



## Members Newsletter August 2025

### A Message from the Chair

Dear Members, it's good to be writing to you in another of our entertaining and informative newsletters – and this is a “Bumper Bundle” edition (thank you editors!). We are moving ever closer to the 25 years celebration of your Alnwick u3a. Shelley has been working hard with her team making plans and organising the event. We look forward to seeing many of you there, do please sign up in September so we get the catering and seating right.

I hope you've had a safe summer. I've been to visit new granddaughters, my younger brothers, a couple of art exhibition launches and of course, many visits to our beautiful coast. My cataract operation has been successful, but now I can see just how dusty my home is! Here's to a stimulating Autumn. **Carolyn McDonald, Chair.**

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## Monthly Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025

### The Reintroduction of Beavers

#### Heather Devey, Ecologist

Heather Devey came to speak to us with her 11 year's experience of the introduction of them, mostly in Scotland.



The beaver is a perfect animal to help with rewilding /wilding/ nature restoration, and she told us about the Cumbria and Wallington projects.

As mammals, Beavers weigh about 30kg, with a lot of meat, which is perhaps why they became extinct in the UK. The meat was classified as fish, so particularly attractive for Fridays and Lent.

Their fur is very dense and was felted and used for high society hats and waterproof felt for the Navy. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century there were only 1,200 left in Europe, so the current population all descended from that stock, but their genes are ok as there were separate relic populations. Beavers were in the region for 35 million years, with a gap of just 400 years.

Beavers have 2 to 3 kits each year, about 100 cm long, plus 30 cm for their tails. Born about now (June), they grow to the size of a labrador, in shades of blonde, darker or black.



They hide in the lodge where there is a paddling pool, coming out of the underwater entrance. Natural predators include bears and wolves. The lodge is built up during the year with wood, rocks and mud, providing warmth, as beavers do not hibernate.

## Monthly Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 (contd)

Beaver tails have skeletons and scales, store fat, and are used as rudders and to communicate. Beavers' hands are used for holding food and grooming. Their front teeth are red, showing the impregnated iron which makes them so strong.

Heather showed us large branches that beavers had cut into lengths to store and eat the bark. Once the sap is exposed there is a nectar rich source of food. A coppice results, allowing for the growth of flowers– they are the ecosystem engineers.

Heather showed us photos and videos of the river Wansbeck at Wallington and told us about strange things that had been found in the dam, including false teeth and an Elvis CD! Living in



beaver pools fish, ducks, kingfishers, herons and otters thrive. The dams hold water in drought, and stops flooding in winter, while providing good habitat for voles. Keeping 20 meters clear from the water's edge gives beavers a good space for their life but can make for conflict with farmers.

Protection of some trees is possible; in Berlin, they use non toxic sand paint. There are great viewing opportunities in Biesbosch National Park in the Netherlands, and there are some evening and dawn tours at Wallington, though they are often fully booked.

**Carollyn McDonald**

## Monthly Meeting – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025

### Mocha Mondo Coffee by Martin Homer

Mocha Mondo started in 2021 as an idea to sell coffee from the back of a coffee van in Martin's retirement. The van was replaced by a trailer at Alnmouth Station, which has changed hands four times since. They continued to sell Mocha Mondo coffee until this year when Martin's original trailer was closed.



In 2015 Mocha Mondo moved to one of the first pods at Amble Harbour, selling coffee and coffee beans roasted in the pod itself, this being the smallest coffee roastery and cafe in the UK! It took two weeks before anyone bought a packet of beans, but they now sell over £500 worth of beans every week. As demand exceeded roasting capacity, an industrial unit, and then a second, were rented on Amble industrial estate, and a factory coffee shop was opened to the public. A bigger capacity roaster was bought (they now have four) and a website was set up to sell the products.

The company now has a team of 10 people and supplies 24 varieties of roasted coffee beans and blends to local holiday companies for their welcome packs. They have a thriving mail order business at [www.mochamondo.co.uk](http://www.mochamondo.co.uk).

