



Members Newsletter December 2025

A Message from the Chair

Dear Alnwick u3a

It truly is winter now, and we had a hard, wet and cold November already. I have started to visit other groups that I am not a member of - something I urge us all to try in 2026. You might even be tempted to get involved in more of the stimulating and friendly groups that our hard-working Group Leaders put together for us. Just get in touch with the Group Leader to check all is well before you turn up. Thank you to the leaders who welcomed me so far, you are amazing.

Wishing you peace at Christmas.

Take care. Carollyn

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Monthly Meeting – 11th December 2025



As you will probably know, we had to cancel last month's meeting on 20th November because of the weather, which I know has been a disappointment. It sounded like it would have been a brilliant talk, but it was the right decision.

We were going to ask attendees to put their name down for the **Alnwick u3a Christmas Meeting on Thursday 11 December 2pm at St Michael's Church Hall**. However, I did ask this in my email about the cancellation.

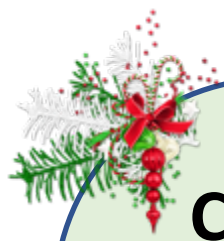
As usual, the meeting presentation will be followed by our **Christmas Social. Details are on the next page.**

Can you please email me if you expect to attend, and also, if you are willing to volunteer on the day either before or after the meeting. Or both!! Some of you have already told me if you are coming or volunteering, so you don't need to do this again.

I do hope you are able to attend.

Pat Ashton, Membership Secretary

membership.alnwick.u3a@gmail.com



Christmas Social – 11th December

The December monthly meeting will see the welcome return of Nick Lewis, who is the National Trust Collections and House Officer for Lindisfarne Castle. This time, he will share with us the details of a past scandal which took place there.

We will then get Christmassy, eat things, drink mulled wine or other seasonal beverages, and maybe listen to appropriate music. Seasonal hats and jumpers will be welcome, if not obligatory!

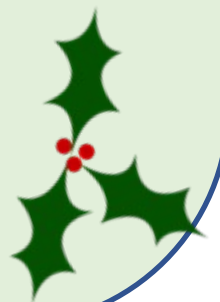
Just a reminder – this will be on the **second Thursday** of the month, not the usual third Thursday.

As I have already said on the previous page, please let me know (if you haven't already) if you would like to attend the Christmas Social and if you have any particular dietary requirements such as vegan, vegetarian or gluten-free. Also, whether you would be able to help out on the day.

Pat Ashton

Membership Secretary

membership.alnwick.u3a@gmail.com



Monthly Meetings in 2026

JANUARY 15th 'Labyrinths' - Carollyn McDonald, our current Chair, will give us a brief look at the history of labyrinths, and a space to use a finger labyrinth for a short time of reflection.

FEBRUARY 19th 'Telling Tales out of School' - The return of Chris Tipple who will take a light-hearted look at life in Northumberland schools in the 19th century.

MARCH 19th 'Himalayan Adventure' - Rob Simpson makes a welcome return with an interesting talk about his trip to India which included travelling in the Markha Valley, being involved with a monastery project and a high-altitude mountain rescue.

APRIL 16th 'Empathy Architecture: Why our Built and Natural Heritage Matters' - Tim Wickens from the Northumberland and Newcastle Society will give a presentation about the society's work to preserve the heritage, culture and landscape of the city and county, so that generations to come can appreciate their beauty and find new uses for them.

MAY 21st 'Good Day Sunshine: The Beatles in Florida'

Brian Ward from Northumbria University returns to give another of his interesting presentations. This one is based on his next book 'The Beatles and the South' which is to be published in 2026.

JUNE 18th 'A Royal Medieval Travelogue'

Aidan Harrison uses the manuscript of John Yonge, Somerset Herald, to describe the events of the 20-day journey of Princess Margaret Tudor from Kent to Berwickshire in 1503. Yonge accompanied Margaret who, at the tender age of thirteen, was on her way to Edinburgh to be married to James IV, King of Scots.



