

U3A

Northumbria Messenger



Page No.



INFORMATION

Letter from the Chairman-----	3
Trustee's Report-----	2
Development Committee update -----	8
Looking Ahead into 2010 -----	17 & 20

Life
A centre for world-class science

INVOLVEMENT

Awareness Day -----	13
Design Matters-----	10 & 11
Florence hosted -----	14
Richmond reports and invites-----	14
Stockton recruits -----	15
Washington is celebrating -----	5
Whickham Wanderers' Project -----	12



INSPIRATION

Alnwick and St. Oswald's Walk -----	4
Darlington reports -----	5
Guisborough's Rock Detectives-----	7
Middlesbrough on memories -----	7
Morpeth appreciates-----	18
Northallerton celebrates -----	4
Northumbria Birdwatchers ... Hungary-----	9
Ponteland overcomes-----	6
Prudhoe & District's calendar girl -----	18
Saltburn's intriguing history-----	13
Stokesley & District explore -----	6
Teesdale pass 200 -----	19
Wessington update-----	19
Wooler is challenged - twice-----	16



Trustee's Report December 2009

I had a meeting in York with the Educational Development Officers and our own Educational Development Contacts and other Trustees. This was a very useful meeting assessing how successful this new development has been. We were told that we can have more EDCs. In case you aren't sure what an EDC does they develop new U3As and if there are waiting lists try to start a new U3A in the area. We have two EDCs, Joyce McKay in the south and Margaret Minns in Whickham. If you would like to get involved with starting new U3As let me know.

I had my second NEC meeting on the 3rd December.

We need a new National Treasurer for 2011, also a new IUTA representative (French essential). If there is anyone in the Region who would like to be put forward for these posts, please let me know.

We have some dBIS Funding which is a grant for £5,000 to support the Learning Revolution. The grant will provide funding of £100 per event for up to five U3As in the Region. The event would be to make the public aware of a U3A in our Region. You need to apply to National Office for this.

Gentle reminder! The next Regional Meeting is on 27th January in Ponteland when the Chairman Ian Searle and Treasurer, Terry Hardie will be coming to answer questions relevant to the Third Age Trust. If you have any questions you would like to ask but can't come to the meeting would you let John Leiper know. Also let him know if you would like to book a place. (lorbottle@tiscali.co.uk or 01890 840494).

We need to discuss at this meeting the paper entitled Regional Support Structures and their funding by the Trust. (sent to your Business Secretaries). Your Regional Committee have discussed this paper and their thoughts have been sent out. It would be really useful if you have discussed both of these within your U3As before coming to the meeting. It is important that you give some consideration to this issue.

Francis Beckett, Editor of the U3A News, has published a very concise book on the history of the U3A this is available at £2.50 from the NEC. There is also a new publicity leaflet "This is U3A". This is an excellent advertising tool and your secretaries will have copies. They should be distributed in public places like libraries, CAB, churches, etc.

With best wishes for the New Year, Joyce Watts

joyce.lorbottle@tiscali.co.uk or 01890 840494

Your Chairman writes ...

Dear Fellow Members,

Wow, what an inspired and inspiring “three months since the last newsletter” you have had! Reading what you’ve been doing is rather like being given a delicious box of all one’s favourite goodies, making it impossible to single out any one in particular – it really is a treat!

So many good ideas make me wonder how we can ensure all our members have a chance to read what everyone else is doing. If you have any innovative distribution ideas would you let us know so we can pass these on?

To those who sent me suggestions for the website and for an article for the national **U3A News**, my thanks. I realise that offering to host visitors to your area is yet another call on your time but, reflecting our famed northern hospitality, many are happy to do this – so generous of you. I am hoping that a version of the article, whether it appears in print or not (!) will be used on our website to alert members, both locally and nationally, to what you are willing to offer.

Coming up is our (all day) Regional meeting in Ponteland on January 27th (featuring Ian Searle, National Chairman, and Terry Hardie, National Treasurer); we do hope to see as many representatives of our local U3As as possible, especially in light of the recent paper on “Regions” from the Third Age Trust. This is causing us concern; could this herald possible inroads into our autonomy? We want to hear as many views as possible so that we can communicate these both directly at this meeting and to the National Executive via our Regional Trustee. If you haven’t as yet seen a copy of this paper you can find it on the National website.

We are hoping to launch our new Regional website at this meeting, so look out for this. We had intended to launch the Regional DVD but this was rather pre-empted at the (excellent – our thanks to Margaret Minns & Joyce McKay, as well as our hosts, the members of Whickham U3A) “Leaders’ Day” at Marley Hill; it will be presented again on the 27th and if your U3A hasn’t yet received its copy, we hope it will be available for you.

Inside you will find details of forthcoming events and reports on recent Regional activities. I would like to draw your attention to our **Regional Meeting on April 28th, which will include our AGM** – we intend that a major focus of the meeting will be for you to tell us what you would like to see happen in our Region in the coming year.

