :

#### The future and history of drones

(Tuesday, 5 August, 10am) An examination of the benefits and challenges of these autonomous systems.

#### George Mallory, 1886–1924

(15 August, 2pm)

A talk on the expeditions of this famous adventurer.

#### Vengeance or Vision? Artemisia Gentileschi and the Art of Survival

(Thursday, 21 August, 10am)



A delve into the groundbreaking artistry of one of history's most amazing female painters.

And if you're into puzzles and games, take a look at [u3a - Learning Activities](#)

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### Learn to play Bridge

Ever thought of learning to play bridge? It's an intriguing card game, sociable yet competitive, and a great way to make new friends.



Durham Bridge

Club is running lessons for beginners from **Monday, 15 September, 6.30 – 9pm** at Framwellgate Youth & Community Centre.

The first session is a free taster; the rest of the 10-week course costs £30, including all materials and refreshments.

Interested? Contact the Bridge Club at [bridgeclubdurham@gmail.com](mailto:bridgeclubdurham@gmail.com)

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Here's another of John Liddle's summer pics – a harbinger of the delights to come when the blackberries ripen.



## July/August Calendar

Date	Time	Place	Group	Contact
<b>JULY</b>				
Mon 28th	10.30am	Sacriston Methodist Church	<b>History Too:</b> <i>The American War of Independence</i>	<a href="#">David Willock</a>
Mon 28th	12.00pm	Waddington St URC Church	<b>Environmental Group:</b> <i>'Creating a Better Climate Future' by P Kent-Hughes</i>	<a href="#">Charles Jolly</a>
Mon 28th	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	<b>Canasta</b>	<a href="#">Mike Forrest</a>
Tues 29th	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Spanish conversation (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Group Leader</a>
Wed 30th	12.00pm	Durham Indoor Bowls Club	<b>Bowls</b>	<a href="#">Malcolm Dawson</a>
Wed 30th	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Français Amical (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Mike Gibb</a>
Thurs 31st	1.15 for 2.00pm	Bowburn Community Centre	<b>Monthly Meeting</b> <i>Waste Management and the environment</i>	<a href="#">Paul Newby</a>
<b>AUGUST</b>				
Fri 1st	10.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	<b>Singing for Fun</b>	<a href="#">Mike Forrest</a>
Mon 4 <sup>th</sup>	1.30 – 3.45pm	Bowburn Community Centre	<b>Big Summer Quiz</b> <i>Carrville and Sacriston quiz groups. Cost £2.50. See poster for more information</i>	<a href="#">Jennifer Banks</a>
Tues 5 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Spanish conversation (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Group Leader</a>
Tues 5 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	<b>History at Sacriston:</b> <i>Famous Women</i>	<a href="#">Elaine Leake</a>
Wed 6 <sup>th</sup>	12.00pm	Indoor Bowls Centre	<b>Bowls</b>	<a href="#">Malcolm Dawson</a>
Wed 6 <sup>th</sup>	1.30pm	Member's home	<b>Craft (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Marion Lotts</a>
Wed 6 <sup>th</sup>	1.30pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	<b>Geology</b>	<a href="#">Lesley Collins</a>
Wed 6 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Français Amical (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Mike Gibb</a>
Thurs 7 <sup>th</sup>	Visits	St John's Methodist Church, Meadowfield	<b>History at Meadowfield</b>	<a href="#">Audrey Adams</a>
Thurs 7 <sup>th</sup>	9.45am	Member's home	<b>French (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Elizabeth Morgan</a>
Thurs 7 <sup>th</sup>	10.15am	Durham Business School, Waterside	<b>Shakespeare (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Sue Childs</a>
Thurs 7 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	The Story café	<b>Parlez français:</b> <i>Growing up</i>	<a href="#">Paul Newby</a>
Fri 8 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Old England Pub car park (DH3 4JB)	<b>Walking: Lumley</b> <i>(Jennifer and Derek Banks)</i>	<a href="#">Richard Dennis</a>

