



Members Newsletter April 2026

Dear Members, how lovely to be able to write to you with sunshine streaming through the windows between the showers!

I've been visiting groups over the past few months and enjoying learning new things – well done to our group leaders. Would you like to try out some different groups to your usual favourites? Have a go!

There is a coach trip on the cards – if some more members sign up! It takes quite a bit of work to set them up, and they are a great part of the u3a offer. An opportunity to laugh, get to know different members and have a look around a new place – this time The Sill and Vindolanda. No driving or parking difficulties, a picnic lunch or treat out – please join in. See you all soon. **Carollyn, Chair.**

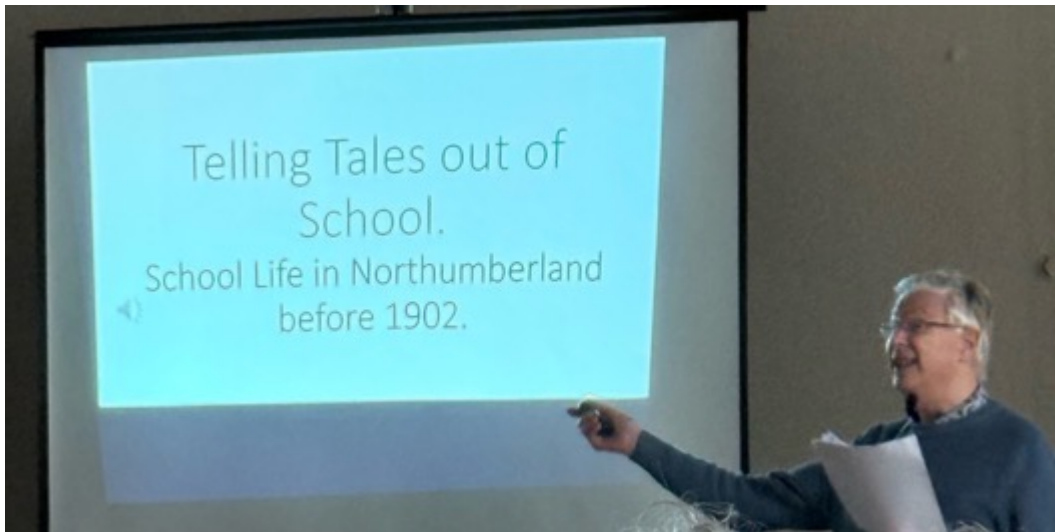
Contents

February Monthly meeting	p2-3	Why did I join u3a?	p12-13
March Monthly meeting	p4-5	New Ukulele Groups	p14
Updates	p6	Odds and Ends	p15
Trip to Vindolanda	p6	Crossword	p16
April Photos	p7-8	Spotlight on Bridge Group	p17
On this Day	p9	Quiz Answers	p18
Quiz	p10	Crossword Answers	p18
Lesser-known Knights	P11	Endpiece	p18

February Monthly Meeting

Northumberland Schools in the 19th Century

Chris Tipple



The talk was about the education of ordinary children: not those from wealthy families who were educated in public schools. The United Kingdom was a world empire, but our education system was rubbish. The teaching of poor children often depended upon money from well-off people.

Many schools were funded by the church or voluntary subscriptions. Some schools were set up by landowners for their workers' children. The 4th Duke Northumberland set up a school at Kielder. But this was all very haphazard.

For example, the Vicar of Embleton endowed a school in the 18th century, and a lady gave £200 for a school in Bellingham for the education of 50 poor children. A teacher was appointed on an annual salary of £12.