**Women Coffee Producers** - Martin told us about the rise of coffee businesses run by women. The coffee is generally grown in impoverished countries in male dominated societies. It started with the Internet and mobile phones which allowed like-minded women to talk to and learn from each other. The International Women's Coffee Association (IWCA) was set up and women went to events to share the coffee they had produced. Qualifications were established allowing the girls who worked in the coffee businesses to study and obtain an education. The coffee improved a lot, and the women gained confidence. One of the IWCA coffees Martin has sold is made by the Rwanda Women's Washing Station – not such a good name but they make a good coffee. It is very dark and strong, grown in good soils and is very popular.

Filberta Hernandez in Honduras took over the coffee business after her husband died. She produced only 8 sacks of coffee and Mocha Mondo bought 5 of them.

Queen Ketiara from Indonesia is designated 'queen' as more than 50% of the proceeds go to women. The owner has instigated an 'NVQ' equivalent certificate for women and girls to give them transferable skills in the workplace. A coffee with a hazelnut, milk chocolate flavour was entered into a competition by Martin and it won a silver award.

Currently, Mocha Mondo sell three IWCA coffees. Rwanda Fugi Ikiziri has flavours of rhubarb tart, raspberry, brown sugar and warm spices which Martin thinks is an exceptional coffee. Patriarchal societies like Rwanda bring stigma, isolation and depression for single mothers. Baho Coffee Company initiated a solidarity group for them and called it 'Ikiziri' because it means 'hope' in their language.

## Monthly Meeting – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025 (contd)

Baho supports the women with training in good agricultural practices, coffee cultivation, high quality processing, financial literacy, weaving, animal husbandry, health care and short-term loans for family needs, and helped build a source of clean drinking water in their community.



Zongolica, meaning 'women power' is from Brazil. 20 women led farms process the coffee and produce a dark syrupy coffee with a smoky liquorice flavour.

Madre Tierra (mother earth) are from Honduras. Their coffee has dark chocolate and tart blackcurrant flavours. This coffee is produced by a diverse community of women farmers like the original Filiberta Hernandez. Honduras has not fully recovered from the hurricanes, and the hard work and spirit of these women farmers is something to be celebrated.

**Four Coffee Processing methods.** When coffee is grown it is either red or yellow and looks similar to cherries.

Washed – processing involves removing the fleshy fruit and drying the seed which is the coffee bean. The cherries are put into water and sorted. Bad ones float; good ones sink. They are then tumbled down concrete channels after being put through a roller which removes the skin but doesn't crush the cherries. Next the fruit is dried, spread out and raked over on a huge surface area like a football field. Finally, the beans are packed in sacks for export.

Martin told us that the outer fruit is used to mulch the fields, but it is full of nutrients, with little or no caffeine and can be drunk as an infusion like tea.

Nature – This is best described as 'sundried'. Cherries are hand sorted and laid out on trestle tables or concrete and left for the sun to dry off the surrounding fruit. The outer parchment is milled off before packing into sacks. Washed have a lower sugar content with a distinct main flavour which can be enhanced during roasting.

Honey Process – nothing to do with honey! The outer flesh is roughly removed by milling but left with the slimy inner fruit (mucilage) on. It is dried in the sun and constantly raked until dry. Yellow honey is raked every hour, red honey is raked five times a day and Black honey is raked once a day.

Fermented or Anaerobic Processing - once you have coffee beans, you can further process them. This involves natural skin yeast, or yeasts that have purposely been introduced. Coffees used to develop this by themselves, for example, Old Brown Java and Monsooned Malabar. Nowadays, yeasts are introduced with the specific purpose of creating flavours in the cup. New methods speed up this process but with Monsooned Malabar it takes two years, and Old Brown Java takes six years.

Martin answered a variety of questions from the audience and invited people to pick up a free sample from his table.

