

Drumbeat



Durham & District u3a

Issue 24, April 2026

Welcome to the April Drumbeat.

Hey ding a ding ding! With the equinox



Photo: John Liddle

behind us, spring is well and truly on the way. I'm on the lookout for frogspawn in our little pond, hoping that if and when it

does appear, at least a few tadpoles make it through to froglet and frog stage. (Not the case last year, sadly.)

This month's new members are: **Krishna Bajaj, Margaret Grant, Terry Jones, Barbara & Maurice Marinan, Duncan Porter and Pam Taylor.** Enjoy!

Thanks once more to all the contributors to this issue. We could always do with more of your news and ideas, especially from group activities, so if you feel the urge to put pen to paper, why not give in to it and send the results to Jim or me?

You'll have our undying thanks.

Laura Woods, editor

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NOTICES

April's monthly meeting is the **AGM**. Do attend if you can: **1.15 pm for 2 pm, Bowburn Community Centre, 30 April.**

There's no Circle Dancing on Thursday, 2 April. Instead, the group will meet on **Thursday 23 April** – same time, same place (2pm, Sacriston Methodist Church).

Take part in the **u3a and me national survey** at

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/u3a-me>

Closes on 31 March

Monthly meeting, 26 March

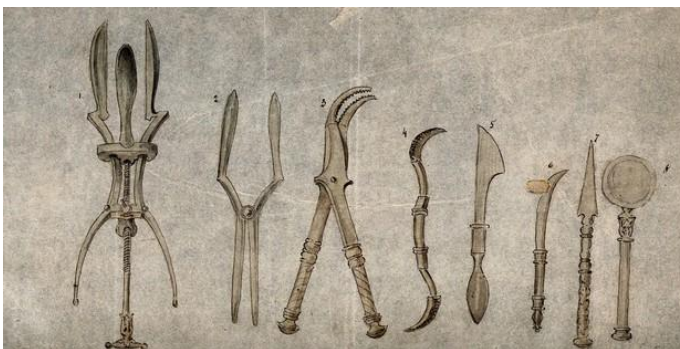
The Roman NHS

What do you imagine it was like to need medical treatment back in the time of the Romans? Pretty primitive, perhaps, with bizarre practices, an abiding trust in the gods – and high doctors' bills to boot?

You might be surprised to learn the truth. The speaker at our March monthly meeting is local historian and Roman re-enactor Gordon Henderson, who's been involved with Binchester Roman Fort since he was 8 years old and has made Roman medicine his particular interest.

The Romans developed their medical knowledge in tandem with their military conquests, and the equipment unearthed by digs at Binchester shows just how advanced that knowledge was – and what a sophisticated health system they created.

Gordon's talk promises to reveal to us an aspect of Roman life that many of us would never have imagined.



Thursday, 26 March, Bowburn Community Centre (1.15pm for 2pm start)

¡ Saludos a todos que hablan español !



If you enjoy using the Spanish language, as spoken in Spain or Latin/Central America, and you'd like to join us for regular chat in a friendly u3a group, then please contact me by email at mjosully@hotmail.co.uk .

We meet every Tuesday at 2.00pm for an hour or so. The group offers those with some working knowledge of the language an opportunity to practise their conversation skills.

If you wish to try it for a session, or discuss it further, please get in touch – we have a couple of spaces at present.

Gracias

Mick O'Sullivan

***Indoors or out, no one relaxes
In March, that month of wind and taxes,
The wind will presently disappear
The taxes last us all the year.***

Ogden Nash



On Roker Beach



Photo: Richard Dennis

The Walking Group hit on lucky with the weather on their February outing to Sunderland. After bussing it from the Glass Centre to Souter Point, they walked back down the coast, enjoying the delights of Roker Beach on the way. (They must have gone for the obligatory paddle after this photo was taken.)

Note: *The Glass Centre will sadly be permanently closed after the end of July.*

A sunny day at Sunnyside

Once again, Durham u3a supported the North Region inter u3a quiz event well, as



we sent 3 teams to take part. The total of teams taking part was 22.

