



## Members Newsletter August 2024

### A Message from the Chair

Hello everyone

I hope you have all enjoyed the summer so far (which I would define as that week in June when it was mainly warm and sunny). We have been out and about since the previous newsletter, with u3a trips to Melrose, Beamish and Bowes; see pages 5-7.

The Autumn is now fast approaching, and trailing in its wake will be more interesting talks and meetings, which I am sure you will enjoy.

You should have received an email from Pat Ashton informing you that the new Alnwick u3a website has now gone live, after development by me and Mary Brazier. We are very pleased with the end result, and we hope those of you with internet access are too (which is most of you!).

**Trevor Robinson, Chair**

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## Annual Membership Renewals for 2024/25

We are now fast approaching the annual membership renewal for 2024/25. The subscription will be £27.00 as from 1<sup>st</sup> September, to cover the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025. The annual subscription will be reduced by £3.80 if the member chooses not to receive the National u3a Magazine, u3a Matters. All members will be asked to fill in a new form to confirm or amend their details as required periodically by the Data Protection Act. Members will be able to confirm on the new form if they do not want to receive the Magazine.

On 31<sup>st</sup> August, Pat Ashton will send out to all members an email and letter written by Pat and George Ellames, asking them to complete new membership forms, which will be attached to the email in both WORD and PDF formats. Members can either print, fill in manually, and send or hand the forms to Pat, or they can fill in the WORD version and return it to Pat electronically. Pat will ensure that people who don't have email, or don't have a printer, receive a hard copy of the form. The forms will also be downloadable from the website, with the links going live on 1<sup>st</sup> September; they will be found at:

<https://alnwick.u3asite.uk/membership/>

## Sound at the Monthly Meetings

Regular attenders at our monthly meetings will know that in the past we have had sound problems, which we have attempted to overcome with new amplification and improved microphones. We do ask our speakers to use the mics, but at the July meeting the presenter chose not to. As it happens, the people at the back could hear him. However, we invite those who are hard of hearing to sit at or closer to the front of the hall, if they wish to. We will also in future insist that the presenter uses one of the mics.

**Monthly Meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024**  
**The Dialects and Music of Northumberland**  
**Presented by Kim Bibby-Wilson**

At our June monthly meeting at St Michael's Church Hall, we welcomed local musician Kim Bibby-Wilson. She talked about aspects of the Northumbrian dialect, illustrated with songs, and recordings of local poets.

Kim explained the differences in dialect across the region, illustrating with the aid of recordings of people from different areas. Some differences were quite subtle, while others were notably different. If she had been presenting recordings of a TV show, some of the speech might have required sub-titles!

We heard examples of people reading poems and singing. This all resonated with the audience, most of whom hailed from different parts of the area around Alnwick.

Kim had examples of local songs and got us to join in with the choruses. I doubt we would have got a recording contract though!

It was also interesting to hear how some accents have changed over time.

Kim also told us about a forthcoming series of folk music concerts at the Alnwick Playhouse (from 30<sup>th</sup> August to 1<sup>st</sup> September). That might appeal to me; back in the day, I used to run a Folk Club in Birmingham.



**Trevor Robinson**

## Monthly Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024

### The Life of a Submariner

#### Presented by Craig Weir

Craig Weir, a retired submariner, gave us a very informative and entertaining talk about his service in the Royal Navy, mostly spent in submarines. He started off by asking us who used the first submarine. None of us got it right; it was Alexander the Great, in 332 BCE, during the Siege of Tyre! There were some attempts over the following centuries to make working submarines, until one, known as the Turtle, was used in 1776 during the American War of Independence.



Submarines were developed further as military vessels over the next 100 years, until by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they were equipped with diesel engines for surface operations, and batteries for use underwater. At the start of WW1, the Royal Navy had as many as 74 submarines, the largest fleet in the world at that time. Germany built 1,162 U-boats during World War II and 785 were destroyed by the end of the war. The remaining 377 U-boats were surrendered (or scuttled by the Germans). In contrast, U-boats sank about 3,000 Allied ships (merchant ships and warships).

