



Members Newsletter February 2026

A Message from the Chair

Happy New Year, if I have not already seen you at a group or monthly meeting. After an icy start to the year, we can reflect on how our two parties shaped 2025; our 25th anniversary, and our Christmas Social. I'm excited to see what 2026 has in store for us. New members? New groups? New Helpers to make your u3a run smoothly and provide a place for learning, laughter and the best life? Please let us know if you have ideas to share.

Carollyn

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December Monthly Meeting

The Errington Affair by Nick Lewis

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Nick started by giving some background about Lindisfarne castle. The Errington affair was set against a backdrop of the Jacobite revolution in Scotland and changes in England between Catholic and Protestant monarchs. In 1688/9 the Roman Catholic King James II fled to exile in France. His daughter Mary and her husband William ascended the throne, but they were

Protestant. The Earl of Mar had taken control of much of Scotland and a rebellion in Northumberland proclaimed the son of James's son as King James III.

On 10th October 1715, Lancelot Errington (a smuggler and gun runner) and his nephew Mark moored their ship, The Mary, in the harbour. He gained access to the castle as he knew the master gunner, Samuel Phillipson. The Erringtons were allowed to wander around looking for a lost key.

Phillipson was in the magazine, a separate building where he lived above the gunpowder store. Errington found Phillipson and pointed his pistol at him proclaiming 'The castle is mine own – make no resistance'!

December Monthly Meeting – contd

Phillipson was taken at gunpoint to the upper battery where the two men grappled and fell to the ground. Eventually, Phillipson was overpowered and ejected from the castle, and the Erringtons ran up a Jacobite flag and fired three cannons as a signal to the mainland and out to sea where French privateers were thought to be.

Phillipson and his corporals tried to parley with the Erringtons but were fired at and a threat to destroy the whole village was made. Phillipson sent a man to Berwick to alert the troops there. The rebels held the castle overnight waiting for help to arrive, but none came. Soon the soldiers and volunteers arrived from Berwick, 70 men in total. They saw the Erringtons, running towards The Mary; they were shot at, injured and captured by the soldiers, taken to Berwick and locked in the prison there. However, there was a conspiracy in Berwick to free the men and they were able to escape by boat, fleeing to France.

Back on Holy Island there was some discussion between the castle and the customs men about who should get the cargo of Brandy from The Mary. The Customs men won! The ship itself was disposed of after the cargo had all been removed.

In 1717, Errington was given a pardon, and he appears to have ended up running The Salutation Inn in Newcastle.

Christmas Social – just a few photos



We managed to get everyone into the hall; at one point we had a wait list, but we had some late cancellations so that problem was solved.

However, we also had some no-shows, without any notice.

In future, it would be appreciated if members who have put their name down for an event let us know if they are then unable to attend.

It increases the chance that someone on a wait list would be able to attend an event.

January Monthly Meeting

Labyrinths by Carollyn McDonald

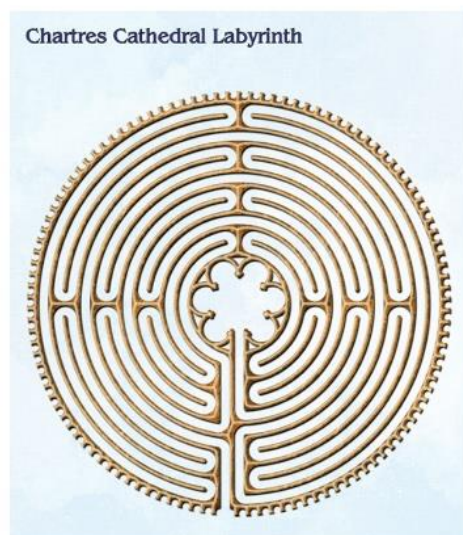
Carollyn started by distinguishing between labyrinths and mazes. Labyrinths are not mazes! She told us 'You can get lost in a maze, but you can find yourself in a labyrinth.'

With one way in and one way out (usually the same way) a labyrinth doesn't stretch a person in terms of choices, but is wandering this way and that until the centre is reached a metaphor for life? Labyrinths have been found up to 4000 years old, all around the world, yet no one knows where they originated.



This is the Hollywood Labyrinth Stone dating from the Mediaeval period, on the road leading to the monastery at Glendalough, founded by St Kevin in the mid 6th century CE.

Labyrinths from the Medieval period post 1066 are usually divide up into four quadrants. Sacred geometry was seen as essential in the construction of these labyrinths, many found on the floors of European churches and cathedrals like Rheims and Chartres.