**Mary Brazier**

## Remaining Monthly Meetings in 2025

**SEPTEMBER 18th** - RICHARD BOOTH - 'Hidden Coastal Gems of Northumberland'

A welcome return of Richard, one of our members, who will continue to share with us Northumberland's hidden geological gems.

**OCTOBER 16th** - AGM – to be followed by our **25th Anniversary Celebration** – where there will be nostalgia, nibbles, entertainment and drinkies.

**NOVEMBER 20th** - SALLY BREWIS - 'OOT-The Out of Town Museum'

Sally will talk about OOT, this National Lottery Heritage funded project, which celebrates the rural heritage of Coquetdale and has created a permanent record of a former way of life.

**DECEMBER 11th** - NICK LEWIS - 'The Errington Scandal'  
The welcome return of Nick who is the National Trust Collections and House Officer for Lindisfarne Castle. He will share with us the details of a past scandal which took place there.

## Beacon

Alnwick u3a now subscribes to Beacon, which is an online management system designed by u3as, for u3as. It is used by over 600 u3as, providing a secure, efficient and effective means of managing their day-to-day business functions. It will make the work of Committee members much easier, especially Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Groups Coordinator.

Beacon completely conforms with GDPR, and provides full daily overnight data backup.

In future, it will be possible to allow Group Leaders access to Group information including membership and email distribution.

**Trevor Robinson – Beacon Administrator**

## Tom's Tales

A German jumps into a river to save a dog from drowning.

'Are you a vet?' asks a passer by.

'Vet?' says the irate German, 'I'm absolutely soaking!'

**Tom Burroughs**

# History Group – Visit to Trinity House

The history group had an enjoyable trip to Trinity House in Newcastle, on the 3rd June. 21 of us met in Broad Chare just before 2pm and headed inside for our tour. We were split into two groups with a guide for each group. Newcastle Trinity House is one of several, with the main one, which now manages all English lighthouses being in London.



We learnt how, in the late 15th century, a group of seafarers had formed a guild to support mariners and their dependents. In 1505 plans were made for the building of a hall, a chapel and some lodgings on the current site. The organisation later built Almshouses for distressed seamen which continued to be used for this purpose until 1964. A school for the sons and apprentices of the Brethren was also built and opened in 1712.

Trinity House is run by a Brethren of mainly serving or retired mariners. They were given the first in a series of Royal Charters by King Henry VIII in 1536. The Charter authorised the Brethren to levy Pilotage, Primage and Buoyage dues on ships trading into the river Tyne. The Charter also gave them licence to build the High and Low lights at North Shields. Successive Royal Charters were received from Edward VI, Mary I, Elizabeth I, James I, Charles 1, Charles II and King James II.

## Visit to Trinity House – contd.

Trinity House was concerned with improving safety for ships entering the Tyne. This included the building of the Low Light and High Light 'leading' lighthouses at North Shields.

Ship's captains were able to line up the two lights in such a way as to ensure their vessel was in the safe channel as they sailed up the Tyne. The previous buildings were replaced in 1808-1810. You can still see both the old and the new Low Light and High Light at North Shields.



Another innovation was the training of Pilot Boat Captains who would be taken out to ships entering the river and put on board the vessel to help them safely navigate into the river. Newcastle Trinity House continues to examine, licence and administer Deep Sea Pilots.

It was interesting to see a piece of charred wood which had been blown across the river by the explosion during the great fire of Newcastle in 1858. Trinity House survived the fire due to being a stone built building. The History Group previously had an interesting talk about this fire from Barbara Wood. I was also interested to learn about the restoration of the chandelier in the banqueting Hall where old peanut butter jars have been re-purposed into the lamp shades being just the right shape for the job! I was especially pleased to see a selection of paintings by John Wilson Carmichael, who I gave a talk about at the Art Appreciation group. He has become a favourite artist of mine.

Overall, I think everyone enjoyed the visit and found something of interest in terms of the history, the building itself and its contents.