Craig served on one ship and four boats, explaining that submarines are referred to as “boats”, with “ship” used to describe surface vessels. He started out in a diesel submarine, which was cramped and smelly; there was little fresh food as it went off quickly, so most meals came from tins and packets. Water was very limited, with only a few pints per day per crewmember for drinking and washing. The limited space had to accommodate up to 72 submariners, plus up to three apprentices in training to become a submariner.

Conditions were a bit better in Craig’s later submarines, the last of which was one of the UK’s four Vanguard class nuclear submarines armed with Trident missiles. Since the decommissioning of the Royal Air Force nuclear weapons in 1998, the Vanguard submarines are the sole platforms for the United Kingdom’s nuclear weapons and are colloquially known as “bombers”. There is always one at sea, with an average patrol length of around five months. Craig said he cannot tell us much about his submarine service because of the “50-year rule”. However, he was able to tell us that although larger than diesel boats, their crew of 132 still have very limited space because of the need for the boat to house up to 16 Trident missiles.

A typical shift pattern for the crew used to be two hours on and four hours off, but on nuclear boats it is now four hours on and eight hours off. A boat can now have a small number of female crew, but for obvious reasons this puts further pressure on the facilities.



Finally, Craig told us about Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, First Sea Lord in 1910, who had said that submarines were “underhanded, unfair, and damned un-English”, and that captured enemy submariners should be hanged as pirates. So, in response the submariners adopted the skull and crossbones as their unofficial emblem!

At the end, Craig was warmly thanked for his service.

**Trevor Robinson**

## History Group Outing to Beamish – 4<sup>th</sup> June

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, Members of the History Group paid a visit to Beamish: The Living Museum of the North.

Beamish was founded in 1970, since when it has grown and now includes numerous exhibits including farms, railway, working trams and buses, a colliery & pit village, and a large town - with various shops and businesses. These are from different periods from the 1820s, 1900s, and 1940s. Also, currently being developed, is a 1950s town, which brought many cries of “we had one of those”!



Sweetshop



Tram

It was a lovely addition to have museum staff, dressed in period costume, at various locations on site, giving more information and answering questions.

With so much to see and do at Beamish it's impossible to cover it all in just one trip, so it's definitely worth another visit.... or more visits.

Many thanks to Anne McMillan for a very well organised and enjoyable trip.

**Shelley Willis** (photos by Shelley, with more on pages 8 & 9)

## Architecture Group Outing to Melrose and Traquair House

The Architecture Group paid a visit to Melrose and Traquair House on 27<sup>th</sup> June. The coach first stopped at Melrose, a historical town in the Scottish Borders. Places to see in the town included Melrose Abbey and the Chain Bridge. The Cistercian Abbey was founded in 1136, but the original buildings were destroyed by English armies in 1385; they were substantially rebuilt later. Several Scottish nobles are buried there, and a casket has been found which is believed to contain the heart of King Robert the Bruce. The casket has been re-buried in the Abbey.



The Chain Bridge is a suspension footbridge crossing the River Tweed from Melrose to the village of Gattonside. It was opened in 1826 and is an early surviving example of this type of bridge, with a span of 300ft. A notice on the bridge advises there should be no more than eight people on it at any one time, and no swinging is allowed!

Melrose is a thriving town; many of us had a walk around looking in their wonderful diverse shops and stopping for a bite to eat.

After lunch, the coach took us to Traquair House which was a hunting lodge of the Kings of Scotland in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. It eventually passed into the hands of James Stewart, a son of the Earl of Buchan, in 1491.



It has remained in the family and is the oldest occupied house in Scotland, having been lived in for over 900 years.

In the grounds there is the largest hedged maze in Scotland, which I didn't try! Behind the cafe are craft workshops. One workshop was run by a

husband and wife; she did leatherwork, and he made Silver Celtic jewelry.

