

Drumbeat

Durham & District u3a

Issue 31, Nov 2026

Welcome to this month's issue of Drumbeat.

It's November already, but as I write this (a bit behind schedule – blame half-term grandchildren duties), the sun is beaming down and the many trees of Durham are glowing all shades of red and gold. So, whether inside or outside, there's much to enjoy about these shorter, blustery autumn days. As long as you keep the cold out, of course.

We have bumper numbers of new members this month. They are: **Gina Barnes, Alan Gray, Margaret Gray, Marilyn Hayat, Catherine Hopper, Christine Morris, Catherine Helen Newby, Valerie Standen, Angela Tyler and Tracey Williams.** Welcome to you all.

The Drumbeat calendar is appearing for the last time in this issue. To free up editorial time for articles – and reduce the risk of human error – we'll simply be including a link to the Beacon calendar from next month.

Enjoy this issue, keep warm and carry on!

Laura Woods, editor

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NOTICES

A reminder that the £2 monthly meeting charge will be reinstated from January, 2027.

Mazzeah Spice – From the Middle East to the North East

Monthly meeting, 29 October

Xerxes Setna has warm memories of the delicious Parsi food his mother produced when he was growing up.

He loved it so much that he and his wife set up food business Mazzeah Spice to bring the delights of Parsi cooking to a wider audience.

Parsi
cuisine
blends
Persian
and Indian
methods

and spices to create subtly different dishes.



Xerxes will be telling us not just about how the business was conceived and developed, but about how his family background, his Persian and Indian heritage and his one-time student diet of beans on toast, have influenced him.

And there'll be samples too...

*Venue: Bowburn Community Centre,
1.15pm for 2.00pm start*

Crime and Punishment

Meadowfield History Group

Members of the History in Meadowfield group went on a fascinating Crime and Punishment walking tour of Durham recently.

They heard about some of the grim and nefarious goings-on that its cobbled streets and hidden alleyways had witnessed in the past.

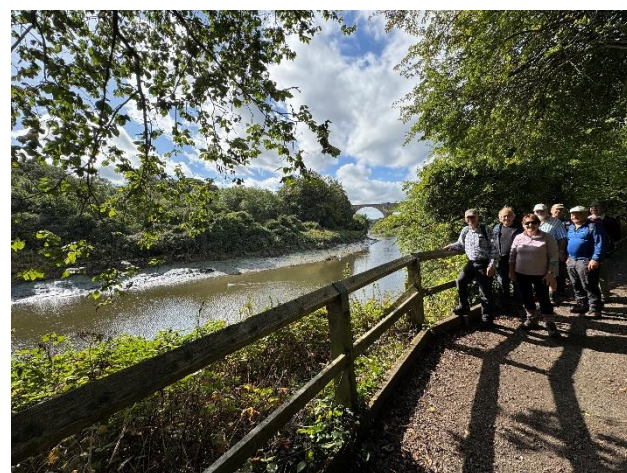
Here they are outside – appropriately enough – Durham Crown Court.



(Thanks to Liz Anderson for photo and note.)

Walking the Walks

The Walking Group explored yet more trails around County Durham in the last couple of months.



Enjoying a sunny walk from Cox Green

(Photo: Peter Jackson)

Led by Richard Dennis, or a member of the group, each month's excursion is always a new find for at least one or two in the group. This time, it was a circular route from Cox Green in September (Richard), and a figure of eight walk from Hunwick in October (Simon Pedley) – both blessed with beautiful weather.



Striding out from Hunwick

Autumn Leaves

A timely pic from John Liddle showcases the lovely hues of the season.



Photography Group

Speaking of photos...

The Photography Group is probably one of the smallest groups in our u3a. That doesn't mean we're any less enthusiastic than other groups, and we are definitely a very friendly bunch.

We enjoy what we do and would love to see more people, with an interest in photography, join us and share their photos. If you like taking photos, or even just looking at them, come along to Bowburn on the 3rd Monday of the month. Enjoy a good cup of tea or coffee, a friendly chat and look at the photos the group has brought in.



Each month we show photos that have been taken by the group on a subject that they have chosen. It's always good to see what others have been up to and it will more than likely inspire you to go out and try some new ideas. We talk about what we will show next month and may even talk about the technical side of photography (even though modern cameras can deal with that for you). Mostly it's about composition and waiting for the right light.

Contrary to popular belief, we are **not** an elite group of professionals. We feed off each other's ideas, efforts and techniques and try to improve our output.