Monthly Events in 2026 (contd)

JULY 16th *'The Story of the Bathing House'* - Jen Teulon will talk about the history of the Bathing House at Howick and the various people who have lived there over the years.

SEPTEMBER 17th *'Molars, Mountains and Monkeys'* Andrew Buddle, local dentist and Associate Clinical Lecturer at Newcastle University, will give a presentation about leading a multidisciplinary team to the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka in Summer 2024.

OCTOBER 15th (AGM first) *'A marine animal on the beach - what should you do?'* - Lorna Llewellyn, a volunteer with the British Divers Marine Life Rescue, will enlighten us with her presentation.

NOVEMBER 19th *'The buildings of David Stephenson'* - Richard Pears, Durham University Librarian, makes a welcome return to introduce us this time to David Stephenson, an 18/19th century architect from the Northeast.

DECEMBER 10th *'Daring to make a comeback'* - Martin Shingler, writer, editor and film historian, making a welcome return with a presentation which will explore the reasons why some ageing film stars have risked reputational damage by making a cinematic comeback after a significant period of absence. He considers how several stars fared when taking that risk.



First Aid Training

Many of our members have expressed an interest in receiving some First Aid training. This would be especially useful for the Walking Groups, for obvious reasons, but it is always good to know something about cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), for example.

Ian Chisholm from St John Ambulance will be at a special meeting in St Michael's Church Hall at 2pm on Thursday 29th January 2026 (5th Thursday of the month), to offer us some first aid demonstrations.

Anyone who would like to attend this special event should contact me at

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

Trevor Robinson
Treasurer



Committee Members 2025/26

Your Committee members are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting. The current Committee members, listed below, were elected at the AGM held on 16th October 2025. Huge thanks are due to Kathy Platt, who has stood down from the Committee after serving for 12 years.

Roles were agreed at the Committee meeting on 3rd November 2025, as shown below. Committee members can be contacted via www.alnwick.u3asite.uk/contact

Chair

Carollyn McDonald

Also Safeguarding Officer

Vice Chair

Shelley Willis

Also Assistant Newsletter Editor

Business Secretary

Cathy Robinson

Membership Secretary

Pat Ashton

Treasurer

Trevor Robinson

Manages our Web and Beacon sites, and is also Newsletter Editor

Groups Coordinator

Anne McMillan

Minutes Secretary

Mary Brazier

Also Assistant Webmaster and manages our Facebook group

Committee Member

Sue Willoughby

Helps with various IT matters




Problems with Receiving Emails?

We have identified some email problems in the new Beacon system we are using to improve our financial management and how we contact our members.

Some of our members have not been receiving emails that have been sent out through Beacon, so we have identified ways to resolve this. If your email address ends in @gmail.com or @gmail.co.uk, your missing u3a emails might be going into Gmail's "**Updates**" folder instead of your main Inbox.

In Gmail you may see a category called **Updates** (sometimes with a number next to it). That number shows how many unread emails are in that category. Your 'missing' u3a emails may be there. To check, simply click **Updates** in the list on the left side of your Gmail screen (on your computer, not phone).

If you prefer everything to go straight into your Inbox, you can turn off the Updates category:

1. Open Gmail.
2. Click the **Settings** icon (the small gear).
3. Click **See all settings**.
4. At the top, select **Inbox**.
5. You will see several categories with  tick boxes. Find **Updates** and **remove the tick**.
6. Go back to your Inbox using the menu on the left.

Once you've done this, emails that used to go into Updates will now arrive directly in your Inbox.

For BT Internet users, see the next page.

Problems with Emails? (contd)

Resolving problems if you are using BT internet:

1. Sign in to BT Mail: Log in to your BT Mail account using a web browser on a computer.
2. Go to Settings: Click on your email address in the top right corner and select Settings from the drop-down menu.
3. Navigate to Safe Senders: In the left-hand menu, click on Mail, then click on Safe Senders.
4. Add the email address: Click the Add button. Enter the full email address in the provided field.
5. Save your changes: Click the Save button to add the address to your safe list.