Despite our strength of numbers we were unable to be victorious. The winning team scored 93 and three teams scored 86. Durham's best effort was by The Golden Girls who scored 84. However, the refreshments were good

as they are supplied by the participants, and there was a fine array of savouries and cakes to be enjoyed with tea and coffee.

In addition, we met up with old friends from the days when inter u3a quizzes involved Durham teams going head to head with teams from Gateshead, Morpeth, Newcastle, and Whitley Bay.

A good afternoon was had by all at Sunnyside, and we look forward to the next challenge.

*Jennifer
Quiz Group@Carrville*

Festival of Fun, Music & Learning Northumbria u3a

If you haven't booked for this event at Ushaw Historic House on Tuesday May 12th, you may still be able to get a place. As of a week or so ago, a few places were available for the following workshops:

10am i) Introducing Uzbekistan
ii) 4.5 mile walk (2 hrs)

11am i) The man behind the concept of the tomb of the unknown warrior
ii) Geology 1 - The Cheviot Volcanoes

1.15pm i) Egyptian Hieroglyphs
ii) Flower photography (1 ½ hrs)
iii) Bird watching walk

2:15pm i) Local history workshop (1 ¾ hrs)
ii) The Art of Joan Miro in Ushaw's Art Exhibition Gallery.

3:15pm Irish History & the poetry of Yeats
See the Region's website at [Ushaw Event](#)

Mors est remedium omnium

(Death is the remedy for all things)

An address from the deceased to friends and family

I will not ask you not to be sad, for your painful emotions belong to you and will live on, unaffected by those who can no longer comfort you, but eventually dulled by those who can.

I will not expect you to remain unchanged, because your personal universe is ever shaken by the loss of any part of it, but it and you will, nevertheless, go on in ways unimaginable.

I will not beg you not to mourn, for regret is a part of us all and needs to quieten slowly through time's soft caress.

I will not ask you not to worry, for I know the living see each of you as precious and worthy of love, which smothers anxiousness.

I will not ask you not to feel the pain of loss, for without the cold of winter we would not know the warmth of the summer sun.

I will not ask you to remember me for I know that will happen anyway; I don't know just how and I don't know just when, but the world will remind you, perhaps

when you read a particular word, see a certain flower or you hear a long forgotten song – those special things will whisper to you and tell you that I was once here.



*Ian Mordue
Creative Writing Group*

"In the Spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours."

Mark Twain



Fings ain't what they used to be

Hello – Badger here again with more interesting facts!

This article is about something that applies to us all. It seems a normal but chaotic, everyday occurrence.

This 'something' has a peculiar name, but I will save this for later as it does not affect these stunning impossibilities. (I am referring to physical rather than mental or relationship things.)

So please read on. Hopefully, you'll be surprised and happy that you did.

This whole concept is based upon things that we do naturally and indeed may not even notice that we are doing during our lives. However, there are certain things we do that can **never, ever, be undone**.

Right, here we go with some simple examples. They may seem trivial and indeed, you may never want to do them, but nevertheless they are valid.

Over time:

- You cannot unscramble scrambled eggs.
- A cup of tea/coffee will only get colder if left undrunk; it will never get hotter.
- You cannot take the milk out of the tea/coffee.
- Metals rust over time.
- Batteries lose their charge.
- Sandcastles crumble.
- Parts of a LEGO building that have been scattered won't rebuild themselves– that takes energy and effort.

- Once a fire burns to ashes, you can't recover the original fuel.
- A child's untidy bedroom won't tidy itself – without parental intervention, the untidiness will get worse.



- Given time, everything that has been made will eventually break.
- Any sense of order or stability will eventually collapse.

(OK, that's enough, Badger! I think everyone catches your drift. Ed.)

FINALE – THE WORD – The Big Reveal – worth the wait?

The scary word for this universal phenomenon is ENTROPY – meaning a state of disorder or uncertainty and randomness. "Entropy" refers technically to The Laws of Thermodynamics... *(No, no more details Badger, thank you – phew!)*

Entropy only increases with time – it is the universe's way of telling the time. It leads eventually to chaos and uncertainty.

Entropy is the measure of this disorder and uncertainty.