Anyone with a smart phone or any other type of camera can take good photos. Most of us (and even professionals) take about a hundred to find one that we really like. With modern digital cameras, this is not a problem. It doesn't cost anything for film or processing – not like the old days.



Photography is also about memories. Once a picture is in the camera, it's there for ever (unless you decide to delete it). Every picture has a story to tell. There is a reason why you took it, there is more than one reason why you kept it and there are many reasons why you would like to show it to others.

Alan Morrison

Interested? The Photography Group meets at Bowburn Community Centre at 1.30 pm every 3rd Thursday (next meeting 16 Nov).

u3a is good for you – Fact!

North East members say belonging to a u3a has expanded their social connections and reduced loneliness, as

well as providing learning opportunities and increasing wellbeing.



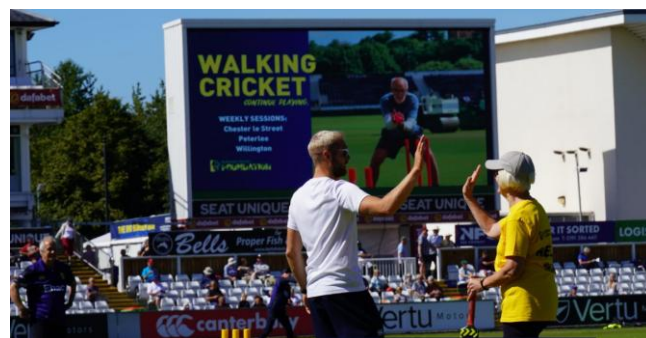
In response to a national survey, 96% of members in this region said the u3a had improved their lives in some way, while 65% felt that it had helped them stay mentally and physically active.

If you want to know more, you can find the details [here](#).

Walking Cricket – free sessions

Durham Cricket Foundation are hosting free walking cricket sessions at Freeman's Quay Leisure Centre (opposite the Passport Office) between 4 – 5 pm on Mondays.

So far there has been good interest and it is likely the hub will continue for the foreseeable future, but we need more people. Please come along if you are interested.

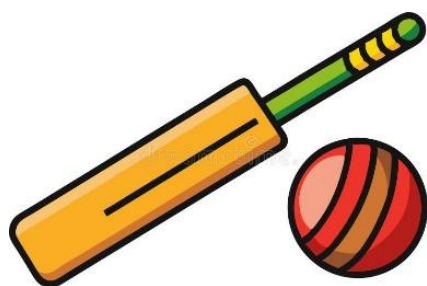


The mixed-sex sessions are a gentle introduction to the game, suitable for both novices and those who have some experience of cricket in their youth! People can just turn up to the sessions (in the sports hall on the 1st floor of the

centre). There's a very friendly and competent female coach – Laura Trotter – who will cater for all ages/abilities/mobilities etc.

Walking cricket offers a version of the game designed to encourage people to keep active and play the game they love. The indoor game follows the same format as regular cricket, although the ball is softer so there is no requirement for helmets or pads. It's non-competitive!

You don't have to have a cricketing background: it could be that your only



experience of cricket is on the beach or in the back garden with kids and

grandkids. Perhaps you do have a cricketing background, but time and age caught up with you; or maybe you have never had the opportunity to try the game, but have loved following it on TV or at a local club. Or you just want a bit of gentle exercise.

I'm a regular and really enjoy it. Please come along and try it!

You can just turn up, but I'm happy for you to give me a ring if you want to find out more (07928 486787). More information is on the Foundation's website: [Walking Cricket – Durham Cricket](#)). Wear comfortable clothing. All equipment will be provided. You are also welcome to just turn up and watch a session. There's no charge.

Mike Gibb

Is that it?

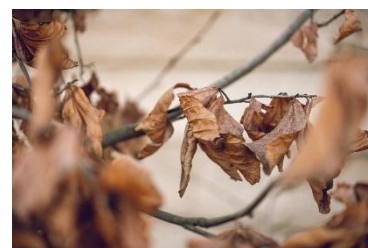
Clawing hand clutches the rail,
slipper foot inches to a step,
ebbing strength straggles behind,
as sand tiptoes stealthily away.

Pause for some breath to catch up..
yes you checked that backdoor key.
Heavens, this struggle on the stairway,
will the same song go on much longer?

Still no letter and their cat must be away,
and that phone isn't worth the expense.
You lost yourself and your cuppa went cold
and the Daily Moan left its grubby paw print.

A movement in the mirror catches the eye,
as the bathroom stares when you pass by.
Rusty, dusty scales could have explained
why the new trousers are hanging so loose.

