

NORTHUMBRIA REGION U3A

Newsletter, July 2008

Some stuff from the Editor

The July 2008 edition of the Regional U3A Newsletter, a little late I'm afraid, I promised your committee that I would have it published by Sunday last but some problems have intervened. Anyway, here it is and I do hope that you enjoy it all. Apologies to all for the lateness, I'll try and do better next time.

The newsletter is intended for all U3A members in the Northumbria Region and you should get a copy, or at least sight of a copy, from your Committee. All those U3A members who do get the opportunity to see a copy please let your fellow members know that you have seen it, show it to them and get them to ask your Committee for a copy for themselves, we need all the publicity we can get.

I am for the first time sending personal copies of the newsletter to quite a few individual U3A members who signed up for this at the last quarterly regional meeting and also a few members of Wear-Tees U3A who have given me their email addresses. Let me know if you want a personal copy

To those U3A's that have contributed to this edition of your newsletter, thank you from the bottom of my heart, you are making my job as editor go like clockwork. To everyone including those U3A's that have, and those that haven't sent anything for this newsletter, then we would like to hear from you. Please note the deadline for your copy for the next issue (November 2008), this is shown at the bottom of the page, but for the avoidance of doubt, contributions no later than Friday 31st October 2008 please. Don't just leave it to your Committee to do this, all items are welcome, FROM ANY U3A member, my contact details are shown at the bottom of this editorial. It needn't be typed, I still have that army of typists waiting for some work – only kidding of course. The best way to get anything to me is by email, every email I receive will be answered. I'm looking forward to hearing from you already.

Thanks a lot, take care and have a good time on your outings.

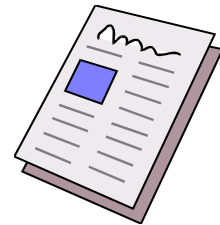
David Grundy – Newsletter Editor

Email regionalu3anews@btinternet.com
Telephone 0191 410 4979
Snail mail 43 Melbeck Drive, Urpeth Grange, Ouston, Chester-le-Street,
County Durham, DH2 1TY,

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Notices

Wooler U3A – Battle of Flodden Study Day

Wooler U3A advise that the Battle of Flodden Study Day on Wednesday 3rd September 2008 is now fully subscribed. If you are going to the event then take care and have a great time up in beautiful and majestic Northumberland.

**Please note the deadline for contributions to go in the next issue is
Friday 31st October 2008**

News from the Region

Alnwick U3A

The disadvantage of holding our monthly meetings in school premises is that we cannot have meetings in July and August, as the dates fall in the school holidays. When we first started, we did not want to have a long summer break between meetings, and so our practice of having an 'awayday' in July and an outing in August was established.

For the July meeting, we choose somewhere not too far away to act as a base for the day, where members can arrive at any time throughout the day knowing that others will be there. We have specific times for morning coffee, a picnic lunch and afternoon tea and we plan a loose programme of activities appropriate to the venue. When we went to Druridge Bay we made use of the visitors' centre and explored the surroundings with the help of their various leaflets. When we based ourselves in Howick village hall, we had walks to the beach and through the grounds of Howick Hall, as well as exploring the geology and birdlife in the area. When we went to Morpeth we followed the town trail and explored Carlisle Park. Last year we went to the Woodhorn Museum, where we had a very interesting tour behind the scenes in the morning and most people went for walks in the adjoining park after lunch. Given good weather - and so far we have been lucky - we have found that, even if we just sit out in the sun, relax and chat for a while, these days make a very pleasant change from the usual rush and bustle of monthly meetings. This month we are going to Howick again and are hoping that we will be able to have outdoor games such as boules and croquet as well as walks, painting, photography, geology... whatever takes people's fancy.

Our August outings have tended to focus on places where we can incorporate a boat trip - Newcastle, Durham, York - but this year we have gone a bit mad and are heading for Loch Lomond. Next year we will probably aim for somewhere a bit nearer home. Any suggestions?