Finally, entropy appears different under Quantum Mechanics – more on that later. *(Ha ha – only joshing! Unless....?)*

Badger (aka Robert Lebar)

Top Flag

A flag flying at half-mast is a universal sign of the death of a significant individual— a Monarch, President, Statesman or woman, or a popular figure within the community. In addition, it can also mark an official period of mourning in the aftermath of a tragedy.

A flag flown at half-mast fulfils this visual role superbly; but its significance lies not in the fact that it is no longer in its usual proud place at the top of the flagpole but, rather, in the space it has vacated to allow another flag to take its place.

Every country in the world has its own unique national flag. More than just a piece of printed cloth, it embodies the honour of the nation, and is treated with due respect. In olden days on the battlefield, to lose one's flag to the enemy was the worst disgrace a fighting unit could suffer. Indeed, for a Roman Legion to lose its golden Eagle standard meant the disbanding of that Legion and the erasing of its name and history from the records.

Today, that respect is still retained: Americans vow allegiance to their flag, while in Britain and many other countries the flag is never allowed to touch the ground, except as part of a ceremonial ritual such as a Remembrance Service.

But sacred as each national flag is to its own country, one flag is universally accepted as trumping every other flag on earth: the Top Flag that takes precedence over all the others. This is the Flag of Death.

Invisible it may be; nor can it be felt by human hands; but it exists nonetheless, shown by the space left for it in times of mourning, above the nation's own flag flown at half-mast.

The proper protocol is to allow Death's flag an amount of space equal to the height of the flag it replaces, plus a few extra inches to ensure both flags do not become entangled.

Just as Death's flags triumphs over every other flag in the world, so Death itself triumphs over every one of us, evidenced in the gap left in our lives by the passing of a loved one.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of Man and Son of God, triumphed over Death with His Resurrection, and has bequeathed this triumph to all His followers.

Which, of course, is the message of Easter.

James Gilman

"Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush."

Doug Larson



Regional u3a

(See p.3 for Ushaw event)

Trinity House Visit, 30 March

A tour of Trinity House, Broad Chare, Newcastle takes place on Monday 30 March at 10:30am. Note that there are steps, with no dedicated access for wheelchairs or mobility walkers. More information is available [here](#) .

To book a place, contact Moira Stokoe: chair@guisboroughu3a.co.uk

AGM and Quarterly Meeting

Friday, 24 April, 10am for 10.30am, Bowburn Community Centre. See the agenda [here](#) .

Golf Day

This will be held at High Gosforth Park Golf Club on **Friday 10th July 2026**, offering:

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

More information [here](#) or contact Mike Wallace at mike.wallace.u3a@gmail.com .

National u3a

A new **Council representative** for the North East, Jane Mathieson of Teesdale u3a, takes up her role on 1 April. Jane's role is to represent the views of this region's members at national level.

Stories and photos are needed by the u3a communications team (as well as the Drumbeat team...) – you can contact them at communications@u3a.org.uk.

Masses of **online learning events**, from staying safe online to the magic of magic squares, and from Anglo-Saxon England to an exploration of the English language. Find out more [here](#).

u3a Festival

1–3 July 2026 at the University of York
£18 per day; £50 for three days. Book your place [here](#) . Tickets are limited.

The **u3a Eye** project is looking for your photos on the theme of “Fancy” in April and May – see [here](#) for details.

And pictures of **original artwork** on the theme of “Into the blue” are invited until 29 April – see [here](#).

“In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.”

Margaret Atwood



A Spring Quiz



Answers on page 12.

1. What famous New York thoroughfare is the scene of an annual Easter Parade?
2. What was the original meaning of the term "maundy"?
3. What Polish custom takes place on Dyngus Day (Easter Monday)?
4. How are Easter eggs delivered to French children?
5. In which country is the traditional Easter bread shaped like a dove?
6. Which two iconic Hollywood actors star opposite each other in the film Easter Parade?
7. In which book do Ma and Pop Larkin and their family first appear?
8. Who composed a bittersweet pop song based on an old English nursery rhyme about the cuckoo's arrival in spring?
9. Which Beatles song celebrates the end of a long, cold, lonely winter?
10. Who was the composer of Frühlingslied (Spring Song) – part of a series of Songs without Words?