Eventually, after a good look around, we went back to the coach for the return to Alnwick.

Grateful thanks are due to Peter Carter for organising this very enjoyable outing.

**Anne McMillan (photos courtesy of Mary Brazier)**

## Art Appreciation Group Outing to Bowes

On 8<sup>th</sup> July, members of the Art Appreciation took a coach to visit the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle, County Durham. Some of you may think that



Barnard Castle is where you might visit to have your eyes tested, but a trip to the Museum is much more



enlightening. The Museum is an art gallery, built to designs by Jules Pellechet and John Edward Watson, and opened in 1892. It houses the art collection of John Bowes and his wife Joséphine Benoîte Coffin-Chevallier.



The Museum contains paintings by El Greco, Francisco Goya, Canaletto, Jean-Honoré Fragonard and François Boucher, together with items of

decorative art, ceramics, textiles, tapestries, clocks and costumes, and objects of local



historical interest. Some early works of Émile Gallé were commissioned by Coffin-Chevallier. There is an eighteenth-century Silver Swan automaton, which periodically preens itself, looks round and appears to catch and swallow a fish.



Once we descended from the coach, some of us made a beeline for the Cafe, which is excellent (and licensed!). We then all went off in different directions to see the various works of art on display.

At precisely 2:00pm, many of us were gathered in front of the amazing Silver Swan to watch the automaton in action. You must be quick, though, as the action only lasts a few minutes. Blink and you miss it!



We all greatly enjoyed this trip. Many thanks are due to Sue Bairstow for organising it.

Trevor Robinson (with thanks to Alan Sayers for the photos)

# August Photos - 1

## Trip to Beamish, by Shelley Willis



Inside Pockerley Old Hall



Kitchen Range



School Classroom



School



Music Teacher's Room

# August Photos - 2

## Trip to Beamish, by Shelley Willis



Masonic Hall



Inside the Masonic Hall



Dentist



Co-Op Store - Hardware



Co-Op Store - Grocery

## Quiz - British Sitcoms (Part 1)

### Courtesy of Shelly Willis

From the surname(s) of the main characters, can you guess the name of the British Sitcom? (Hope you enjoy this as there's Part 2 in the next Newsletter! )

No.	SURNAME(S)
1	Abbott
2	Arkwright & Emmanuel
3	Boswell
4	Brockman
5	Butler, Harper, & Blake
6	Collier & Ferris
7	Crilly, McGuire & Hackett
8	Fforbes-Hamilton & DeVere
9	Fletcher, Godber & MacKay
10	Glover
11	Granger, Horton & Tinker
12	Harper
13	Javis & McDade
14	La Hughes & Farrell

No.	SURNAME(S)
15	Lumsden
16	Meldrew
17	Monsoon & Stone
18	Parkinson
19	Pinner & Warrender
20	Porter
21	Rigsby, Jones, Moore & Smith
22	Sabatini & Haslam
23	Smallbridge & Peel
24	Spencer
25	Stubbs, Theodopolopodous & Green
26	Trenneman, Moss & Barber
27	Tripp
28	Unsworth & Henshaw

## You Need New Committee Members

Our Annual General Meeting, on 17<sup>th</sup> October, is now only a little over two months away. As I have previously said, at this meeting we will be electing your Committee Members for 2024/25. Some of the existing Committee will be standing down, after several years of sterling service, and it would be good to have some new people standing for election. We would especially like someone to come on board as Secretary, as Maureen Sayers, the current Secretary, will be retiring from this role.

The Committee is an essential part of keeping our u3a continuing to operate as a successful organisation. If you are interested in joining the Committee, please put your name forward to Maureen Sayers, who can be contacted at [secretary.alnwick.u3a@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.alnwick.u3a@gmail.com)

The Committee is happy to welcome observers if anyone would like to see what happens at our meetings.