Maureen Stephenson, Alnwick U3A

Bede of Jarrow U3A

I am introducing myself as Secretary of the newly-formed Bede of Jarrow U3A. I had heard about U3A whilst I was still "zoo keeping" in a secondary school somewhere in Durham, so when I retired I decided that finding out more about U3A and its activities would be one of my priorities. I had missed the first meetings towards the end of 2007, but was certain to be at the January meeting. I sat there eagerly awaiting to hear what activities U3A had to offer me. I listened intently to everyone... walking, painting, music appreciation and so on. So when I was on my way home I had to ask myself "Just how did I get to become Bede of Jarrow's secretary? I posed this question to my 36 year old daughter, who immediately replied "Cos you can't keep your mouth shut".

Anyway, we are becoming very successful, I am proud to say. As well as walking twice a month, we offer painting, music appreciation, a reading group, a feel good group, a Sunday lunch group, indoor bowls, and tenpin bowling.

We have a fully paid up membership in the mid sixties (that's not their ages) and quite a number of prospective members. We have members who have joined us from other areas as a second membership and I feel quite proud of our growing success. I have a special thank you to Margaret Minns from Whickham who steered us in the right direction for quite some time.

For someone who dreaded retirement, and what should I do with my time, I now need ten days in a week, although I daresay that the working population (remember those days??) would object to that.

We have had various outings including a visit to Trinity House in Newcastle, a "Seedy and Sophisticated" tour around part of Newcastle, and a two day trip to Amsterdam. We are looking forward to a visit to Cragside soon, and then to the Alnwick Garden. More importantly, we are already thinking about our Christmas arrangements!

Our speakers have given us "Lord Collingwood", Trading Standards, and our very own Derek Hutchinson who has been in the Guinness Book of Records several times for kayaking the North Sea, and I daresay he will give a talk to any group who would like to book him. Margaret Minns gave us a very good account of her visit to Russia. We aim to have a speaker at every monthly meeting, and also an outing to somewhere every month.

I'll finish with a big hello to other U3A's in the Northumbria Region, and hopefully quite soon we will be able to meet.

Iris Walls – Secretary, Bede of Jarrow U3A

Cestria U3A at Chester-le-Street

At Cestria U3A we have had a Look at Health group running now for over two years. Topics are decided by members. We have talked about de-toxing our bodies, nutrition, food supplements, how allergies can affect us and ways to care for ourselves. We have experienced various therapies and recently had a very successful First Aid session. We always have a particular topic to discuss but we also enjoy interesting off the topic chat as well! I am a Complementary Therapist and teach Relaxation and Stress Management techniques. Please let me know if you could like to share your skills or ideas with us. I would be happy to share my skills with you. You can get in touch with me Margaret Timothy at mgttimot@tiscali.co.uk or telephone me 0191 385 3610

Margaret Timothy, Cestria U3A

Cowtons and Countryside

We were so impressed by the OPEN DAY at DURHAM during last summer that we decided to hold one of our own as our contribution to the twenty fifth anniversary celebrations of U3A. We are a fairly new group having been in existence for just over three years. Serving a rural population based in East Cowton village, in North Yorkshire. Our membership has grown from twelve initially to over seventy.

All of our group leaders were most enthusiastic to be involved and some informative and eye catching displays were set out in the annex of our local church. We had a lively crowd of members and visitors during the afternoon who not only learned about our range of groups but enjoyed some tasty seasonal food and drink. We recommend the idea to other U3A's as it enabled us to meet socially and spread our ideas at the same time.

Sylvia Aitken, Cowtons & Countryside U3A

Darlington U3A

All of our group activities are now in full swing and being enjoyed by all of our members involved.

The gardening group started the season with an evening of old time music hall which put them in the mood for their season of outings. This started with a lecture on rare plants. They then braved the cold at Castle Howard and had a very interesting day with an exceptionally well informed guide. Meldon Hall was next on their visiting list. After a few transport problems they duly arrived and enjoyed an excellent lunch. Then the gardens were visited and thoroughly enjoyed. This very active group has a four day garden visiting holiday planned. More of this in our next bulletin.

Both moor walking groups have been active. The long distance group operate through the year. They generally walk about seven to nine miles stopping for a packed lunch. During the winter months they indulge in the comfort of a pub lunch. There are twenty regular members of the group and during this summer they have planned a walking holiday in Italy. The short distance walking group meet every two weeks starting after Easter. Generally walking about three to four miles in the afternoons, using cars to reach a suitable start point the group regularly attracts about twenty five members.