11. Appalachian Spring is a 1944 work by which American composer?
12. Who will rise and go to Inisfree, to live in a small cabin "in the bee-loud glade"?
13. Who painted Primavera – the allegory of spring? (Anag: ROSE AND LICIT BOLT)
14. Which artist created the series "The arrival of spring" – without the aid of a paintbrush or canvas?
15. Can you identify the authors in whose works these words appear?

- (a) *"Don't you know what that is? It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want—oh, you don't quite know what it is you DO want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!"*
- (b) *"In the spring, XXX, a livelier iris gleams upon the burnished dove."
"So I have been informed, sir."
"Right ho! Then bring me my whangee, my yellowest shoes, and the old green Homburg. I'm going into the Park to do pastoral dances."*
- (c) *"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade."*

April Calendar

Date	Time	Place	Group	Contact
MAR				
Mon 23 rd Mar	10.30am	Sacriston Methodist Church	History Too at Sacriston <i>The Battle of Britain from both sides</i>	David Willock
Mon 23 rd Mar	12.00pm	Waddington Street URC Church	Environmental Group <i>Breaking Together by Jem Bendall</i>	Charles Jolly
Mon 23 rd Mar	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Canasta Cards Group	Mike Forrest
Tues 24 rd Mar	10.00am	Belmont Community Centre	Art Appreciation (full) <i>Henri Matisse</i>	Carol Tritton
Tues 24 th Mar	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Spanish	Mick O'Sullivan
Wed 25 th Mar	10.30am	King's Head car park	Amblers <i>Walk from Lanchester</i>	Tina Naples
Wed 25 th Mar	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Français Amical (full)	Mike Gibb
Thurs 26 th Mar	1.15pm for 2.00pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Monthly Meeting <i>The Roman 'NHS' (Gordon Henderson)</i>	Lynn Brooks
APRIL				
Wed 1 st April	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Français Amical (full)	Mike Gibb
Wed 1 st April	1.30pm	Member's home	Craft (full)	Jan Fish, Marion Lotts
Wed 1 st April	1.30 pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Geology	Lesley Collins
Thurs 2 nd April	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thurs 2 nd April	10.15am	Business School Bistro	Reading Shakespeare	Sue Childs
Thurs 2 nd April	2.00pm	The Story Café	Parlez Français <i>Easter</i>	Paul Newby
Fri 3 rd April	10.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	Singing for Fun	Mike Forrest
Fri 3 rd April	2.00pm	Indoor Bowling Centre	Bowls	Malcolm Dawson
Mon 6 th April	10.30am	Bowburn Hall Hotel	Coffee Morning	Marion Lotts
Mon 6 th April	1.30pm	Carrville Methodist Church	Quiz at Carrville	Jennifer Banks

Tues 7 th April	10.00am	Broomside Park Beefeater	Topical Discussion (full)	Janis Goodson
Tues 7 th April	2.00pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	History at Sacriston	Maureen Craik
Wed 8 th April	10.00am	Member's home	Creative Writing (full) <i>Protest poems/Colours</i>	Irene Wilkinson
Wed 8 th April	10.30am	Poplar Garden Centre, Shincliffe	Amblers <i>Walk from Poplar Garden Centre (Harry & Elizabeth)</i>	Tina Naples
Wed 8 th April	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Français Amical (full)	Mike Gibb
Thurs 9 th April	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thurs 9 th April	10.00am	Waddington St URC Church	Poetry Reading	Pauline Butler
Fri 10 th April	10.00am		Walking <i>A walk in the Durham countryside with Simon</i>	Richard Dennis
Fri 10 th April	10.30am	Witton Gilbert Community Centre	Historical Novels <i>Dissolution by CJ Sansom</i>	Tina Naples
Mon 13 th April	10.30am	Bowburn Hall Hotel	Coffee Morning	Marion Lotts
Mon 13 th April	10.00am	Member's Home	Book Group (full)	Lynn Bilsborough
Mon 13 th April	1.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	Canasta Cards Group	Mike Forrest
Mon 13 th April	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Poetry Appreciation <i>The Southern Hemisphere</i>	Steve Beckett
Tues 14 th April	10.30am	Wetherspoons Bishop's Mill	Theatre <i>Discussion and planning</i>	Nancy Gemski
Tues 14 th April	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Spanish	Mick O'Sullivan
Wed 15 th April	1.30pm	Member's home	Scrabble	Maureen Craik
Wed 15 th April	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Français Amical (full)	Mike Gibb
Wed 15 th April	7.00pm	SPRA Community Room, Sheraton Park	Wine tasting <i>Off the beaten track 1</i>	Jennifer Banks Cynthia Bolton
Thurs 16 th April	10.15am	Business School Bistro	Reading Shakespeare	Sue Childs
Thurs 16 th April	1.15pm	St John's Church Hall, Meadowfield	History at Meadowfield: <i>Binchester: Health care in Roman Times (Gordon Henderson)</i>	Audrey Adams