Mon 11 <sup>th</sup>	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	<b>Canasta</b>	<a href="#">Mike Forrest</a>
Tues 12 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Spanish conversation (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Group Leader</a>
Wed 13 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Member's home	<b>Creative Writing</b>	<a href="#">Irene Wilkinson</a>
Wed 13 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Visitor Centre (TS21 2DN)	<b>Amblers: Hardwick Park</b> <i>(Mike Forrest, Sheila Beardsmore)</i>	<a href="#">Tina Naples</a>
Wed 13 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Français Amical (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Mike Gibb</a>
Thurs 14 <sup>th</sup>	9.45am	Member's home	<b>French (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Elizabeth Morgan</a>
Thurs 14 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Waddington St URC Church	<b>Poetry Reading:</b> <i>Inspiring Figures</i>	<a href="#">Pauline Butler</a>
Fri 15 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	<b>Singing for Fun</b>	<a href="#">Mike Forrest</a>
Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Sacrison Methodist Church	<b>Quiz at Sacriston</b>	<a href="#">Mary Elizabeth Adcroft</a>
Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	<b>Photography</b>	<a href="#">Deborah Blindt</a>
Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Sacrison Methodist Church	<b>Monday Crime Club: The Cuckoo's Calling</b> <i>(Robert Galbraith)</i>	<a href="#">Tina Naples</a>
Tues 19 <sup>th</sup>	11.15am	Gala balcony	<b>Theatre: Discussion and planning</b>	<a href="#">Nancy Gemski</a>
Tues 19 <sup>th</sup>	12.00pm	Cosy Club Durham	<b>Pub Lunch</b>	<a href="#">Sylvia Buxton</a>
Tues 19 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Spanish conversation (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Group Leader</a>
Wed 20 <sup>th</sup>	12.00pm	Indoor Bowls Centre	<b>Bowls</b>	<a href="#">Malcolm Dawson</a>
Wed 20 <sup>h</sup>	1.30pm	Member's home	<b>Scrabble</b>	<a href="#">Group Leader</a>
Wed 20 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Français Amical (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Mike Gibb</a>
Thurs 21 <sup>st</sup>	9.45am	Member's home	<b>French (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Elizabeth Morgan</a>
Thurs 21 <sup>st</sup>	10.15	Business School Riverside	<b>Shakespeare (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Sue Childs</a>
Thurs 21 <sup>st</sup>	1.15pm	St John's Church Hall Meadowfield	<b>History at Meadowfield:</b> <i>How we ended up with a housing crisis; Discovering black and white</i>	<a href="#">Audrey Adams</a> <i>Dorothy Hamilton;</i> <i>John Campbell</i>
Thurs 21 <sup>st</sup>	2.00pm	The Story Café	<b>Parlez français</b>	<a href="#">Paul Newby</a>
Fri 22 <sup>nd</sup>	10.00am	Nr station (DL13 2SL)	<b>Walking:</b> <i>Frosterley Marble</i>	<a href="#">Richard Dennis</a>
Mon 25 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Sacrison Methodist Church	<b>History Too :</b> <i>Restoration</i>	<a href="#">David Willock</a>
Mon 25 <sup>th</sup>	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	<b>Canasta</b>	<a href="#">Mike Forrest</a>
Tues 26 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am	Belmont Community Centre	<b>Art Appreciation (FULL):</b> <i>Moonlight and starlight</i>	<a href="#">Carol Tritton</a>

Tues 26 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Spanish conversation (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Group Leader</a>
Wed 27 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Gala Café	<b>Français Amical (FULL)</b>	<a href="#">Mike Gibb</a>
Wed 27 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Main car park (DH4 7EL)	<b>Amblers:</b> <i>Herrington Country Park (Latso Racz)</i>	<a href="#">Tina Naples</a>

**Other groups/activities 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](#)

And all volunteers/suggestions for **occasional outings** are welcomed.

**The following groups are not meeting in August:** Book Group; Circle Dancing; Coffee Morning; Environmental Group; Historical Novels; Music Appreciation' Poetry Appreciation; Topical Discussion; and Wine Tasting.

**The following groups are full:** Art Appreciation; Craft; Creative Writing; Français Amical; French; Monday Crime Club; Shakespeare; Spanish Conversation; and Topical Discussion. But that needn't hold you back – you can start another group! And there are start-up funds available where needed. Contact [Paul Newby](#), groups coordinator, if you think you'd like to set one up.

Your contributions to Drumbeat are actively invited! Send your items, ideally by mid-month (around 400 words max), to [Laura Woods](#), editor, or [Jim Crinson](#), deputy editor.