The local history group had a very interesting lecture from a member on the Jarrow Crusade. They also had a talk from an editor of a local paper. Their first outing this year was to Saltire which was attended by over thirty members.

Our luncheon club meets at monthly intervals. Some thirty to fifty members regularly attend, meeting at a number of local eating establishments where a good time is generally had by all.

Harry Gibbs, Darlington U3A

Derwentside U3A

Three members of Derwentside U3A German Group recently visited Germany for a holiday in Hamelin.

Of course, there were rats everywhere: made of bread, wood, chocolate and so on. We had flown from Newcastle to Hanover and then continued by train to Hamelin, a picturesque town of narrow, winding, cobbled streets and half-timbered houses with gold coloured mottoes painted on the beams and pretty flower boxes. We watched the enactment of the legend of the Pied Piper which stems from 1284. The first version was written by Magda Fischer and produced in 1930, but the current enactment dates only from 1956. Then we enjoyed coffee and cake on the top deck of a steamer on the Weser river.

Bad Pyrmont, a watering place an hour away by bus, provided a good contrast to Hamelin with its huge hotels and tree-lined avenues leading to the beautiful, elegant park full of exotic plants.

We also visited Hanover, the capital of Lower Saxony. Near the station are well-stocked department stores and George Street, named, according to a plaque, after the Elector who became King George the First of England. So we went down there and discovered older buildings and churches and attractive, quieter squares. Before returning to the station, we walked along the river and learnt that the name Hanover supposedly comes from words meaning "high riverbank".

Hamelin and the surrounding area certainly had something for everyone: modern shops, history and delicious cakes and ice creams and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves!

Jill Ramsay - German Group Convener, Derwentside U3A

Dunelm U3A

Dunelm U3A continue to have a steady membership of over 100 and have seen our groups expand again during the past year. We now offer: Art Appreciation, Walking, Local History, Card Games, Lunch Club, Digital Cameras and Computer Support, Theatre Trips, Reading Group, Basic Italian, and Garden Group. The garden group is our newest one and runs from Spring through to Autumn. It was an idea from this group that led to our first, highly successful outing.

Early on Monday, 9th June, a coach, full of our members, plus some of their friends, set off for Wallington Hall in Northumberland. Marvelling at the lovely weather, we joined others who had travelled by car. The prearranged guided tour of the gardens was extremely popular and most enjoyable. Everything was looking so beautiful in the

lovely summer sunshine! Our guide was extremely knowledgeable and kept us enthralled.

Lunch was a bit of a problem as a very long queue formed and vegetarian food quickly sold out. However, the afternoon "go as you please" look around the house was super. We all had a most enjoyable and happy day and are looking forward to another one next year.

Charlotte Staples, Dunelm U3A

Mid-Northumberland U3A

The Inaugural Meeting of the Mid-Northumberland U3A Group was held in Longhirst Village Hall on Friday, 22 June 2007. The Meeting was attended by some 30 people, some of whom were members of the Morpeth U3A Group, who came to express support for the formation of the new group. The majority of those attending were, however, potential members of the new organisation.

The formal motion to start the Mid-Northumberland U3A Group was approved, as were proposals to accept the constitution that was placed before the Meeting, and to fix the annual subscription at £10. Officials were elected as follows:

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|-------------------------|--|
| Chairman | Mr. C. Brian Gallon. |
| Vice Chairman/Secretary | Mr. Bob Crosby. |
| Treasurer | Dr. Ian West. |
| Committee Members | Mrs Sarah Allonby. Mrs Martha Hall. Mrs Sheila Petersen. |

Placed around the room were lists of various activities which the Group hoped to provide for its members. During the interval the potential members placed their names on the lists of their choice, and completed and handed in their membership application forms. At the conclusion of the Meeting it was announced that the new Group had 18 paid up members. An examination of the activities lists showed a total of 25 different topics, varying from art appreciation to wine tasting, from badminton to walking groups and from languages to philosophy. Some of these activities attracted as many as seven or eight members whilst others were only subscribed to by one or two people. Co-ordinators to organise each of the activities were appointed.