**Mary Brazier**

## Did you know?

The keen eyed amongst you may have spotted this flower as the one in the front-page backdrop photo.



Most of us either have Bloody Cranesbill growing in our gardens, as it's excellent ground cover, or have seen it growing wild along the dunes. But did you know that Bloody Cranesbill is the county flower of Northumberland?

**Shelley Willis**

# iPad/iPhone Tips & Tricks Workshop

**Tuesday, 30 September 2025**

**14:00-16:00 (with a refreshment break) – Small Hall**

This workshop aims to answer some questions you may have about using your Apple device/s. Do you use hand gestures as shortcuts or in frustration? How many times do you need to tap the screen to get the job done? Did you know that apps are interlinked?

There will be an opportunity throughout for you to ask questions but if you are shy about asking in front of others, please email me and I will try and fit your question in, after the refreshment break or, if time is lacking, I'll email you the answer after the session.

The workshop will be about having fun, learning new skills, understanding your device a little better and building your confidence.

To register for this workshop, please email me at:  
[sue.willoughby.u3a@gmail.com](mailto:sue.willoughby.u3a@gmail.com)

If you wish to bring your device, please make sure it is fully charged. You will not need to connect to the Internet in this session.

**Sue Willoughby**

# August Photos

## From Maureen and Alan Sayers



**Edinburgh Surgeons Hall Museum**



**Bratislava**

## August Photos – contd.



**Bratislava**



**Amsterdam**



**Linz**



**Bratislava**

## Renewal of Annual Subscription for 2025-26

It's that time of year again! The annual Alnwick u3a subscription for 2025-26 is due on 1<sup>st</sup> September, the start of our next financial year. Details are on the website at

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

There's a link to a downloadable Membership Form, but **please note that continuing Members do not need to complete this.**

In summary, the subscription for 2025/26 will be £27.00 . If you choose not to receive the National u3a Magazine, u3a Matters, the annual subscription will be reduced by £3.80 to £23.20.

If you are a member of the **North Northumberland Network (NNN)**, i.e. Berwick, Coquetdale and Wooler) the cost is half of our normal subscription minus the cost of the u3a Matters magazine, making the annual subscription £11.60.

**For those of you who are Members of any other u3as**, the Associate Member subscription is based on the normal fee, minus the Third Age Trust Annual Capitation Fee (currently £4 per member) and annual subscription to u3a Matters, making the cost £19.20.

**The best way to renew your membership is via BACS direct from your bank account**, and you can do this now; you needn't wait until September. The details are below: **please make sure you include your name in the transaction details:-**

<b>Sort Code</b>	<b>20-59-43</b>
<b>Account No.</b>	<b>00278882</b>

Cash or cheques, made out to "Alnwick u3a", can be paid to the Treasurer or the Membership Secretary at our monthly meeting.

# On This Day – 6<sup>th</sup> August

(This date is when the newsletter was published, although some of you may be reading it a little later)

## 80 YEARS AGO TODAY

By August 6<sup>th</sup> 1945, cities in Japan had been bombed and burned out by the Allies. Hiroshima feared it was their turn when they heard a plane overhead.



**Hiroshima Ground Zero Memorial**

This time it was just one plane with one bomb that obliterated the whole city. A few days later a second bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

After the Germans had surrendered on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1945, the Allies asked Japan for an unconditional surrender.

They were warned that if they did not surrender, there would be 'prompt and utter destruction'.

The Japanese ignored the call, so city after city were destroyed with a barrage of bombs. Invasion was thought impossible as the fierce Japanese would have put up a prolonged and bloody fight.

When two atomic bombs were ready, targets were decided. Tokyo had been bombed out. Kyoto had been at the top of the list but Henry Stimson, the American War Secretary, who had visited the ancient capital with all its shrines and temples, argued against this.

Kokura and Niigata were also considered but Nagasaki was chosen for the second bomb as it had, among other targets, large shipyards.