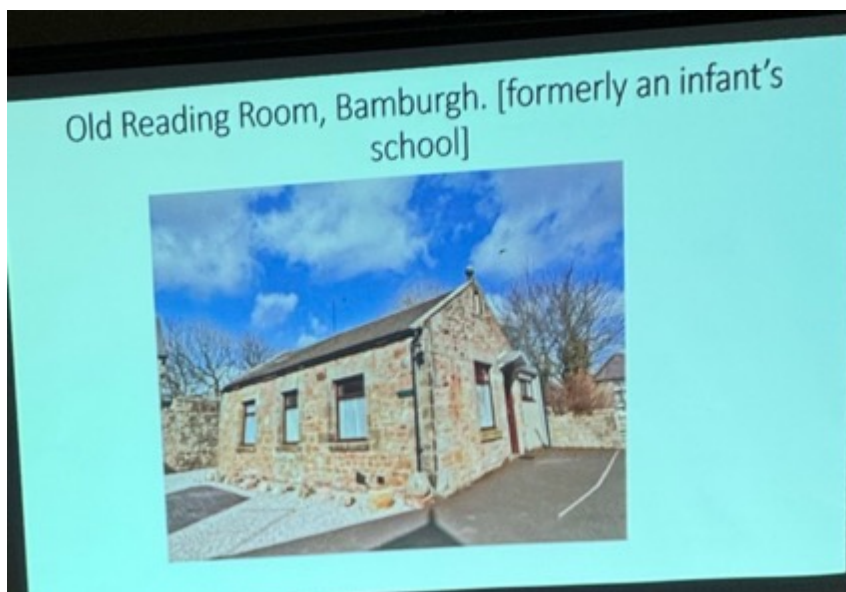
February Monthly Meeting – contd

Before 1840, schools were run only with a teacher in charge, and senior pupils acted as monitors. 1846 brought in the Teacher's Certificate.

The Education Act 1870 enabled the creation of School Boards, which could use local rates (property taxes) to fund schools, supplemented by government grants and continuing parental fees. A National Order in 1871 established school inspectors. Teachers got extra money for a good report.

With the Free Education Act of 1891, the state began paying a grant (fee grant) of ten shillings per student per year, which finally made most elementary education free.

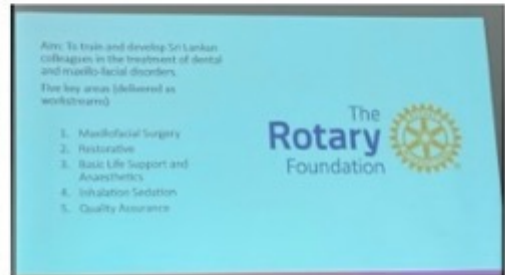
Learning was often by rote, such as long poems of 176 lines. There was corporal punishment for bad behaviour and poor performance.



March Monthly Meeting

Mountains, Molars and Monkeys by Andrew Buddle

Following his retirement from Alnwick Dental Practice, in 2024, Andrew led a multi-disciplinary team to the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka. The project was funded by Rotary Clubs from the Northeast whose contribution was match funded by Rotary International. The project cost around £70k, some of which was spent on specialist equipment which was not available at Peradeniya.



The team was made up of eight medical professionals with experience in different areas. The focus of the project was the problem in Sri Lanka with many people having the habit of chewing Betel nut, a stimulant which causes dental cancer. Patients tended to present late to medical services meaning they would often require surgery.

The Team was: -

Dr Andrew Buddle – focused on providing and demonstrating a metal head with substitute dentures to practice on.

Dr Andrew Fletcher – a sedation specialist.

Taran Malhotra – A specialist in digital maxillofacial surgery.

Dr Anand Nadgir – A newly retired anesthetist who was able to teach the university staff about basic and advanced life support.

Associate Professor Tim O'Brien – a restorative consultant who was also able to help the team in quality assurance with reference to the latest UK standards.

Mr Sajid Sainuddin – a maxillofacial surgeon who, in the first week, carried out a 14-hour operation on a girl who had had a benign tumor removed a year before.

March Monthly Meeting (contd.)

Dr Carly Taylor – works with Mr. Sainuddin and makes prostheses for the mouth when a tumor has been removed.

Dr Annette Wyllie – carried out a lot of surgery and teaching and worked with Dr Fletcher on sedation work and the set up all the inhalation equipment.



The team took a lot of equipment out with them including a defibrillator and resuscitation dummies. They had arranged the paperwork needed to cover what was being carried in the team's luggage!

At the first meeting with the Sri Lanka team, the team handed over the equipment they had taken out and found that maxillofacial surgeons had travelled from all over the country to attend the seminars.

The team were looked after by the Rotary Club of Kandy and stayed at Peradeniya Guest House, which provided modest accommodation but was opposite the Botanical Garden where flying foxes, fruit bats and monkeys could be seen. In the middle weekend of their stay the team were taken on various trips to see the Temple of the Tooth, other temples and monasteries and a golden Buddha, which tourists are not usually able to see. They met and talked with a monk who they later found was equivalent to our Archbishop of Canterbury!

Andrew said it had been a life affirming experience for him and told us the trip had left a legacy in that the team have stayed in touch with the university staff and help them in any way they can.