We are grateful for the support we receive from our regularly participating U3As; we do note that some U3As attend rarely. Why? What can we do to make our meetings more attractive to all our members? Come along and let us know!

We are lucky to belong to such a friendly and exciting organisation; I would like to thank all those whose contributions and enthusiasm has made our Region the success it is. I have thoroughly enjoyed this year as your Chairman, having, I hope, finally overcome the “concussed duckling” state of my first weeks!

On behalf of your committee and myself, I wish you all an Exciting, Expanding (membership, not waist-line!), Innovative, Inspiring, Participative, Productive and most of all, a Happy and Healthy New Year.

***Yours
Marion***

Marion Whyte
Chairman

Alnwick and St. Oswald's Walk ...



We in Alnwick U3A were all a little bit surprised to find your "challenge" in the October edition of Northumbria Messenger to undertake activities relating to St Oswald's Way, as members of the Society were involved from the beginning of the project, and have taken a considerable interest in it. Peter Carter, one of our members, was involved in the research for this new long-distance walk, having responded to a request for help. The results of this research can be found in the boxes relating to historical, architectural and other information in the St Oswald's Way handbook. Alnwick U3A's Walking Group, of which Peter is a member, took an early interest in walking the Way, and in 2006 shortly after the route opened started walking along it. About 10 intrepid people set out at fortnightly intervals on the walk from the Holy Island to Heavenfield. Sadly, no-one completed the whole route, due to other commitments at various times of the year, but they all walked the vast majority of it, and I attach a photo of the group approaching Heavenfield.

Peter Carter has continued his research into St Oswald since this time, and will talk on "St Oswald and St Oswald's Way" to any group interested. He has produced some wonderful photographs of stained glass, statues etc relating to St Oswald: it is quite surprising how much material there is. He even found a painting in Venice! There is currently an exhibition, put on by the Alnwick and District Local History Society at Bailiffgate Museum in Alnwick, part of which relates to Peter's work on St Oswald. If you can get there, it is well worth seeing. It finishes on 31st December.

Dilys Carter

in Northallerton



it is crisp and white with frost this morning and there is a sprinkling of snow on the surrounding hills. It is winter and Northallerton U3A is looking forward to Christmas and planning for 2010. Seventy Walkers are off to a very nice restaurant for Christmas Lunch, whilst the Badminton players are off to Betty's for hot chocolate and probably a 'fat rascal' after their final game of the year. (They will have to play a fair few games to shift that). Over 100 members are holding a 'Beat the Winter Blues' lunch on the 20th January.

We have an activity programme planned for 2010, and 36 groups for our members to enjoy. A new Committee was voted in at the AGM on 9th December and they inherited a membership of 370 (all talented and enthusiastic). Now all we have to do is find some willing volunteers to help with all those tasks that apparently do themselves!!! (We wish).

The Committee and Members wish you all a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year, filled with friends, learning and activity.

Maggy Grocott

Darlington write

After the August break all groups restarted enthusiastically. The local history group has had talks **about Future Energy Supplies** with Dr. Nicholson from Teesside University; **St. Cuthbert**; **Roman Medicine**; and How Villages Got Their Names. Outings took them to Northumberland - to **Flodden Field**, Chillingham Castle, Etal and Ford; to The Treasurers House and Cemetery in York and to **Cusworth Hall near Doncaster**, museum, gardens, lake, etc. and is highly recommended. Google "Cusworth Hall, Doncaster" for details.

The garden group again had a very good season. They too were exceptionally lucky with the weather. All the gardens visited were very interesting and there annual holiday was thoroughly enjoyed by all. They ended the season in spectacular fashion by a visit to **Castle Howard** to see the castle decorated for Christmas.

We had our annual Christmas lunch at the Croft Hotel. As always we had a wonderful meal which was accompanied by appropriately seasonal music. There were a large number of very acceptable raffle prizes.

The final event of the year was our carol service at Bondgate Methodist Church, attended by about 150 members. This consists of a programme of seasonal music followed by readings from members and an address by the minister. Donations were presented to the church and local charities.



All activities will be suspended for the Christmas period.

A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all regional members.

Harry Gibbs

Advance Warning: The 2010 Northumbria Region AGM will be on Wednesday 28th April - back at The Angel View Inn, Gateshead. It's time to start thinking about nominations, motions and so on.

Washington is celebrating ...

its 10 years in existence during 2010.

- The year kicks off with a celebratory Anniversary lunch at Beamish Hall on the 22nd of January for which we have 80 bookings from members. John and Doreen Lloyd of Wearside U3A who helped us to get off the ground have been invited to join us in our celebration.
- Early in July we have planned a return cruise from South Shields to



Newcastle. We have hired exclusive use of the boat and nearer the time we plan to invite U3A members from the Region to join us on this trip. More details in the New Year!

- Finally, in early September we are planning a day out and a picnic at **Beamish Museum**.