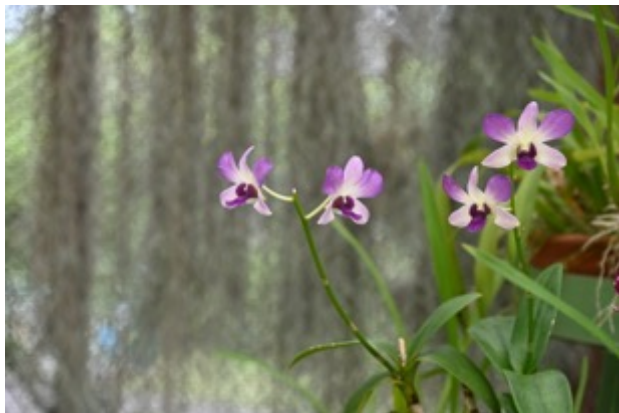
Sue Willoughby





December Photos by Trevor Robinson

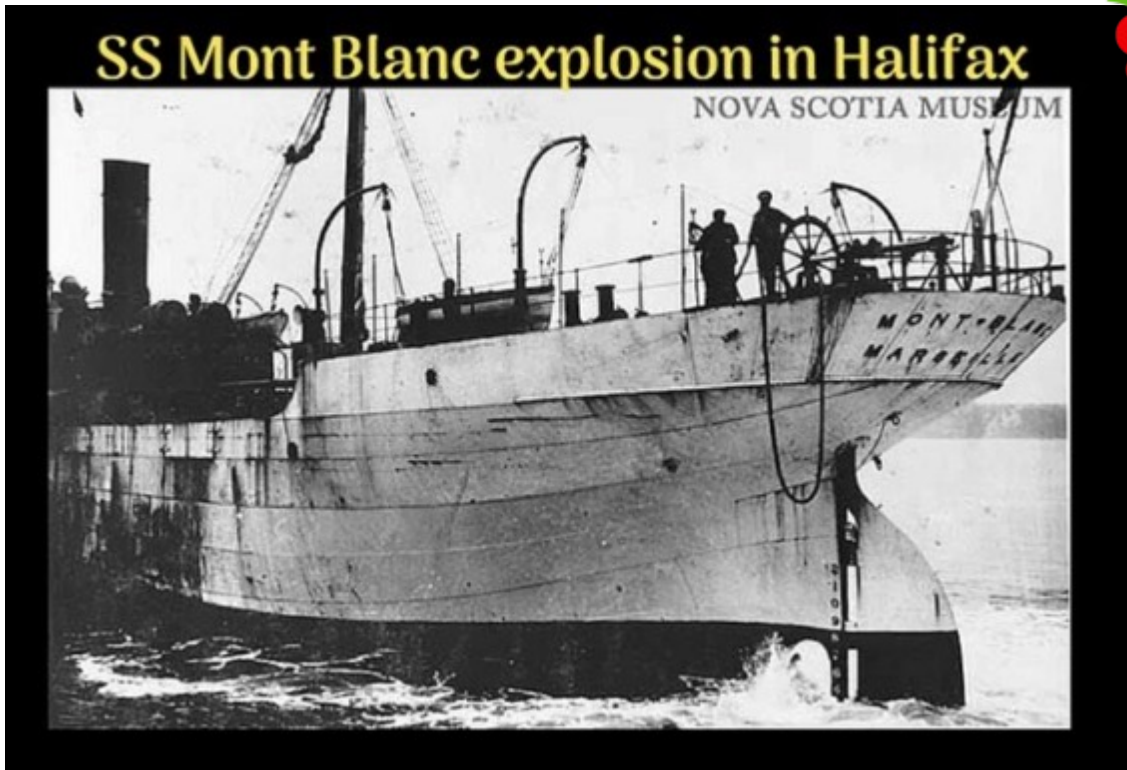
Orchids in the Sri Lanka Royal Botanical Gardens



December Photos Contd.



On This Day – 6th December 1917



On this day In 1917, nearly every ship crossing the Atlantic had to call into Halifax, Canada and it was a very busy day. At 7.30am the anti-submarine nets were lifted and the traffic could commence.