Mary Brazier

Updates

25th Anniversary Pens

We have done all we can to get the pens out to Members. If anyone doesn't have a pen, but would like one, they should get in touch with a committee member.

Photograph Privacy

We often publish photos of various u3a events. However, some people do not want their face to be published.

If any of you do not wish to be included in any photos taken by groups or at other meetings, you should move out of the shot or turn away.

Or just say to the photographer that you do not want your photograph to be taken.

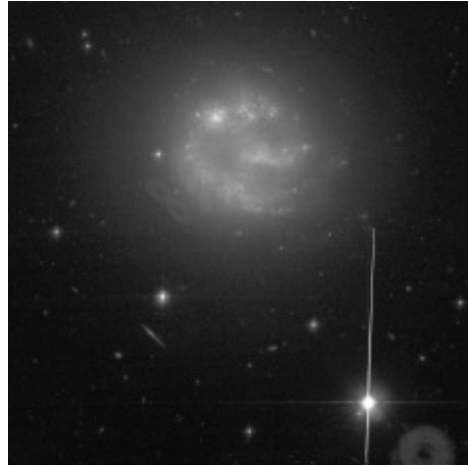
Trip to Vindolanda and The Sill

On Tuesday May 19, the Archaeology Group are planning a coach trip to Vindolanda and The Sill. The cost of this will be £33 which includes entrance to Vindolanda at a reduced rate (The Sill is free!). There are still places available for a £15 deposit (refundable if you find you can't make it and we have a back-up). If it rains there is always the Museum and Cafe! Anyone interested please contact George Ellames (gellames@yahoo.com) or Pat Ashton (membership.Alnwick.u3a@gmail.com)

**April Photos - From the March Science Group – Galaxies
Photographed by the Hubble Space Telescope and the
James Webb Space Telescope**



Tadpole Galaxy



Bear Paw Galaxy



Butterfly Galaxies



Meathook Galaxy



Pinwheel Galaxy



Hockey Stick Galaxies

April Photos (contd)



Mice Galaxies



Andromeda Galaxy



Sunflower Galaxy



Antennae Galaxies



Godzilla Galaxy



Penguin Galaxy

On This Day – 7th April 1832

Joseph Thompson, a farmer, went to Carlisle to sell his wife; they had both agreed to part.

A large crowd gathered; he was only charging 50 shillings for her. After an hour, the price was knocked down to 20 shillings, together with a Newfoundland dog as an incentive.

This practice was never legally recognised. It was a ritual which often took place in a marketplace or inn, with the wife led by a halter and "sold" to a new partner.

It was very common until early 20th century, especially in the northern industrial towns. In 1857 an Act was passed which was supposed to make divorce cheaper and accessible to the masses.

In one of the last reported instances of a wife sale in England in 1913, a woman giving evidence at a Leeds Court claimed that she had been sold to one of her husband's workmates for £1.

Anne McMillan

Blue and Yellow Quiz - By Shelley Willis

- 1 Who wrote, and first recorded, the song Blue Suede Shoes
- 2 Who had a 1966 hit with the song Yellow Submarine
- 3 Which artist painted The Blue Boy
- 4 Which artist painted The Yellow House
- 5 What is a Russian Blue
- 6 What is a Yellowhammer
- 7 What is a Blue Danio
- 8 How many points is the yellow ball worth in snooker
- 9 How many points is the blue ball worth in snooker
- 10 In the Olympic rings what position is the yellow ring
- 11 In the Olympic rings what position is the blue ring
- 12 Which European country's flag is top half blue and bottom half yellow
- 13 Which European country's flag is a yellow cross on a blue background
- 14 The EU flag has a circle of how many yellow stars on a blue background
- 15 Mr Blue Sky was a 1977 hit for which band
- 16 Goodbye Yellow Brick Road was a 1973 hit for which singer
- 17 Which spirit gives a Blue Lagoon cocktail its colour
- 18 What is the name of the condition that turns your skin yellow
- 19 Who drove the Sunbeam Blue Bird, in 1925, when it became the first car to exceed 150mph
- 20 If you were in a yellow taxi, which city are you most likely to be in

Visual Clues



Q3

Q4



Q12



Q13

Lesser-known Knights of the Round Table

- The knight who was afraid to fight: Sir Render
- The knight no one believed: Sir Real
- The knight too big to sit at the table: Sir Round
- The knight who designed the table: Sir Cumference
- The undercover knight: Sir Veillance
- The knight who was never killed in battle: Sir Vivor
- The knight who exceeded expectations: Sir Passed
- The knight who showed up unexpectedly: Sir Prize
- The knight who overcame obstacles: Sir Mount
- The knight who performed in three rings: Sir Cus
- The knight who drank too much: Sir Rhosis

What Was I Looking For When I Joined u3a?