**Trevor Robinson, Chair**

### Tom's Tales

I like being a naturist but it takes a lot of gall

It's OK in the summer but we're heading for the fall.

And when winter is upon us, I'll wish I'd never chosen

To stand around with nothing on and have my assets frozen.

**Tom Burroughs**

## New Group – Lunch Group

There is a new Group starting in September – this is the Lunch Group. We will meet up for lunch and a chat in various venues in, or near to, Alnwick.

We will meet monthly on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at 12pm. The first meeting will be on the 26<sup>th</sup> September.

If you are interested in joining this group, please contact me via the Groups page on the website.

**Shelley Willis**



## Craft Group – Additional Meetings

The new Craft Group, led by Deborah Barton, held its first meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. It has proved to be so popular that an additional day has been added to the monthly schedule.

The group will now meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month, from 2-4pm, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month, from 10-12am. Both meetings are held in the small hall at St Michael's.

Deborah has also offered to co-host a new Wine Group. If you are interested, you can contact her via the Craft Group page on the new website.

Here are a couple of examples of work prepared by Group Members:



Miniature wooden model  
by Jean Findlay



Diamond art by Anne  
McMillan

# Odds and Ends

I just killed a huge spider running across the floor with my slipper. I don't care how big the spider is, no one steals my slipper.

My friend just told me he launched a tennis ball 1,000 metres and his dog ran and brought it back. Sounds a bit far-fetched to me.

I woke up the other day to find I had a small toupee growing out of the side of my head. It was just an ear wig.

Got a new hobby. A couple of days a week, I spend a couple of hours bellringing. Some people find it an odd thing to do with your time, but I find it very therapeutic. The bus driver seems less keen on it, though...

I went to the doctors this morning and I said: "I feel like I've got some cutlery stuck in my throat".

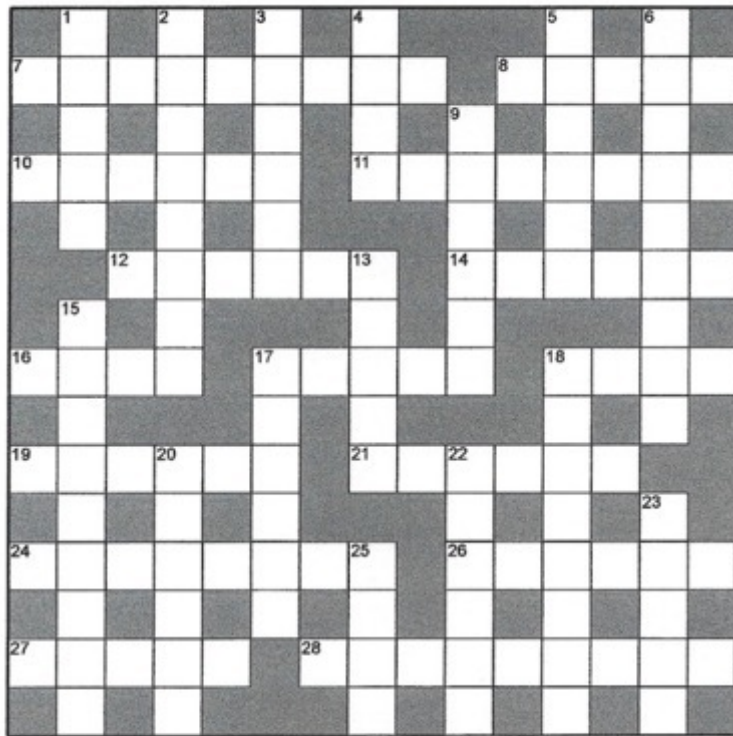
She took a look and then said: "it's not serious, you just need to have utensils taken out."

I thought I would visit a new Irish restaurant in my town, called Paddy Fields. Imagine my surprise when the only dishes on the menu were all Chinese.

I have discovered an interesting new religion. The followers worship a particular shade of blue. It is called .cyantology

I used to scuba dive, but eventually I gave it up. Deep down, I realised it wasn't for me.