Since those early days the membership has increased to its present level of 89. Two or three of the activity groups have prospered to the extent that two parallel groups have had to be created. Some others have proved not to be so popular, and some activities have been dropped altogether. The Group holds its General Meetings on the second Wednesday of each month at 2.00 p.m. in Longhirst Village Hall. These General Meetings attract between 25 and 40 members and occasional guests. A range of interesting subjects has been covered by entertaining speakers at each meeting, and the U3A is to hold its first Annual General Meeting on 10 September 2008.

C. Brian Gallon, Mid-Northumberland U3A

Newcastle U3A

Newcastle U3A's Winning Quiz Team

The campaign started spectacularly in November last year with what proved to be the first of five wins on the trot. By March the possibility of actually winning something may have caused a little nervousness among the ranks and a slight increase in the frequency of blurts, memory blanks and other disorders. During this down period we lost our two matches, first a close run thing against Gateshead, the result of which hung in the balance until the final question, and the second a more comprehensive defeat against last year's champions, Morpeth, who were on impressive form.

At a jamboree in May this year, otherwise known as the U3A District Social Quiz Evening, laid on by Durham U3A at the Indoor Bowls Centre in Pity Me, we went on to win the quiz against Derwentside U3A. The eight wins out of ten allowed us to pick up the coveted Trophy for the first time. (Unfortunately Muriel and Evelyn were unable to be present that evening).

Derek Woodhouse, Newcastle U3A

Northumbria Region U3A

Northumbria Region U3A Bird Watching Group celebrates its 10th Anniversary

The Northumbria Region Bird Watching Group had its beginnings in 1998 with half-day excursions held after the Wearside U3A monthly coffee mornings, the embryo idea being that members would travel to meet up with birdwatchers from other U3A birding groups in the region at their local nature reserves etc., in effect holding joint U3A site visits. Thus after prior contact by Wearside's John Lloyd, the first get-together was arranged with Whickham U3A in May 1999, when four of their members were met at Shibdon Pond Nature Reserve in Blaydon, and the combined party viewed the birds present.

The next combined excursion was held with two members of Ryton & District U3A, with Wallsend Swallow Pond as the destination, soon followed by meetings with birding groups from Newcastle and Washington U3A's in January 2000. Subsequently as the word spread, the number of U3A's with participating members mushroomed, the half-day excursions became whole day outings, and the frequency of visits increased.

From these modest beginnings, although in the main the group continues to visit local venues, over the years trips have been arranged much further afield with some requiring overnight or longer stays. For example 3 days at Bamburgh, four days at Southport, an almost annual four days on the Solway Coast, five days on the Isle of Mull and a week in Mallorca. In May 2000, seven of us joined in a three day birding holiday at York organised by Joy Soanes, the National Birdwatching Coordinator, together with other U3A birding groups (York and Sheffield). We had ringside seats for the breeding Avocets at Blacktoft Sands on the Humber Estuary, and a day at Bempton Cliffs, where we could hardly stand up in the wind, with spectacular views of the largest mainland-breeding colony of Gannets in Britain

At different times over the period, birders from some dozen U3A's in the Region attending outings, have been joined by members from further afield including Chester, Cockermouth and Newquay U3A's, which get-togethers have led to useful exchanges of ideas and burgeoning friendships. Over the past five years Clive Allen of Ryton & District U3A has planned the annual programme of visits, although for 2008 a different approach will be tried, with the leadership being shared between four people. However the group would not have been so successful without the willing help of many of the participating members in organising accommodation and travel arrangements for the outings, including lifts for the non-drivers.

Some new venues were included in the 2007 programme including Geltsdale RSPB reserve, Grindon Lough and Gilsland. By way of change a boat-load had a trip round Coquet Island RSPB reserve on a halcyon day of brilliant sunshine, to see the endangered Roseate Terns, celebrating afterwards with a fish and chip dinner.

In 2008 we have enjoyed our usual 4-day trip to the Solway for the huge flocks of wintering geese, and a fantastic ten day trip to Extramadura/Donana (Spain). We look forward to visiting the new RSPB reserve at Saltholme Marsh (Teemouth), and an autumn trip to Andalusia for the raptor migration over the Straits of Gibraltar.