By Judy Wall

The U3A – what’s that all about? When, in the dark ages of the last century, I finished school I refused to go on to further education, either at college or university. I’d had enough. I just wanted to get a job, earn some money, leave home, spread my wings.

My seemingly insatiable curiosity, my Why questioning - which had, especially, driven my dad mad as I grew up – led me to journalism. I wanted to know what made people ‘tick.’ Somewhat ironically, decades later this curiosity also led me back into education. In my 40s, 50s early 60s I completed course after course at Bradford University, culminating in a Doctorate of Philosophy. I loved it – and came to realise how education is wasted on the young!

I have always been an avid reader – because it provided me with an escape from the reality of life in a household with five younger brothers! But now my reading reached new heights, providing academic interest and answering big questions, before going to university I hadn’t even thought of.

Don’t get me wrong, I’ve usually got three or four books on the go at once, and most of them are likely to be ‘lighter’ – detective novels, including the great works of Northumberland author L J Ross. It was the Ross books which guided my husband and I on our holidays around this beautiful county – Holy Island, Kielder Forest, Cragside, and Belsay Hall, to name but a few. We realised we wanted to live where we loved to holiday. Eight months ago, we realised that dream and moved to just outside Alnwick, with, on a clear day, what estate agents describe as sea glimpses, across the fields to Alnmouth.

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

People asked us if we were moving closer to family, as many tend to do when they are older. But both being southerners (hailing from Bath and London) that wasn't us. I kept thinking, this will either be great or a great disaster. Critically, we needed to make new friends – increasingly difficult to do as I've grown older. I think we may just become more discerning!

A week after we moved, I joined the U3A. The only experience I'd had of the U3A was through my father-in-law, who was a member in London. A quiet, not naturally sociable man, who had lived alone for years, I remembered seeing a lovely picture of him in a U3A friend's garden one summer. He was smiling, perhaps the happiest I'd ever seen him. When he died in 2020 some of his U3A friends attended his simple burial. It was clear they were fond of him; that he had found companionship in the U3A.

This is what led me to the U3A. I am now a member of two groups: philosophy (shamed into it, in the knowledge that despite my Doctorate, I know very little about it); and art appreciation (I am one of those who knows what they like, but don't know why);?).

I'm hoping the U3A will offer me the chance to make new friends, and to explore – now I have more time in my retirement – new areas of interest, or those I have been meaning for years to get around to. Watch this space!

NB: Trevor's hoping the "what does the U3A offer me" question can become a series in this newsletter. Please feel free to send him your experience of arriving and what you hope the U3A will offer you.

New Ukulele Groups

Two new ukulele groups will start up on 23rd April. Sessions will be held on the 2nd Thursday of the month, afternoons, and the 4th Thursday of the month, mornings, in the small St Michael's hall.

A Group for Beginners will take place 2-3pm on the 2nd Thursday, and 10-11am pm on the 4th Thursday. We'll look at how to hold, tune and strum the ukulele, together with a few very basic chords.

The Group for Improvers will take place 3-4pm on the 2nd Thursday and 11-12am on the 4th Thursday. The improvers should have a basic grasp of the chords C, F, G7 and Am, and be able to strum along with the group.

The emphasis will be on FUN, not perfection, so come along and have a go. We'll be playing fun, upbeat songs that everyone will know. Once beginners have grasped the fundamentals of playing the ukulele, they can of course move on to the improvers Group. No musical knowledge is required.

Music sheets will be provided, and the cost will be £2 per session to go towards printing etc, which will also cover the usual hot drink and biscuit.

You will need to bring your own ukulele but there will be a few available for first timers to see if you like playing. You will also need to bring a music stand (readily available from Amazon or other suppliers, from around £12).

If you have any queries regarding the sessions, equipment or anything else, please don't hesitate to contact Lynn Exeter at dafttart100@hotmail.com

Odds and Ends

The Pink Panther's to-do list:

- to do
- to do
- to do to do to do,
- to do, to doooooo

I absolutely hate it when I am losing at Scrabble. Apparently, I have Irritable Vowel Syndrome.