## Crossword – courtesy of Alan Sayers



### ACROSS

- 7** Came round a sort of plain bell-tower (9)  
**8** Races around a large expanse of land (5)  
**10** Bad samples of trees (6)  
**11** A poor old horse and some sheep find themselves involved in crosswords (8)  
**12** In this part of London your curls are referred to as this (6)  
**14** Make certain that you're positive about the measurement first (6)  
**16** Part of a church that's partially collapsed (4)  
**17** Score twice (5)  
**18** I left the boss to work in the kitchen (4)  
**19** Handcart built in Cumbria (6)  
**21** Katherine was in the dictionary looking specifically for this word (6)  
**24** This is the last place you want to end up in (8)  
**26** A grim farmhand (6)  
**27** Faced with fear and illness (5)  
**28** They pull out all the stops (9)

### DOWN

- 1** Vessel that can go backwards as well as forwards (5)  
**2** Wise guy consumed tablet but not without splashing a bit of water (8)  
**3** Both Oxford and Cambridge crews should row in this (6)  
**4** A variety of bleeding heart that grows well in Scotland (4)  
**5** He suffered from too much sun (6)  
**6** The latest mart held at a racecourse (9)  
**9** This always comes first when avoiding danger (6)  
**13** Roots disturbed, affecting the trunk (5)  
**15** Talk that's not hard on the subject of an illicit drinking club (9)  
**17** Produced deer of a certain colour (6)  
**18** Varying climates will affect how this grows (8)  
**20** Staggered around the dance floor (6)  
**22** A cushion for the car (6)  
**23** Skins ready for tanning are misspelt (5)  
**25** A measure of land mainly for storage (4)

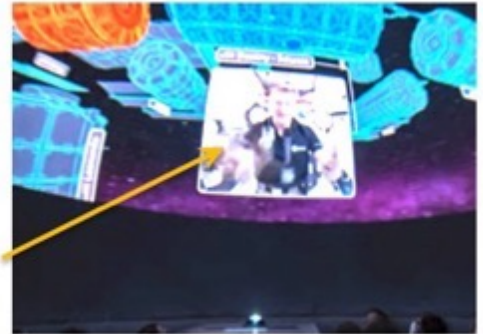
# Taking Science to Children

This is another article about some of the things your Committee Members get up to. Some readers may already know that I am involved with another charity, Kielder Observatory Astronomical Society (KOAS), based in Kielder Forest. One of our main aims is to facilitate the education of members of the public in the science of astronomy. KOAS is particularly interested in providing an education outreach programme to allow children and young people to experience the wonders of the universe as a means of inspiring closer engagement with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects. This is very important here in the Northeast, given the relatively low outcomes achieved by students from disadvantaged communities, those who are looked after and the low take-up of post-16 physics by girls.



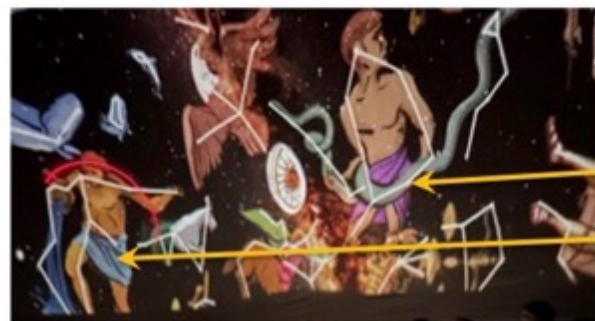
In 2019, we received a grant from the Mayor of North of Tyne to enable up to 10,000 children and young people each year to take part in school-based science week experiences. This included use of our mobile planetarium, inside which a group of children and young people would see planets, stars and galaxies, and watch inspirational videos. The photo on the left shows the planetarium in a school in Northumberland, with children going through the entrance tunnel.

An example of a video, seen on the right, showed UK astronaut Tim Peake when he was on board the International Space Station. The children loved this!