Clive Allen and Colin Freeman, South Tyneside U3A

Ponteland U3A

We took a stand again at "Party in the Park" (run by Churches Together in Ponteland) in early June and had new members signing up on the day. Membership has now reached 300 and we have 30 special interest groups. The monthly meetings attract upwards of a hundred with visitors attending each month. Many visitors soon become members. Amongst the most recent titles we have had, include "Shepherd's Walks", "Climate Change", "The Other Geordies" and "History of English Parish Churches". It was wonderful to hear how a shepherd had developed walks, followed by tours and now he organises holidays for visitors from all over the world. To get a balanced view on Climate Change seek out Gareth Kane.

Members have been out and about through the spring and summer months. The two garden visiting groups and the vegetable growers all have separate programmes but they combined for an excellent visit to RHS Harlow Carr in June. The local History group succeeds in filling a coach for every outdoor visit whilst photography, bird watching and botany and geology go off in different directions. The luncheon club goes out to eat once a month – there are plenty of attractive venues to visit. The short walks group meet twice a month and have now built up quite a compendium of short walks and suitable eating facilities at the end of their walks.

We will be having our new members meeting in September – new members bring new ideas and new leaders for starting groups – we continue to have a new groups' organiser to set "wheels in motion".

Ponteland U3A continues to be very active.

Syd Cowan - Vice Chairman, Ponteland U3A

Ryton and District U3A

We are having our Open Day on October 29th this year, which is usually run as a showcase for all of our groups, and we do our best to advertise this well locally to get people to drop in and find out who we are. The day is usually run in the afternoon - about 2 - 4 p.m., and we do get quite an assortment of passing visitors, it helps that we are based in the Youth Club (!!) which is on the 'main drag' through Ryton to Crawcrook.



Our membership remains fairly steady at around the 90 mark and this seems to work quite well, though our Bowls group has a waiting list. This is simply because we do not have enough mats to accommodate more, and our good news just now is that we have been successful in a grant application to assist us in replacing one of the mats, though it is matched funding, and we need to 'top it up'. Advertising locally is via posters in shops, libraries, doctors' surgeries etc. and often quite simply word of mouth. The monthly Coffee Morning we hold is often the place where enquirers come to 'check us out' and this seems fine, our members who attend the Coffee Mornings are up for putting the world to rights, but are also very welcoming and encouraging to enquirers.

Some of our members recently enjoyed a visit to

Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle to see an Alfred Sisley exhibition which had come to our attention. The day was not good weather-wise, we travelled in a more or less constant downpour, with poor visibility all the way there.

However, on arrival we decided to do what we could to make up for the damp trip.

Some of us were keen to get to the exhibition immediately, some of us were just as keen to see to bodily needs first, and after visiting restrooms, took reviving tea or coffee before going through the exhibition. There was a good range of Sisley's works, he was one of the Impressionists who worked in Paris, although Alfred Sisley is an English name, in fact he was born in France of English parents. His work clearly chronicles the Impressionist progression generally as well as his own learning curve, and was interesting to view. The Sisley exhibition is on up to 21 September, try to get there if you can, it's well worth it. Some of our group, Thelma Littlejohn, Sylvia Cuthbert, Ann Watson, Clive Allen (our Group leader), Evelyn Sweeting and Doug Henderson are shown in the photograph at the entrance to the museum.

An unexpected bonus was to see the paintings of an artist on Illumination with a selling exhibition and to see her at work upstairs in the museum. She specialises in using gold leaf in her paintings and has produced exquisite insect and animal drawings, juxtaposed with almost jewel like stained glass style ornamentation. A rare treat, to have the opportunity to speak with a practising very fine artist. Her name is Judy Hurst, originating from Durham, she has lived in New Zealand, now returned.

Jenny Roberts, Ryton & District U3A

South Tyneside U3A

Formed in May of 2001 with 42 members the South Tyneside U3A continues to grow from strength to strength. After moving premises several times to accommodate an increasing membership our monthly meetings are currently held at the Pier Pavilion South Shields where we entertain over 350 members. We have a growing waiting list of over 75 and helped start the new Bede of Jarrow U3A in the hope that people on our waiting list would join them.