January Monthly Meeting (contd.)

They became popular as garden designs in 17th century Holland, arriving in England with William and Mary - a sacred Catholic icon retained by Protestants, in a secular setting.



Labyrinths can be found in many retreat centres, parks, cathedrals and even gardens; a Google search will

give you a UK list. Traditionally shaped or modern, made of stone, bricks, wood, or canvas, or temporary such as mown grass, sand, or sawdust, the path brings soul to sole.

For those of us not so nimble, a finger labyrinth is useful. Followed with a finger, a pencil or pointer, on a labyrinth made of stitched material, paper or 3D printed gives time and space to reflect, meditate or just breathe. Research has shown that using labyrinths assists people who are recovering from operations, trauma, abuse or stress, as part of a holistic approach.

In the presentation we spent a few minutes using finger labyrinths, to music, and some people took one home to try again.

First Aid Event – 29th January 2026

Ian Chisholm, from St John's Ambulance, gave some excellent demonstrations of first aid topics, to a receptive audience of 22 u3a members. Here are some photos of what he showed us.



CPR on an adult



Working on a baby



Mouth to mouth resuscitation 7

First Aid Event – 29th January 2026 (contd.)



Using a defibrillator



Listening for breathing



Putting Trevor Robinson into the recovery position

Monthly Meetings in 2026

There have been a few changes –current programme is shown below:

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 ‘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.

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

MAY 21st ‘Good Day Sunshine: The Beatles in Florida’ Brian Ward from Northumbria University returns to give another of his interesting presentations.

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.

Monthly Meetings 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 *'We are what we eat: how our food intake expresses our affiliations and life journey'* - Lynn Harbottle, dietitian and medical social anthropologist, will give a presentation which reflects on her own food influences to illustrate the meanings and significance we assign to food and eating.

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 to explore the reasons why some ageing film stars have risked reputational damage by making a comeback after a significant period of absence.

Specialist u3a zoom talks

Many u3a members are unaware that u3a nationally offers many online learning events. You can find out more at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events#ONLINE-EVENTS>



News Updates

We have got a new feature on the Welcome Page of the Website:- **Latest Notices**. It highlights upcoming monthly meetings, or late notice of a cancellation due to poor weather, for example.

We also announce that the French Conversation Group has unfortunately had to close, due to lack of interest.

February Photos – Animals in Sri Lanka

By Trevor Robinson



Water Buffalo



Monkeys



Crocodile



Elephants



Mongoose



Deer

February Photos – Animals (contd)



Chital



Dugong



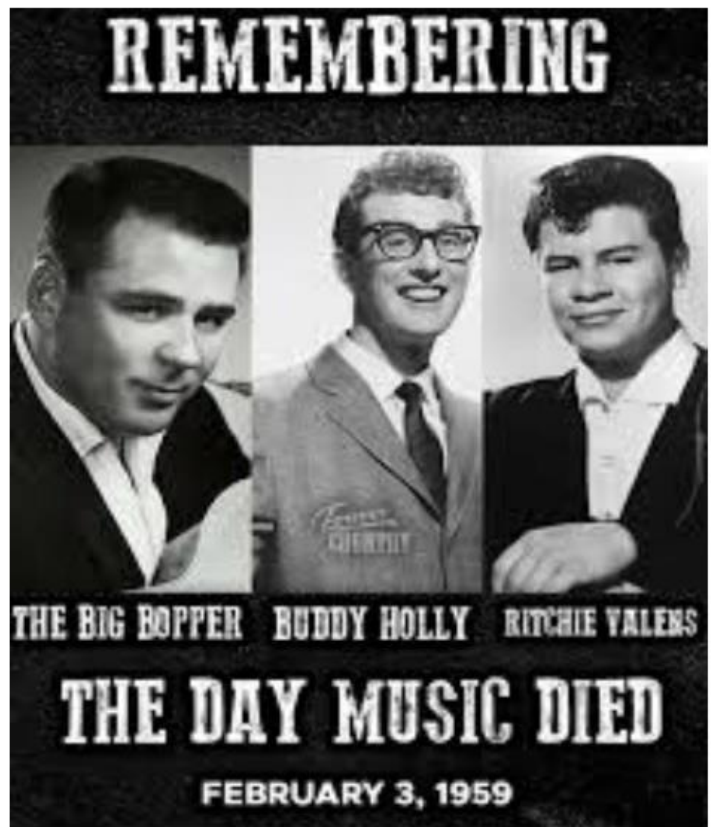
Bat



Langur

On This Day – 3rd February 1959

Charles Hardin Holley, known as Buddy Holly, was an American singer and songwriter who was a central and pioneering figure of mid-1950s rock and roll. He was born in Lubbock, Texas, to a musical family during the Great Depression, and learned to play guitar and sing alongside his siblings. His style was influenced by gospel music, country music, and rhythm and blues acts, which he performed in Lubbock with his friends from high school.