Have you forgotten something?
You must have missed the bell.
Perhaps there's more to come,
or..... is that it?



Mick O'Sullivan

Regional u3a News

The winner of the poetry category of this year's regional short story and poetry competition is Durham & District member, Frank Kennedy.

His entry, Christmas Post 1975, can be seen on the North East u3a website, and will feature in December's Drumbeat.

National u3a News

The 2026 AGM was held as a hybrid event on 16 October, The meeting adopted a resolution requiring the Third Age Trust Board to consult formally with u3as before undertaking any advocacy or campaigning activity that was outside the remit of promoting the u3a movement. Full details of the AGM can be found [here](#).

Online learning events in November include:

[The History and Legacy of Stax Records](#)



A four-session course exploring the rise, sound, struggles and lasting influence of the Memphis-based label that helped define Southern soul, from Otis Redding and

Booker T. & the M.G.'s to Isaac Hayes and the label's dramatic collapse.

(First episode: 5 November, 10–11 am)

[Shaping Fashion: The Elizabethan bodice, buckram and busks](#)



A look at the changing shape and style of women's dress in 16th century England.

(25 November, 10 – 11.30 am)

[The ultimate guide to editing your creative writing](#)

Practical tips and simple exercises to help you improve your short story writing.

(26 November, 10 – 11.30 am)

[Virtual Visits](#) invites u3a members to create a short record of a visit they've enjoyed. Submissions will be used to:

- Inspire other members or interest groups to visit new places
- Create a gallery of recommendations, especially of less well-known locations.
- Provide slides and stories that can be shared in meetings or talks by members both online and in local u3as.

November 2026 Calendar

To contact a group leader, please see the website Groups page, or click [here](#)

Date	Time	Place	Group	Contact
October				
Mon 26 th Oct	10.30am	Sacrison Methodist Church	History Too (Sacrison) <i>Dead Sea Scrolls</i>	David Willock
Mon 26 th Oct	12.00pm	Waddington Street URC Church	Environmental Group <i>'No Miracles Needed' by Mark Jacobson (9,10,11)</i>	Charles Jolly
Mon 26 th Oct	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Canasta Cards Group	Mike Forrest
Tues 27 th Oct	10.00am	Belmont Community Centre	Art Appreciation (FULL) <i>Sculpture: Classical to Renaissance</i>	Carol Tritton
Tues 27 th Oct	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Spanish	Mick O'Sullivan
Wed 28 th Oct	10.30am		Amblers A stroll around Tudhoe Village	Tina Naples
Wed 28 th Oct	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Français Amical (FULL)	Mike Gibb
Thurs 29 th Oct	10.15am	Business School Bistro	Reading Shakespeare	Sue Childs
Thurs 29 th Oct	1.15pm for 2.00pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Monthly meeting <i>Mazzeah Spice: From the Middle East to the North East</i>	Lynn Brooks
Sat 31 st Oct	2.00pm	Sacrison Methodist Church	Music appreciation <i>Clive Wright</i>	Stephen Brand
November				
Mon 2 nd Nov	10.00am	Member's Home	Book Group	Lynn Bilsborough
Mon 2 nd Nov	1.30pm	Carrville Methodist Hall	Quiz at Carrville	Jennifer Banks
Tues 3 rd Nov	10.30am	Newton Grange Pub	Topical Discussion (FULL)	Janis Goodson
Tues 3 rd Nov	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Spanish	Mick O'Sullivan
Tues 3 rd Nov	2.00pm	Sacrison Methodist Church	History at Sacrison	Maureen Craik
Weds 4 th Nov	1.30pm	Member's home	Craft (FULL)	Marion Lotts
Weds 4 th Nov	1.30 pm	Sacrison Methodist Church	Geology	Lesley Collins
Thurs 5 Nov	1.15pm	St John's Church Hall, Meadowfield	History at Meadowfield: <i>Trinity House Tour</i>	Audrey Adams
Thurs 5 th Nov	2.00pm	Business School. Bistro	Français Amical (FULL)	Mike Gibb
Thurs 5 th Nov	1.30pm	Sacrison Methodist Church	Circle Dancing	Linda Murdie