Thurs 16 th April	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thurs 16 th April	2.00pm	The Story Café	Parlez français	Paul Newby
Fri 17 th April	10.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	Singing for Fun	Mike Forrest
Fri 3 rd April	2.00pm	Indoor Bowling Centre	Bowls	Malcolm Dawson
Mon 20 th April	10.30am	Sacriston Methodist Church	Monday Crime Club <i>The Woman in Cabin 10</i>	Tina Naples
Mon 20 th April	2.00pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Quiz at Sacriston	Maureen Craik
Mon 20 th April	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Photography <i>Panning</i>	Alan Morrison
Tues 21 st April	10.30am	Wetherspoons Bishop's Mill	Theatre <i>Discussion and planning</i>	Nancy Gemski
Tues 21 st April	10.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	Housing and Health	Dorothy Hamilton
Tues 21 st April	12.00pm	Various	Pub Lunch	Sylvia Buxton
Wed 22 nd April	10.30am	Winlaton Mill, NE21 6RU – outside visitor centre	Amblers <i>The Land of Oak and Iron (Ian and Sylvia)</i>	Tina Naples
Wed 22 nd April	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Français Amical (full)	Mike Gibb
Thurs 23 rd April	2.00pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Circle Dancing	Linda Murdie
Sat 25 th April	2.00pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Music Appreciation	Stephen Brand
Mon 27 th April	12.00pm	Waddington Street URC Church	Environmental Group	Charles Jolly
Mon 27 th April	10.30am	Sacriston Methodist Church	History Too at Sacriston: <i>Alfred the Great and the struggle for Angland</i>	David Willock
Mon 27 th April	1.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	Canasta Cards Group	Mike Forrest
Tues 28 th April	10.00am	Belmont Community Centre	Art Appreciation (full) <i>Materials other than paint used in art</i>	Carol Tritton
Tues 28 th April	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Spanish	Mick O'Sullivan
Wed 29 th April	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Français Amical (full)	Mike Gibb
Thurs 30 th April	10.15am	Business School Bistro	Reading Shakespeare	Sue Childs
Thurs 30 th April	1.15 pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Monthly meeting and AGM <i>(no speaker)</i>	Lynn Brooks

Other groups/activities include:

Cinema – normally Mondays, but depends on film being shown

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

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

[Paul Newby](#)

[Rita McGarr](#)

The following groups are full: Art Appreciation; Craft; Creative Writing; Français Amical; Shakespeare; 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.

Answers to Spring Quiz on p.8

1	Fifth Avenue	10	Felix Mendelssohn
2	Commanded, ordered (from Latin "mandatum")	11	Aaron Copland
3	Water fights (from an old custom of drenching with water to symbolise life and renewal)	12	W.B. Yeats ("The Lake Isle of Inisfree")
4	They're dropped by flying church bells on their way back from being blessed by the Pope in Rome	13	Sandro Botticelli
5	Italy	14	David Hockney
6	Judy Garland and Fred Astaire	15a	Mark Twain ("Tom Sawyer")
7	"The Darling Buds of May" (H. E. Bates)	15b	P. G. Wodehouse ("The Inimitable Jeeves")
8	Paul Simon ("April come she will")	15c	Charles Dickens ("Great Expectations")
9	"Here comes the sun"		

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.