Buddy Holly had been sick of the long touring coach journeys so chartered a plane. The Big Bopper (a popular American singer) had the flu, and Richie Valens (another popular star) won his seat on the plane in a toss of the coin.

On This Day – 3rd February 1959 (contd.)

At midnight, the Charter Owner watched as the plane took off, then saw the taillights quickly descend showing that the plane was crashing. Fearing what had happened, he took off in another plane when it was light and soon found the wreckage.

night flight...; visibility was poor; and the pilot was not familiar with the instruments.

The official enquiry found that the pilot was not qualified for night flight. Visibility was poor and the pilot was not familiar with the instruments. The plane had smashed into the ground at 200 miles per hour; all on board died.

Buddy had pioneered a new era in music, and he created a powerful influence over artists like The Beatles, Elton John, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton and The Rolling Stones.

According to the singer Don McLean, February 3rd was 'The Day the Music Died'

Anne McMillan

Bird Quiz - By Shelley Willis

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 In a pear tree | 16 String of small coloured flags |
| 2 Said to be the bringer of babies | 17 Proudly showing off all his eyes |
| 3 Tower of London residents | 18 Murmuration in groups |
| 4 Rod Hull's puppet | 19 Three under par |
| 5 Happening quickly | 20 Batman's sidekick |
| 6 Sang in Berkeley Square | 21 Bumps on the skin |
| 7 Brag or ugly woman | 22 Went to sea with the pussycat |
| 8 Tails on a farthing | 23 Greedy person |
| 9 Batsman out without a score | 24 Seven a swimming |
| 10 Cause to pass down the throat | 25 Works at the coalface |
| 11 Chess castle | 26 1993 film "--- Brief" |
| 12 Two under par | 27 Jonathon Livingston |
| 13 Wizard from Arthurian legend | 28 Pirates of the Caribbean's Captain Jack |
| 14 Yeast infection | 29 Four and twenty baked in a pie |
| 15 Breathin' in repeated short gasps | 30 Tall machine for moving heavy objects |

Organisations offering free support to Northumberland residents

By Carollyn McDonald

At a recent networking event in Amble, I picked up a few leaflets and contacts that I thought some of you might find helpful. Many of these organisations are also at Alnwick Gardens a couple of times a year, and that is where you can meet and talk before making any commitment. We usually let members know about these events in our bi-monthly newsletters.

Frontline – supported by Citizens Advice, NHS, Northumberland County Council and Thriving Together. This is a secure on-line library of local health and wellbeing services. ‘Community services in one place’. Residents can self-refer, through local search, by town, postcode or keywords. Email info@frontlineuk.org.uk, or call 01799 616655

Carers Northumberland – has an information line where you can make enquiries or just chat, on 01670 320025. You can also email them at info@carersnorthumberland.org.uk. Issues offered include Emergency Care Planning, Carer’s rights, telephone support and events to build networks and friendships locally. They run workshops designed to explore different aspects of caring including legal issues, benefits, carer’s rights, stress, guilt and wellbeing. If there were enough u3a members registered, we could offer our space to run one of these 1-3 hour workshops. Please register your interest in joining such a U3A hosted event by contacting me via our website.

Organisations offering free support (contd.)

Northumberland Sensory Services is a charity delivered by BID Services (services for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, sight impaired, deafblind, or living with other disabilities) and supported by Northumberland County Council. They provide specialist services and information for adults who are deaf, hard of hearing, sight impaired or deaf/blind living in Northumberland, and their families. These services can be provided in your own home, in the community or in their offices by appointment. 01670 293150, email northumberland@bid.org.uk

Vision Northumberland introduce their Low Vision Assessment Service. Based in Morpeth they can help you assess different vision equipment to help you. 01670 514316. Email [info@vision – Northumberland.org](mailto:info@vision-northumberland.org)

Health Trainer Service for support to develop a personal plan to help with health issues faced in wellbeing for Northumberland residents over 16. For example, eat healthier foods, lose weight, get active, drink less alcohol, or quit smoking. 'Together we will develop your personal plan, set achievable goals and provide ongoing motivation and support'. They offer one to one and group programmes. 01670 813135 All these, and other services are funded in part or wholly by Northumberland Council – our rates and taxes. If you decide you would like their support, do please get in touch with them.