Just joined an amateur autopsy club. I can't wait for Friday. It's open Mike night!

Really pleased to get a full tank of petrol for £60. Granted, it was only for my lawnmower, but I'm trying to stay positive.

The boiler broke last night, and we had to get a man out. How he got in there in the first place, I've no idea.

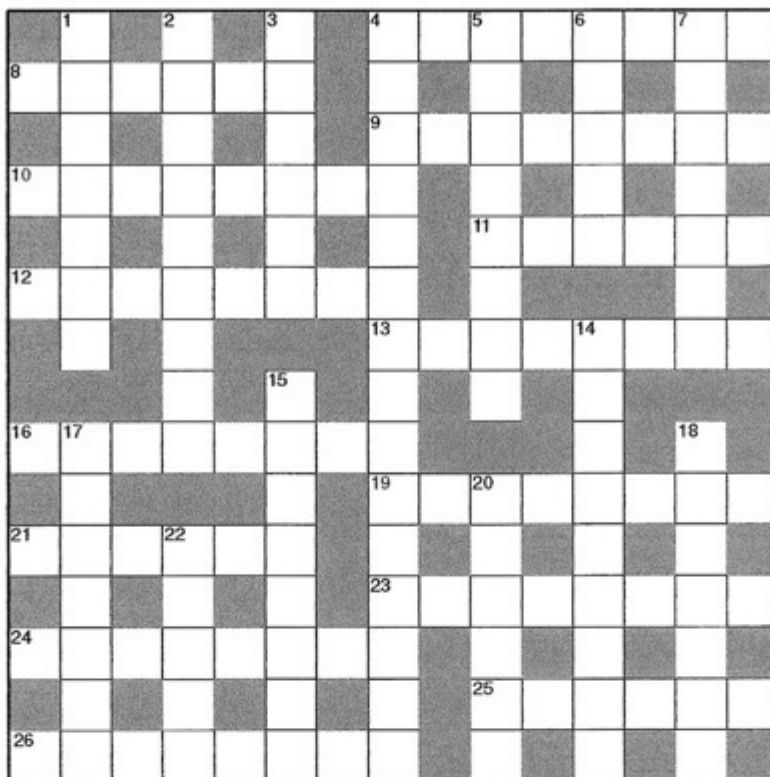
I used to own a very expensive middle eastern carpet, but unfortunately it was stolen. I phoned the police, but they told me I had to wait 48 hours before I could report a missing persian.

I've been trying to lose weight for years, but I've now decided that, despite all my efforts at dieting, I'll never get back to my original weight.

Seven pounds two ounces is just not achievable.

Crossword

(courtesy of Maureen and 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 title 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)

Spotlight on an Interest Group: Bridge

I was asked several years ago by a friend if I would like to learn to play bridge, with trepidation I went along and found that I really enjoyed it.

Bridge is a very popular game, it's fun, it's sociable, it's a great way of meeting new friends and keeping your brain active. So, it isn't a surprise that each year many people decide they want to learn how to play.

Believe it or not, there are said to be significant benefits to health and wellbeing if you play bridge regularly. This was shown in a study undertaken by Professor Marian Diamond from Berkeley University in 2000.

Playing a game of bridge requires you to concentrate. This helps keep your brain active and, apparently, helps boost your immune system!

We all know the adage – “use it or lose it”. With more and more people living long, healthy lives and surviving to a ripe old age it is important to keep your brain active and alert.

Bridge is a social game. It's a great way of getting out and meeting new people. It's a good excuse for friends to meet regularly, enjoy a few games and exchange news and gossip..... But I must warn you bridge can become addictive!

Mareen Sayers



Quiz Answers

1	Carl Perkins	11	Top left
2	The Beatles	12	Ukraine
3	Thomas Gainsborough	13	Sweden
4	Vincent van Gogh	14	12
5	Breed of cat	15	Electric Light Orchestra (ELO)
6	Bird	16	Elton John
7	Fish	17	Blue Curacao
8	2	18	Jaundice
9	5	19	Sir Malcolm Campbell
10	Bottom left	20	New York, USA

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

*Daffodils exalt the sun
Hyacinths scent the air
Primroses pronounce spring
Trees blossom birds sing.*

Mary Atkinson