There was also a suggestion of a demonstration in an unpopulated area, but this was quickly dismissed. Eventually the decision went to Hiroshima as it was untouched.

This was not just a new weapon; Henry Stimson said it was 'a revolutionary change in the relations of man to the universe'.

The use of atomic weapons on civilian populations has been the subject of intense debate ever since.

**Anne McMillan**

# Interest Group News

We currently have 29 interest groups – a couple have wound down recently, but we have news below about a current group, a new one and one returning after a break.

**PHILOSOPHY GROUP** - See the next page for updated information about the Philosophy Group

## LUNCH GROUP

Another enjoyable outing, at The Horseshoes Inn, Rennington, on 31st July.



## FRENCH DISCUSSION GROUP

Do you speak French?

If so, this new group give you the opportunity to practice by just chatting together in a relaxed atmosphere and on a variety of topics to be decided by the group.

You can contact the Group Leader, Dean Kosmin, at [d020456@aol.com](mailto:d020456@aol.com)



# Alnwick Philosophers

Our philosophy group is small, friendly and perfectly formed. We have thoughtful and lively discussions looking at different philosophies and ideas as they relate to our lives and the world nowadays. Meetings range from serious to fun and because everyone in the group contributes, this makes for very enjoyable, thought-provoking meetings in individuals' homes.

We take our information for discussion from a variety of sources for philosophical principles and ideas, including books, articles, our own experiences as well as internet sources. In other words, the meetings are all about what people bring to the course – there are no right or wrong answers. Many of the questions and discussions are not about ancient ideas and history but are topical and relevant for nowadays. In the past the group has discussed issues such as

- The 4 Freedoms outlined in 1941 and the basis for the UN a few years later: Freedom of Speech; Freedom of Worship; Freedom from Want; Freedom from Fear.
- The differences and similarities between Altruism and Philanthropy.
- Liberty – how, what, when and where it applies and doesn't apply
- The Philosophy of Art – this included Reith Lectures by Grayson Perry

## Alnwick Philosophers contd.

All discussions are within the context of philosophies and philosophers. For our next few meetings, we have decided on the programme. We shall start by looking at three of the Ancient philosophers and asking what their beliefs and philosophies were and how relevant (or not) they are today.

September - Socrates.

October - Aristotle

November - Plato

January onwards - To be agreed by the group.

One of the key sources we plan to use is from U3A Philosophy 'head office'. One of the recommended sites is 'History of Philosophy (Without any Gaps)' from King College, London.

This website offers the opportunity to look at philosophies from around the world. -

<https://historyofphilosophy.net/>

If you want to join us, please contact **Anne Larvin (Group Leader)** through the U3A website Philosophy link on the Groups page.

## More August Photos From Shelley Willis

As we are now well into summer, I thought this Newsletter should be what the magazines used to call a “Bumper Bundle Edition”. So here are some photos Shelley took at Cresswell Walled Garden.

**Trevor Robinson, Newsletter Editor**



## More August Photos – contd.



# Visit to the Macular Society

On the 30<sup>th</sup> June, Carollyn McDonald and I visited the local meeting of the Macular Society, at the Lindisfarne Centre in Alnwick.

Nearly 1.5m people in the UK have macular disease, including some of our members. It affects people of all ages, but age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the most common condition, generally affecting people over the age of 55. AMD is the biggest cause of sight loss in the UK, affecting more than 700,000 people. The Society supports people suffering from this condition, and funds research into its causes and treatment.

I have been looking at the Macular Society website to get ideas about improving our communications with those members with eyesight issues, especially the Newsletter and the Website. I hope to say more about this in the next Newsletter.

**Trevor Robinson**  
**Newsletter Editor**

# A Request from Coquetdale u3a

Coquetdale u3a's Railways and Modelling Group is flagging a little (with only 3 members) and may have to fold when the current convenor moves from the area. We wondered if any of Alnwick u3a members have an interest in model railways and if so, would they like to join our group for some ad hoc get-togethers?