Carolyn McDonald, Chair

What Was I Looking For When I joined u3a?

By Trevor Robinson, Newsletter Editor

I wanted to start a new regular feature for the Newsletter, about why people joined the u3a and what they had hoped to get out of it. I managed to persuade a recent new member to write a piece, but it was suggested that I should go first! So here it is.

My working life was in local government finance, ending up in the West Midlands. I retired in 2007, and my wife retired in 2016. We decided to relocate to the North East, where my family originated. I knew a little bit about the University of the Third Age (as we were then named), but I didn't investigate further until 2019. I wanted to become involved in things I found interesting and perhaps find new interests. I also wanted to make new friends, to widen my social circle.

We live near Felton, roughly halfway between Morpeth and Alnwick, both of which host a u3a. So which one to choose? Easy! I have had a lifelong interest in science and studied physics at university. So as soon as I found that Alnwick u3a has a Science Group, and Morpeth u3a doesn't, there was no contest. I became a member of Alnwick u3a and joined the Bridge, History and Science Groups.

That was in January 2020 – six years ago. Of course, the pandemic came along just two months later, and our face-to-face meetings came to a halt. This was disappointing, not least because I was planning a Science Group presentation on the Project Apollo Moon Landing missions. Foiled by the virus!

I have always liked to volunteer for things, so I said I would be happy to help out during the pandemic. Next thing I knew I was a Co-opted Member of our Committee and soon after was asked to resuscitate the newsletter.

What Was I Looking For ...? (contd.)

Two years later I was Chair. How did that happen? Always be careful when you volunteer for something!

What was I expecting from joining u3a? As I said earlier, I wanted to be involved in new things and widen my social circle. Did this materialize? The short answer is a resounding YES.

I have been a member of 11 groups and am currently a member of nine. I have found an interest in art that is greater than I thought, to the extent that I have given two presentations to the Art Appreciation Group. I have given several talks to the Archaeology Group on places I have visited, such as Machu Picchu and Angkor Watt. And I have given many presentations to the Science Group on a range of topics, such as Quantum Physics, Plagues, Dinosaurs, DNA and Cosmology.

Last but not least, I gave a presentation to the first monthly meeting held after the pandemic, in September 2021, about my travels in North America. As it happened, it was my birthday, and about 50 people sang happy birthday. A record for me!

As well as attending group meetings, I have been on some wonderful trips to museums, art galleries and a gin distillery, not forgetting some great meals with the Lunch and Supper Groups.

I certainly subscribe to the u3a motto of *learn, laugh, live*, but I also am reminded of the Monty Python's Life of Brian quote "**what have the Romans ever done for us?**". Substitute "u3a" for "Romans", and then be amazed by the length of the resultant list. I have got a lot of fun and enjoyment from my u3a membership.

Now, over to you. I already have an article from a new member for the next newsletter, but it would be great to hear from other members, whether new or not. You can find my contact details at

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

Attending Meetings at Other u3as

Would you like to attend a group at another local u3a?

Wooler:

Our members will only be charged the cost of the room used by the group, apart from the Wine Appreciation Group. Their full membership is £5 but will be going up to £10 in Oct when their new membership year begins.

Berwick:

The full membership is £15 so to attend their groups you would need to be an associate member. The cost is £9.50 per year. There is also a £2 per group venue charge for everyone. The venue is free if the group is held in the Northumberland Building Society or the Library.

Coquetdale:

There is only a charge for the venue.

Please contact the group leader through the u3a website to check details before you travel!

Odds and Ends

I've got a flat in Knightsbridge, very close to Harrods.

Now I'm waiting for the AA to arrive to fix my tyre.

You should never trust a ladder.

They are always up to something.

Never leave home without wearing a smile. And clothes. Don't forget clothes.

Patient to Doctor: "Doctor, I keep thinking I'm Napoleon".

Doctor to Patient: "But you're dressed like Nelson".

Patient to Doctor: "I know I'm Nelson, but I keep thinking I'm Napoleon".

Hiking in your 70s is a great way to meet people.