We have 34 active groups. Some are so well attended that we are attempting to start further groups to meet the demand.

Eric Makepeace - Secretary, South Tyneside U3A

Stokesley and District U3A

Membership of Stokesley and District U3A reached 220 in April, but fortunately, has slowed down over the past three months. As we approach the end of our fourth year in August, the only disappointment really is that 16 activity groups seems a little low for such a large membership. The Committee are constantly encouraging members to come forward with new ideas that could lead to more activities and this has led to the promise of three new groups starting up in the autumn in Beginners Spanish, Gardening and Poetry Reading.

Meanwhile, the Travel Group had the first of its coach trips to places of local interest in May with a visit to York and a guided tour around the Minster. Our next outing is to Alnwick Castle in July. Also in July, seven of our members are joining a four day art tour to Liverpool, organised by Stockton U3A.

The Natural History Group has enjoyed some interesting visits over the past few months. In April, seventeen members visited the site of the new RSPB reserve at Salthome on Teesside and were guided by Emma, the new warden. The site is still under construction and is planned to be open to the public in the Spring of 2009. The visitor centre promises to be outstanding, and the hides will provide an excellent view of migrant, wading and native birds. The group had lovely day for a wild flower outing to St. Gregory's Minster near Kirbymoorside in May. Twenty members came for a walk through lovely woodland and then enjoyed lunch in a nearby farm shop.

Other well established groups, such as Bridge, Art History, Armchair Travel and Walking, continue to see increasing numbers of members attending their sessions. It's interesting to follow the expansion of some groups as they move from the dining room in a member's house, to a small room in the Community Centre, then to the largest room in the Community Centre.

Tony Daniels, Stokesley and District U3A

Teesdale U3A

It's official – just into our second year and we *are* a U3A branch, number 679 to be precise. At our June meeting, John Leiper presented the Certificate of Membership of the Third Age Trust to our Chairman Barry Cook.

Our membership now stands at 130; we were gratified that 98% renewed their membership after the first year, and take this to mean we're just about getting things right.

John quipped that as he drove through beautiful Teesdale on his way to our branch meeting, at Cotherstone Village Hall, he was somewhat doubtful that there could be enough people in such a peaceful and unspoiled place to actually sustain a U3A branch. However the strength of the branch is immediately obvious to anyone attending a meeting. Attendance is usually around the 70 mark, just right for the size of the hall, and the sociability of the membership is immediately apparent. A very high percentage of people who come to 'try out' our meeting go on to join. We always have a speaker and haven't had a 'dud' yet! (except in December, when we have our Grand Christmas Bash – which involves all kinds of silliness). Recruitment of new members is mainly by 'word of mouth'.

We now have 15 active groups, all with healthy support; the latest one to form is the Cinema Group, whose favoured venue is the excellent Station Cinema complex in nearby Richmond – where the outings can include lunch or tea, and

a viewing of the changing exhibition by local artists, as well as the chosen film. Very catholic tastes in this group – from the latest Mike Leigh, to Indiana Jones, and Mamma Mia this month.

Other groups too benefit from our location: not only a beautiful area but easy transport links to further afield. Geology, Archaeology, Rambling, Bird watching (2 groups now) are spoiled for choice of venue in our surroundings. The Gardening group too – although their search for horticultural inspiration often takes them further afield; Scampston near Scarborough this month, a 'Hanging Basket Workshop' in Darlington last month. The Travel group have 'done' the Cotswolds (twice), Eden and Heligan are next, and bookings are healthy for Oberammergau in 2010.

One of our members is currently recruiting for a UFO group - yes indeed, but it actually stands for UnFinished Objects – the idea being that we all have pet projects filed away under 'pending', which we never quite got round to finishing – that best-selling novel, the Doctor Who scarf, the masterpiece in watercolour, the personal memoir, whatever – so why not let's get together and proceed with our UFOs while enjoying good company and mutual encouragement.

We are always keen to establish links with neighbouring U3A branches, so finally, a reminder: if any of you are arranging outings etc. whose numbers could do with a boost, we're happy to give it some advertising space in our own newsletter.