The Norwegian ship *Imo* was in a hurry and she entered the Narrows leading into Halifax well above the speed limit, swerving in and out trying to avoid other ships.

The French ship *Mont-Blanc* was laden with high explosives and highly inflammable fuel and heading for the Western Front.

On This Day – 6th December 1917 (contd)

She was only travelling at 1 knot when she noticed the Imo on collision course. Both ships cut their engines trying to avoid each other but they collided.

The barrels were punctured and sparks ignited the fuel and the fire spread. At 9.05am the fire set off the explosives.

The shock wave was felt 100 miles away, and deck gun was shot 3.5 miles in the air. A tsunami smashed the quayside and fires were started across Halifax.

Nearly 2,000 people were killed, 9,000 injured and every building for 1.5 miles was flattened or badly damaged. It was the largest man-made explosion before the nuclear age and, until Hiroshima, it was the standard by which blasts were measured.

Information taken from On This Day In History - Dan Snow.

There is a great deal of detailed information of the collision online.



Christmas Poem

“Mum’s Christmas Dinner . . . to Die For”



by Alan Sayers, aged 8¹/₂

- 1 Mum, bless her, is not the best of cooks.
Not for her Delia’s recipe books.
Our Christmas dinner won’t be of good cheer,
It’ll just be as dire as the one last year.
- 2 It’s going to be awful, I have no doubts,
Especially those over-cooked Brussels sprouts.
The gravy’s lumpy, as well as the mash,
Well, it was never going to be anything flash.
- 3 The turkey’s tough so it’s a relief
To know that Grandma’s brought her teeth.
Last year she lost them and got in a tizz
So Grandad let her borrow his.
- 4 For the Christmas pud, Mum thought it dandy
If Grandad put a match to the brandy.
Hard of hearing, he makes a BIG mistake.
He’s only gone and set fire to the Christmas cake.
- 5 Mouthful of Christmas pudding so dense,
I choke on an IOU instead of sixpence.
The custard comes in one almighty lump.
“Has anyone here got a stomach pump?”
- 6 For that last remark I get a clout off Dad.
He says I shouldn’t be such an ungrateful lad.
But why can’t he get it into his head,
I’d rather have Coco Pops for dinner instead.
- 7 Mum always struggles with light, fluffy pastry
So it’s no surprise her mince pies aren’t tasty.
If you ask me they really shouldn’t be eaten,
They’re enough to scare the life out of Mrs Beeton.
- 8 Now I’m stuffed and never been fuller,
I swear I’m turning a funny colour.
My stomach groans, I’ve got a pain,
Hope I don’t see my dinner again.
- 9 Meal over, it’s time to rest the belly,
Feet up, relax and watch the telly.
The King’s on at 3 . . . now that will be glum,
“Can I go outside and play football, Mum?”
- 10 “No,” she replies. “Show Grandma your toys,
But try not to make too much noise
’Cos Grandad’s heading for the land of nod,
He’ll soon be asleep, the dozy old . . . gentleman.”
- 11 But first he switches off his hearing-aid.
Wish he wouldn’t do that ‘cos I’m afraid
He passes wind at a pace that is steady,
Must be the sprouts working already.
- 12 I hope next year’s dinner won’t be so glum
’Cos I’m inviting you all, please do come.
I know the turkey couldn’t be tougher
And just like me you’ll probably suffer.
- 13 So bring with you a bottle, something to drink.
Wine, beer or Gaviscon . . . whatever you think!
The choice for me though couldn’t be easier,
I’ll be having a pint of milk of magnesia.
- 14 This Christmas poem goes from bad to worse
So I promise I’ll make this the final verse.
I’m sorry if it failed to make you laugh,
But what do you expect . . . I’m only 8 and a half !!