Of course, the delivery of the programme ground to a halt when covid arrived in 2020. However, once schools had reopened, we were able to resume the presentations. School visits continue; I attended one recently at a junior school in Alnwick, and I was very pleased to observe a group of Year 6 pupils looking at displays of constellations.

In the photo on the far left, the children were shown a projection of an outline of constellations in the night sky, and asked what they might represent.



On the near left, we see illustrations of what the constellations look like with their pictures on top. Some children guessed correctly! For example, Sagittarius the Archer is clearly visible, as is Aquarius the Water Bearer.

The children were very

excited to see the planet Saturn (which appears distorted because it was being projected onto the curved roof of the

planetarium).

It was great to see children being inspired by these special lessons. You never know, some of them might become scientists!

So that's one of the things I get up to in my spare time - perhaps one of you would like to share your interesting activities with fellow u3a members?



Trevor Robinson

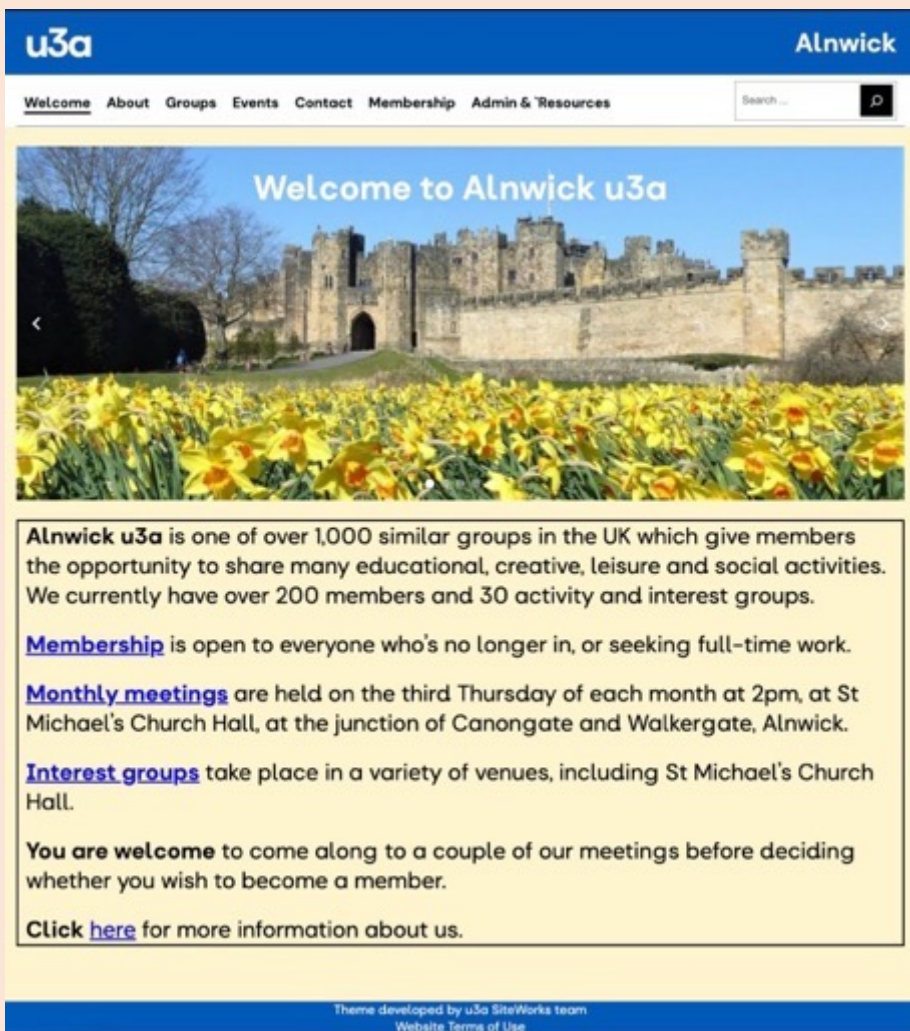
## Alnwick u3a New Website

Regular readers may recall that in the previous Newsletter I mentioned that Mary Brazier and I were grappling with the software to establish a new website for Alnwick u3a. We needed a new one because our previous website was based on old software (in fact very old: about 20 years old at least) which will no longer be supported by the Third Age Trust after December this year.