They all have their own layouts at home, so they get together occasionally to look at what they've been working on, and they've visited various model railway exhibitions in the past as well as the Tanfield heritage railway. One of the members has made a model bus station.



If anyone is interested, get in touch with me and then I can make the introductions.

Vivienne Fleet

Chair Coquetdale u3a

[fleet\\_vivienne@hotmail.com](mailto:fleet_vivienne@hotmail.com)

## Quiz – from Shelley Willis

### Connecting Word

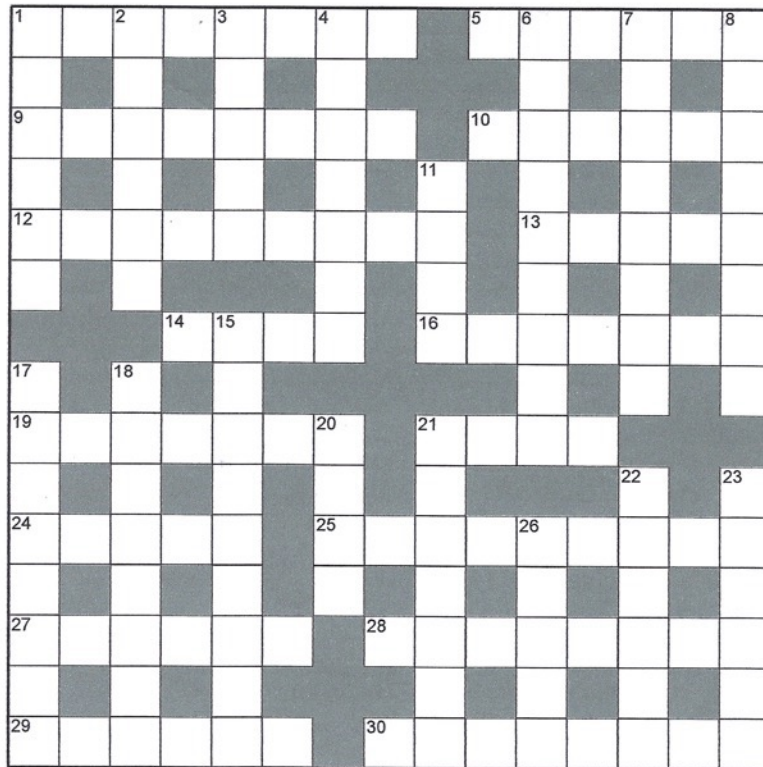
Find the connecting word that finishes the first word and starts the second word.

Example: Pole ..... Wars The connecting word is Star  
( Pole Star & Star Wars )

1	Fool's	.....	Leaf
2	Jelly	.....	Shower
3	Fun	.....	Enough
4	Love	.....	Egg
5	Over	.....	Lively
6	Rubber	.....	Pond
7	Sailor	.....	Case
8	Square	.....	Ticket
9	Any	.....	Guard
10	Pop	.....	Flakes
11	Cheque	.....	Worm
12	Spear	.....	Sauce
13	Green	.....	Dance
14	Roast	.....	Eater
15	Fishing	.....	Ball

16	Old	.....	Stuffing
17	Cat	.....	Bug
18	Dark	.....	Play
19	Time	.....	Machine
20	Watch	.....	Block
21	Caustic	.....	Bread
22	Yule	.....	Jam
23	Stone's	.....	Away
24	Mexico	.....	Hall
25	Broad	.....	Robbery
26	Search	.....	Officer
27	Double	.....	Cracker
28	Rose	.....	Bath
29	Brandy	.....	Fly
30	Deep	.....	Frame