Marion Bond, Teesdale U3A

Tynedale U3A

As you may already know, Tynedale U3A was launched in 1984 as one of the first in the country. Since that time we have gone from strength to strength and have helped to set up several other groups in the county. We now have a membership of 387 which naturally varies from year to year but on the whole we still keep growing and the only advertising we do is by word of mouth or by our website www.gordong.demon.co.uk which gives details of forthcoming meetings etc. and also each month we now produce a leaflet called the 'Informer' which is distributed at the monthly meeting and sent out by e-mail detailing up-to-date information from group convenors or other relevant news. We still have two Newsletters each year as well.

We have about 36 different groups, some like Literature, Mah-jong and Poetry have split into smaller groups as numbers grew too large. Naturally the numbers of groups does change as some close and others start. Starters in the last 12 months have included Ballroom dancing, Spanish conversation, Digital photography, Exercise classes which are led by one of our members who specially trained so that she could lead this class and the latest group to start is Railway studies, which is appealing to both male and female members.

We have an active Travel Group with members organising holidays both home and abroad. The latest was a holiday in Slovenia and the next a weekend in Peebles.

Individual groups organise their own outings which are generally open to any member. We have an annual outing for all members, this year it was to the Falkirk Wheel which was most enjoyable.

Recently we met members from Whitehaven U3A who were on a day trip to Hexham.

We provided coffee and scones for them on their arrival and then some of our members who are Hexham Town Guides took them on a tour of the town before introducing them to a Hexham Abbey Guide who took them round our beautiful Abbey, including a visit to the historic crypt. This seemed to be a very successful day, and in view of the presentation of Whitehaven on Countryfile recently we are looking forward to a reciprocal visit in 2009.

Trisha Wall – Newsletter Editor, Tynedale U3A

Wear Tees U3A

We now have 230 members and 18 groups, all of which are very active. £9,000 of lottery money is now expended and we are submitting our final report. A coach load of members is to attend the Edinburgh festival for 5 days in August visiting Theatres and the Tattoo. In September thirty six members will have lunch and a train journey on the Weardale Railway.

Our Luncheon group is increasing in popularity, visiting local hostelrys for lunch immediately after the monthly meeting. The History group has had a very interesting year enhanced by the Lottery funding.

The Reading group has steady number of members devoted to reading. Members volunteer to lead the group in a discussion of a book of their choice. In the past eight years they have read a variety of books, mostly by modern authors. (A list is available if anyone wants it). Twice a year we have a "swap shop" when members suggest books to each other and exchange them. At 50p and £1 a copy it is a way of adding to group funds.

The Theatre group has had a very successful season, enjoying a wide variety of performances including opera: "Carmen", "Madame Butterfly". Ballet: "The Nutcracker". Drama: "The Importance of being Earnest". Musicals: "South Pacific" and "Cats". The special treat of the year was in December when fifty four members went to see "The Borrowers" in Keswick. It was a full day excursion and enjoyed by everyone.

A comparatively recently formed group is Play Reading, though small has a lot of fun. Among the plays read was "The PaxPacata" by Ken Lucas, one of a group of plays published by The Third Age Press.

We have three walking groups:

1. Last Tuesday Walkers which enjoys circular walks of between 5 and 6.5 miles in all kinds of weather.

2. 7 to 10 Mile Group. There are 38 members at present and the aim is that each member takes a turn at choosing and leading a walk. Walks are planned at least months in advance

The Italian group meets fortnightly in a member's home and so enjoys the benefits of a coal fire (rare these days). This small group of five resumes in September using "Italian For Absolute Beginners", obtained from the local library, this comprises tapes and a booklet.

The Wildlife Group meets monthly in a wide variety of places of interest, both local and further afield. They have visited the Farne Islands where they had a wet, but successful day and in November they travel to the Caerlaverock Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Dumfriesshire, staying overnight.

Norma Ralph, Wear Tees U3A

Wooler U3A

We're going to war...

Gas masks, tin hats and 1940's style radios have been occupying members of Wooler U3A recently. They're just some of the props we've acquired for our summer play, Wooler at War, which is based – very loosely – on a book of wartime reminiscences collected by Wooler's local history group.