Thurs 5 th Nov	9.45am	Member's Home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thurs 5 th Nov	2.00pm	The Story	Parlez Français <i>Chpt 18 & DK Chpt 7</i> <i>Supermarché</i>	Paul Newby
Fri 6 th Nov	10.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	Singing for Fun	Mike Forrest
Fri 6 th Nov	2.00pm	Bowls Centre	Bowls	Malcolm Dawson
Mon 9 th Nov	10.30am	Bowburn Hall Hotel	Coffee Morning	Marion Lotts
Mon 9 th Nov	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Canasta Cards Group	Mike Forrest
Mon 9 th Nov	2.00pm	Radisson Blu Hotel Tempus Hub	Poetry Appreciation <i>War poetry</i>	Steve Beckett
Wed 11 th Nov	10.00am	Hybrid: Member's home and Zoom	Creative Writing	Irene Wilkinson
Wed 11 th Nov	10.30am		Amblers Carrs Nature Reserve	Tina Naples
Wed 11 th Nov	2.00pm	Business School. Bistro	Français Amical (FULL)	Mike Gibb
Thurs 12 th Nov	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thurs 12 th Nov	10.15am	Business School Bistro	Reading Shakespeare	Sue Childs
Thurs 12 th Nov	10.00am	Waddington Street URC Church	Poetry Reading	Pauline Butler
Fri 13 th Nov	10.00am	A walk in the Durham countryside	Walking	Richard Dennis
Fri 13 th Nov	10.30am	Witton Gilbert Community Centre	Historical Novels <i>Romola by George Eliot</i>	Tina Naples
Mon 16 th Nov	10.30am	Sacriston Methodist Church	Monday Crime Club <i>Angels Flight by Michael Connolly</i>	Tina Naples
Mon 16 th Nov	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Photography <i>Abstract</i>	Alan Morrison
Mon 16 th Nov	2.00pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Quiz at Sacriston	Maureen Craik
Tues 17 th Nov	10.30am		Housing and Health	Dorothy Hamilton
Tues 17 th Nov	10.30am	Wetherspoons Bishop's Mill	Theatre <i>Discussion and planning</i>	Nancy Gemski
Tues 17 th Nov	12.00pm	For venue contact group leader	Pub Lunch group	Maureen Craik
Tues 17 th Nov	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Spanish	Mick O'Sullivan
Wed 18 th Nov	1.30 pm	Member's home	Scrabble	Maureen Craik
Wed 18 th Nov	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Français Amical (FULL)	Mike Gibb
Wed 18 th Nov	7.00pm	SPRA community room Sheraton Park	Wine tasting <i>Burgundy</i>	Jennifer Banks Cynthia Bolton

Thurs 19 th Nov	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thurs 19 th Nov	1.15pm	St John's Church Hall, Meadowfield	History at Meadowfield <i>Sutton Hoo (Olly Burton): Biblia Pauperum (John Campbell)</i>	Audrey Adams
Thurs 19 th Nov	2.00pm	The Story	Parlez Français <i>TBD</i>	Paul Newby
Fri 20 th Nov	10.30am	Bowburn Community Centre	Singing for Fun	Mike Forrest
Fri 20 th Nov	2.00pm	Bowls Centre	Bowls	Malcolm Dawson
Mon 23 rd Nov	12.00pm	Waddington Street URC Church	Environmental Group <i>'No Miracles Needed' by Mark Z Jacobson (12,13,14,15)</i>	Charles Jolly
Mon 23 rd Nov	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Canasta Cards Group	Mike Forrest
Mon 23 rd Nov	10.30pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	History Too (Sacriston) <i>The Dead Sea Scrolls</i>	David Willock
Tues 24 th Nov	10.00am	Belmont Community Centre	Art Appreciation (FULL) <i>Open Session - Journeys</i>	Carol Tritton
Wed 25 th Nov	10.30am	TBA	Amblers	Tina Naples
Wed 25 th Nov	2.00pm	Business School Bistro	Français Amical (FULL)	Mike Gibb
Thurs 26 th Nov	1.15pm for 2.00pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Monthly meeting <i>The Music and Satire of Gilbert and Sullivan</i>	Lynn Brooks
Thurs 26 th Nov	9.45am	Member's home	French	Elizabeth Morgan
Thurs 26 th Nov	10.15am	Business School Bistro	Reading Shakespeare	Sue Childs
Sat 28 th Nov	1.00pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Music appreciation <i>Group selection (Emotions)</i>	Stephen Brand
Mon 30 th Nov	1.30pm	Bowburn Community Centre	Canasta Cards Group	Mike Forrest

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 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.



Send your contributions around 400 words max) to Laura Woods, editor (lauramw100@gmail.com) or Jim Crinson, deputy editor (website committee page).