# Crossword – courtesy of Alan Sayers



## ACROSS

- 1 Aspect I'm unsure of when selecting a base for pitching the tents (8)
- 5 Some RAF personnel are spoilt rotten (6)
- 9 Queen Victoria was reportedly unhappy about something (8)
- 10 Passed over the cards (6)
- 12 Files for a short legal action are kept here (9)
- 13 Innocent enough to think I could enter the main part of the church (5)
- 14 Cast aside deeds (4)
- 16 Use this for a three-pronged attack (7)
- 19 Still waters (7)
- 21 Stimulates the memory with a little exercise (4)
- 24 A role that stands out from the others (5)
- 25 Somewhere to stop in Alaska (9)
- 27 Pressed for a smarter look (6)
- 28 Steamroller is needed to even things out (8)
- 29 Resist change with a sibling (6)
- 30 Overwhelming disturbances caused by earthquakes (8)

## DOWN

- 1 A paltry wage for one who works in a biscuit factory (6)
- 2 Intend, that is, to be an ungenerous person (6)
- 3 You may not necessarily be unhappy if this gets up your nose (5)
- 4 Parents are upset at what's in the surgeon's toolbox (7)
- 6 Little devil summing up what's around the corner (9)
- 7 Grandfather clock (3,5)
- 8 Has doubts about those thought to be guilty (8)
- 11 Stooped down to pick up the grass (4)
- 15 Drinks dispenser with internal piston (9)
- 17 Honey farms (8)
- 18 Figures of eight (8)
- 20 Partially burn the fish (4)
- 21 John set out to make outer garments (7)
- 22 Where globetrotters call home (6)
- 23 Did he invent the wheel? (6)
- 26 Canoe breaking up in the water (5)

# Odds and Ends

I haven't kept up the subscription to my Scrabble Club.

Now they're sending threatening letters.

I remember some very happy times in my childhood when my Dad would roll me down the hill in a tyre.

Those were Goodyears.

I tried U2's new search engine, but it's terrible. I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

I was working in a glue factory when I first met my wife. We bonded immediately.

Peruvian owls hunt in pairs, because they're Inca hoots.

Apparently, one in five people in the world are Chinese. There are five people in my family, so one of us must be Chinese. It's not me so it must be mum, dad, brother Colin, or brother Ho-Chan-Chu. But I think it's Colin.

I wouldn't say my next-door neighbour is a creep.

But he's just had a new drive laid with two tons of gravel.

I've finally worked out why the French eat snails. They don't enjoy fast food very much.

My cat lost his tail in an awful accident. Took me ages to get him a new one, but I finally found one at a retail store.

## Quiz Answers

1	Gold
2	Baby
3	Fair
4	Nest
5	Look
6	Duck
7	Suit
8	Meal
9	Body
10	Corn

11	Book
12	Mint
13	Tea
14	Beef
15	Net
16	Chestnut
17	Litter
18	Horse
19	Slot
20	Tower

21	Soda
22	Log
23	Throw
24	City
25	Daylight
26	Warrant
27	Cheese
28	Bed
29	Butter
30	Freeze

## Crossword Answers

**ACROSS** - 1 Campsite. 5 Pilots. 9 Unamused. 10 Spades. 12 Briefcase. 13 Naive. 14 Acts. 16 Trident. 19 Pacific. 21 Jogs. 24 Apart. 25 Anchorage. 27 Ironed. 28 Leveller. 29 Sister. 30 Tsunamis.

**DOWN** - 1 Crumbs. 2 Meanie. 3 Snuff. 4 Trepan. 6 Impending. 7 Old Timer. 8 Suspects. 11 Bent. 15 Cafetiere. 17 Apiaries. 18 Octagons. 20 Char. 21 Jackets. 22 Harlem. 23 Ferris. 26 Ocean.

### *End Piece - Summer Time*

*This is the season of eloquence.  
It is a time of indulgence  
when there is a profusion of fruit and flowers  
and fields of grain are dense.  
The air is heavy with the scent of lavender.  
A season of indulgent eloquence.*

*Mary Atkinson*