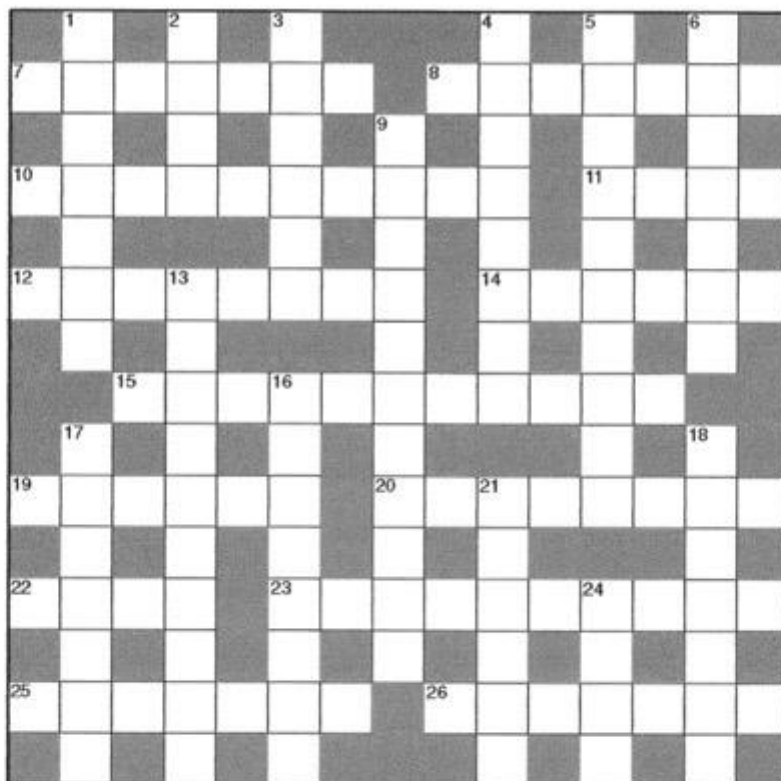
Today I met two paramedics, three nurses, a helicopter crew, an anaesthetist and a cardiologist.

I was abducted by aliens yesterday. They made me wash my hands, brush my teeth, comb my hair and eat my vegetables

Turns out I was on the mother ship...

Crossword

(courtesy of Maureen and Alan Sayers)



ACROSS

- 7 Ignited a furious row perhaps (7)
- 8 She works for the Department of Transportation (7)
- 10 By the end of a performance this instrument is letting off steam (10)
- 11 To me it's a heavy read (4)
- 12 A must for pressing engagements (4,4)
- 14 Keyworker in the office (6)
- 15 Finding one's way there should be a piece of cake (5,6)
- 19 It's fun to bump into one of these vehicles (6)
- 20 Tired out after a heavy meal (8)
- 22 Whale seen in Minorcan waters (4)
- 23 Beware, these sort of bargains could cost you dearly (4,6)
- 25 The unexpected came from here (7)
- 26 Kim sped round, therefore used up less time (7)

DOWN

- 1 Shouts aimed at the umpire (7)
- 2 Didn't finish writing the summons (4)
- 3 A strange remote falling star (6)
- 4 Employee who doesn't work from home (8)
- 5 It's refreshing yet we spit it out (10)
- 6 He deals in drugs. . . legally (7)
- 9&21 Old timers (11,6)
- 13 Messages sent via the newspapers (10)
- 16 Focal point for the scouts (8)
- 17 Whisky-flavoured biscuit (7)
- 18 Crossings available after the bridge collapsed (7)
- 21 *See 9D*
- 24 Vapour sprayed about in the perfumery department (4)

Quiz Answers

1 Partridge	11 Rook	21 Goose
2 Stork	12 Eagle	22 Owl
3 Raven	13 Merlin	23 Gannet
4 Emu	14 Thrush	24 Swan
5 Swift	15 Puffin	25 Miner
6 Nightingale	16 Bunting	26 Pelican
7 Crow	17 Peacock	27 Seagull
8 Wren	18 Starling	28 Sparrow
9 Duck	19 Albatross	29 Blackbirds
10 Swallow	20 Robin	30 Crane

Crossword Answers

ACROSS - 7 Sparked. 8 Dorothy. 10 Kettledrum. 11 Tome. 12 Flat Iron. 14 Typist. 15 Black Forest. 19 Dodgem. 20 Tuckered. 22 Orca. 23 Free Offers. 25 Nowhere. 26 Skimped.

DOWN - 1 Appeals. 2 Writ. 3 Meteor. 4 Commuter. 5 Toothpaste. 6 Chemist. 9&21 Grandfather Clocks. 13 Telegraphs. 16 Campfire. 17 Bourbon. 18 Ferries. 2 See 21. 24 Fume.

End Piece

**Ushered in with wind and snow
the dark new year brings moods
low.**

**It is time for reflection
hoping for inspiration!**

Mary Atkinson