I'm pleased to say that between us we have delivered a new website, which is now open for viewing. We hope you like it. There have been quite a few visits since the site went live: by the end of July there had been over 3,000 viewings. We would be very pleased to hear what you think of it; you can send me an email using the Contact page on the website. The new web address is

<https://alnwick.u3asite.uk>

If you still attempt to logon to the old address (perhaps using a bookmark you may have saved) you will automatically be redirected to the new site. The new Welcome Page looks like this:



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Alnwick u3a website. At the top, there is a blue header with the 'u3a' logo on the left and 'Alnwick' on the right. Below the header is a white navigation bar with links for 'Welcome', 'About', 'Groups', 'Events', 'Contact', 'Membership', and 'Admin & Resources'. A search box is located on the right side of the navigation bar. The main content area features a large banner image of Alnwick Castle with a field of yellow daffodils in the foreground. The text 'Welcome to Alnwick u3a' is overlaid on the image. Below the banner is a text box containing the following information:

**Alnwick u3a** is one of over 1,000 similar groups in the UK which give members the opportunity to share many educational, creative, leisure and social activities. We currently have over 200 members and 30 activity and interest groups.

**Membership** is open to everyone who's no longer in, or seeking full-time work.

**Monthly meetings** are held on the third Thursday of each month at 2pm, at St Michael's Church Hall, at the junction of Canongate and Walkergate, Alnwick.

**Interest groups** take place in a variety of venues, including St Michael's Church Hall.

**You are welcome** to come along to a couple of our meetings before deciding whether you wish to become a member.

Click [here](#) for more information about us.

At the bottom of the page, there is a blue footer with the text: 'Theme developed by u3a SiteWorks team' and 'Website Terms of Use'.

Trevor Robinson

## Quiz Answers

No.	SIT COM
1	Bless This House
2	Open All Hours / Still Open All Hours
3	Bread
4	Outnumbered
5	On the Buses
6	The Likely Lads
7	Father Ted
8	To The Manor Born
9	Porridge / Going Straight
10	Father, Dear Father
11	The Vicar of Dibley
12	My Family
13	Still Game
14	Gimme Gimme Gimme

No.	SIT COM
15	Sorry!
16	One Foot in the Grave
17	Absolutely Fabulous
18	Butterflies
19	Just Good Friends
20	2point4 Children
21	Rising Damp
22	Surgical Spirit
23	Never The Twain
24	Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em
25	Birds of a Feather
26	The IT Crowd
27	Robin's Nest
28	In Loving Memory

## Crossword Answers

**ACROSS** - 7 Campanile. 8 Acres. 10 Maples. 11 Anagrams. 12 Barnet. 14 Ensure. 16 Apse. 17 Forty. 18 Chef. 19 Barrow. 21 Okayed. 24 Cemetery. 26 Reaper. 27 Ashen. 28 Organists.

**DOWN** - 1 Kayak. 2 Spillage. 3 Unison. 4 Alba. 5 Icarus. 6 Newmarket. 9 Safety. 13 Torso. 15 Speakeasy. 17 Fawned. 18 Clematis. 20 Reeled. 22 Airbag. 23 Pelts. 25 Yard.

### End Piece

*After a rain dampened start  
summer can now play its part.  
Meanwhile the earth can take heart  
from its display of fine art.*

Mary Atkinson

### Final Renewal Reminder

Membership renewal is due on 1<sup>st</sup> September. Pat Ashton will be emailing the Forms to you all at the end of August. They will also be downloadable from the website on 1<sup>st</sup> September