You'd be amazed at the goings on in our small market town during the war – arsenals raided, steamrollers disappearing, soon-to-be-famous movie stars mixing with the locals.

To find out more, you could come and see the production for yourselves and join in a few old wartime favourite songs. Wooler at War is being put on over two days – July 25 and 26 – as part of Wooler's Glendale Festival. Tickets are £3 or £2 for concessions and the show is being staged at 7:30 p.m. at Glendale Middle School. If you would like tickets, ring Jenny on 01668 281219.



The sound of music

After our visit to the 25th anniversary shindig in Durham, several members came back enthused by a recorder group they'd heard. So our resident musician, Kathryn Straughan set up a recorder group for Wooler U3A members. Given that the band of fifteen or so were virtually all starting from scratch she'd quite a job on her hands. But determination has paid off.

The group are giving their first mini concert for members at the next General Meeting in August. Albert Hall next ladies?

Trips galore

One of the biggest advantages a group like ours can offer is organised trips to places and events that we perhaps wouldn't get to ourselves. This year we've already had a very successful visit to the Harrogate Flower show in April as well as two or three theatre

trips – the Pitman Painters in Newcastle went down particularly well.

Next on the agenda is a visit to Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle to see the exhibition of paintings by Alfred Sisley. Although he was English, he was part of the French Impressionist movement and the paintings on display are rarely seen as they mostly belong in private collections. After the visit to the museum, we plan to stop for a short while in Barnard Castle.

As with previous trips that involve a large coach, we'll be offering spare seats to people outside our U3A to join us, to help reduce the coach fare. So if you're free on August 14, and might like to join us, ring Elaine Bales on 01668 281124 to see if there are any spare seats. The admission to the museum is £6 or £5 and the coach fare will probably be under £10.

Flodden Day going well

Just to report that lots of people have signed up for the field study day on the Battle of Flodden which we reported last time. It's taking place on September 3 and we'll report on how it went next time.

Jenny Pollock

Area Trustee Report January 2008.

Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM)

No doubt you will all know by now that the two motions put forward by the NEC to adopt new Articles of Association and Memorandum of Association were passed with over 90% of the votes. This now means that the areas that we have worked with for some years are now replaced by the Government recognised Regions. This will make very little difference to us – the most significant difference being that we will elect our own trustee to the NEC rather than being elected at the National AGM.

This will cause other Region's much more difficulty and the NEC is working closely with them to help them to establish themselves. It looks particularly difficult in the South East and South West.

Shared Learning Projects.

These take place in several parts of the country and I am at present negotiating with Beamish museum with a view to carrying out a research project with them. By the time of the Regional Meeting at the end of July I am hoping that Beamish will have decided how they would like us to work with them. If anyone would like to be involved with such a project please contact me on 01890 840494 or lorbottle@tiscali.co.uk for more details.

Summer School.

It is now looking very likely that we will run a Summer School in the North next year (2009) with the venue being at the Queens Campus at Stockton. If anyone would like to offer a course covering 3 days or would like to assist in any other way please let me know. Contact details are as above.

National Conference and AGM

As I am sure you are all aware this is to be held at Swansea from September 7th to 9th and the theme is to be "The complete university - a celebration of diversity." Although it is a long way for us to travel I hope it will be well supported from the Region. If you really cannot attend may I appeal to you to use your proxy votes.

John Leiper, Regional Trustee

Please contribute to the next newsletter (latest date for copy is Friday 31st October 2008) whether you are on a committee or a U3A member, there is lots going on in your U3A that other U3A's in the region would love to hear about.

If you are an activity group leader or coordinator, tell us about your group. have you done anything interesting and out of the ordinary lately? Ask your Committee whether they have sent anything for the Regional Newsletter

Please email any copy that you have to regionalu3anews@btinternet.com in the body of the email or as an attachment it doesn't matter. If you only have handwritten copy then please snail mail (include your telephone number) to:

**Regional U3A News
43 Melbeck Drive
Urpeth Grange
Ouston
Chester-le-Street
County Durham
DH2 1TY**

All correspondence will be answered.

Let's see if together we can get something in the newsletter from all THIRTY SEVEN of our regional U3A's and get this newsletter to more than twenty pages.