CHRISmas Quiz

All questions to do with (or sounds like) Chris



- 1 Which TV game show did Chris Evans present in 1994/95 ?
- 2 What was the CB call handle/name of the character played by Kris Kristofferson in the 1978 film "Convoy" ?
- 3 What was the name of the character played by Christopher Biggins in the TV series "Porridge" ?
- 4 How many Olympic gold medals has cyclist Sir Chris Hoy won ?
- 5 In the 1970s childrens cartoon TV series "Crystal Tipps and Alistair" what colour was Crystal's hair ?
- 6 Which superhero did Christopher Reeve play in several films during 1978-1987 ?
- 7 Which character did Chris Ellison play in the TV series "The Bill" between 1984-2000 ?
- 8 When was the Crystal Palace glasshouse built in Hyde Park ?
- 9 Female comedian Crissy Rock plays manageress Janey York in which British sitcom ?
- 10 In the 1994 film "Miracle on 34th Street" who played the character Kris Kringle ?

CHRISTmas Quiz (contd)



- 11 Where did Agatha Christie's amateur detective Miss Marple live ?
- 12 Who was Christopher Dean's professional partner ?
- 13 In which year did BBC Breakfast sport correspondent Chris Hollins win "Strictly Come Dancing" ?
- 14 What character did Christopher Plummer play in the 1965 film "The Sound of Music" ?
- 15 In which year was the world leading auction house Christie's founded ?
- 16 What are Chris Lowe and Neill Tennant jointly known as?
- 17 Which character has Christopher Chittell played in TV soap "Emmerdale" for nearly 40 years ?
- 18 Actor Christopher Lee played the character Scaramanga in which James Bond film ?
- 19 Which year did Crystal Gayle have a hit with the song "Don't it make my brown eyes blue" ?
- 20 The English town of Christchurch is located in which county ?
- 21 Kristie Allsopp and Phil Spencer present which popular reality TV programme ?
- 22 What year was Italian explorer Christopher Columbus's initial voyage ?
- 23 Christina Aguilera recorded the theme song "Reflection" for which 1998 Disney animated movie ?
- 24 In which 1970s British sitcom did Paula Wilcox play the character Chrissy Plummer ?

CHRISTMAS 1975 - 50 YEARS AGO - Anne McMillan



Here is the top 10 UK singles chart for December 21, 1975:

"Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen

"I Believe in Father Christmas" by Greg Lake

"The Trail of the Lonesome Pine" by Laurel & Hardy With The Avalon Boys featuring Chill Wills

"Let's Twist Again / The Twist" by Chubby Checker

"Happy to Be on an Island in the Sun" by Demis Roussos

"Sailing" by Rod Stewart

"Can't Give You Anything (But My Love)" by The Stylistics

"Bye Bye Baby" by The Bay City Rollers

"Whispering Grass" by Windsor Davies and Don Estelle

"Stand by Your Man" by Tammy Wynette



Odds and Ends



My landlord said my heating bill is too high, and he needs to see me. I told him he can come round any time. My door is always open.

I decided to sell my house and live in a shipping container. Saving loads of money, but at the moment I'm just off the Cape of Good Hope.

I found an old shoe repair ticket in Grandad's coat. I went to collect, and the bloke said "It'll be ready next Thursday."

I recently got rid of my small yacht but kept my very nice racing car. It had to be one or the other; I haven't got *that* much Lego...

Yesterday, I spotted an albino Dalmatian. It was the least I could do for him.

I don't understand the features on these new cars. I went into reverse, and it played a video of some guy getting run over.

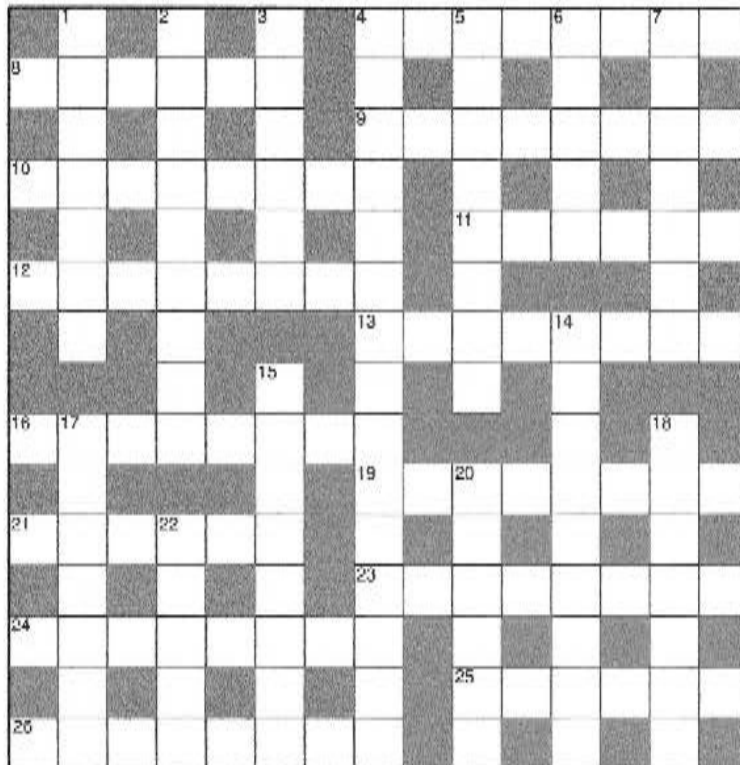
I told my friend "there's only one thing that scares me on Halloween." "Which is?" he asked. "Precisely" I replied.

I can make a sandwich with both hands tied behind my back. Incredible feat.





Crossword – courtesy of Alan Sayers



ACROSS

- 4 The sort of miles one does on a ship (8)
- 8 Colourful hairband! (6)
- 9 Kids who have just found their feet (8)
- 10 Newlyweds get caught in a shower (8)
- 11 A little you gain only in your first year (6)
- 12 We used to go miles for this treat (8)
- 13 I've heard that Anna registers with a research team (8)
- 16 Young 12-month-old fish (8)
- 19 Having a natural rack for headgear (8)
- 21 Lines up a wrong signal (6)
- 23 Squire who serves behind the bar (8)
- 24 Using the imagination when applying for this sort of work (8)
- 25 Price paid for the release of Romans (6)
- 26 Folk agree that it's all relating to the mind (8)

DOWN

- 1 Imperial seat (7)
- 2 Royal servant who likes his traditional Sunday dinner (9)
- 3 Funny drawing (6)
- 4 Go to the pictures at Trafalgar Square (8,7)
- 5 Having started using the pedestrian tunnel (8)
- 6 Home where you'll not get a warm reception (5)
- 7 Raise a song first, then get to hospital via the quickest method (7)
- 14 Hitting the high notes (9)
- 15 Greedy folk will eat the leftovers (8)
- 17 Expand a general confusion (7)
- 18 Somehow boredom sets in when in the boudoir (7)
- 20 Strange unrest amongst the piano specialists (6)
- 22 A surgical procedure that's hard work (5)



Quiz Answers

No.	Answer	No.	Answer
1	Don't forget your toothbrush	13	2009
2	Rubber Duck	14	Captain Georg von Trapp
3	Lukewarm	15	1766
4	6	16	Pet Shop Boys
5	Purple	17	Eric Pollard
6	Superman	18	The man with the golden gun
7	DCI Frank Burnside	19	1977
8	1851	20	Dorset
9	Benidorm	21	Location, location, location
10	Richard Attenborough	22	1492
11	St. Mary Mead	23	Mulan
12	Jayne Torvill	24	Man about the house

Crossword Answers

ACROSS - 4 Nautical. 8 Streak. 9 Toddlers. 10 Confetti. 11 Rookie. 12 Marathon. 13 Analysts. 16 Yearling. 19 Antlered. 21 Aligns. 23 Landlord. 24 Creative. 25 Ransom. 26 Mentally.

DOWN - 1 Ottoman. 2 Beefeater. 3 Sketch. 4 National Gallery. 5 Underway. 6 Igloo. 7 Airlift. 14 Yodelling. 15 Pigswill. 17 Enlarge. 18 Bedroom. 20 Tuners. 22 Graft.

End Piece

*The trees have shed their leaves.
Autumn's rust gives way to seasonal gusts.
The year is old and it is cold.
The days are long and it is dark
as winter makes its mark.*

Mary Atkinson