Alongside these events we have an ongoing programme of preparing

- **a year book** which will include photographs of all current members (who wish to take part) with brief details about themselves for posterity!"

John Holleran, Secretary

Stokesley & District ..

celebrated our 5th Anniversary as a U3A with a fully catered, subsidised lunch in nearby Hutton Rudby Village Hall. Ninety members attended and our guest of honour was Margaret Minns from Whickham & District U3A. The day was enjoyed by everyone and we hope that our next five years will be equally successful as the first.

Our membership is now over 300 and there seems no end to the popularity of the U3A. Our 23 groups are all flourishing and we have exploratory meetings for two potentially new groups in January - Music Appreciation and **Needlecraft**.

Particularly successful this year has been our Travel Group. In addition to one day, coach trips to **Saltaire, Durham Cathedral, Tees Port (3 trips)** and the **National Glass Centre** at Sunderland, we had a weekend visit to **Manchester** and



Liverpool where the highlight was a 5 hour boat trip down the **Manchester Ship Canal** on the Sunday. Our **Natural History Group** also ran a coach trip to the **Farne Islands**, whilst the Gardening Group had days out to the **Harrogate Spring and Autumn Flower Shows** as well as visiting a number of gardens in North Yorkshire, particularly **Harlow Carr Gardens** and **Scampston Walled Garden**. The programmes for visits with the Travel Group, Natural History Group and Gardening Group in 2010 are already booking fast.

Tony Daniels



Save money! 0870 calls can be expensive, but there is a way round. go to www.saynoto0870 where you may well find a geographical or even a freephone number. Lots of other hints there, too.

Ponteland overcomes

the gloomy, short days that are upon us by gathering to enjoy the climax to the year, the Christmas "**Faith Tea**". This celebration, at our monthly general meeting, was a wonderful chance for members to relax, be entertained and indulge in a marvellous spread.

This year, our Chairman, put together a clever **combination of members' talent and professional input**. First to perform was our **Recorder Group** whose



instruments ranged from the smallest to the largest possible. Next up, were Ernie Coe and Bob, two Geordie comedians who knew how to raise a laugh even from the most critical. I was very tickled by "the talking frog" joke; maybe you will get the chance to hear it in full one day so I

won't spoil the punch line. Finally, Brian Prickett conducted the **Choral Group** in a seasonal ensemble and then led the assembled audience to sing with gusto some Christmas carols.



As you might expect, we rounded off the afternoon with a welcome cup of drink and as much teatime fare we could eat.

Gillian Williams, Vice Chairman

Guisborough's Rock detectives – Beginners' Geology



During the Spring and Autumn of 2009, two beginners' courses of "Rock Detectis" were held to re-discover and investigate the Cold Cases of the life and death of living beings that lived almost 200,000,000 years ago in Cleveland.

It involved 30 people in total, in ten week slots, and stimulated excitement with two field excursions on the spectacular North Yorkshire coast and in a disused North York Moors quarry which revealed a classic geological exposure.

The coast trip proved that the Present is the Key to the Past and that Middlesbrough with its industrial Teesside conurbation began in a muddy, iron-rich swamp!

In the quarry the remains of a 30,000,000 years old off-shoot of a Hebridean massively hot magma was closely examined, the conclusion being it had probably winged its way across Scotland and North West England from the Isle of Mull. Back in the classroom, death assemblages of ancient animals, beautiful earth minerals and rocks ranging from ironstones to shiny mica schists were examined and forensically classified, many of them provided by funds obtained from a fruitful partnership with our local Prior Pursglove College.

The course was rounded off imagining our awe-inspiring, spectacularly varied countryside from its first birth pangs in a huge long-gone continent, via tumultuous mountain building and the spreading of a new ocean. These formed the present rocks and landscape we spent a lot of time meticulously observing in our studies.

We feel confident and hopeful that some of our Rock Detectives feel the need to pursue matters further, perhaps now with a more measured eye?

Stan Robson

Middlesbrough on Capt. Cook and Stewart Park



In December I attended a special book launch held at the Captain Cook Museum in Marton, Middlesbrough. *Memories of Stewart Park* was published by The Friends of Stewart Park to commemorate 80 years since the official opening of the park. One of our members, Linda Gallagher, had compiled memories of the park sent in by members of the public. These varied from outings with children and walking the dog to the children's pets, the country dancing, the Cleveland Show, Radio One road shows and doing their courting!



There were contributions from park staff past and present. There were also photographs from family albums, Middlesbrough Council and the Evening Gazette. Linda gave an interesting introduction to the project and John Grundy gave one of his amusing speeches.

The Friends have just been awarded a large grant from the Heritage Lottery fund to develop some of the original buildings from Marton Hall to enhance visitor facilities and we look forward to improvements in our much loved park.

Heather Walker

NORTHUMBRIA REGION
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT - OCTOBER 2009 TO JANUARY
2010

AWARDS FOR ALL GRANT OF £8233 - PROJECTS COMPLETED

Many of you who were interviewed or participated in activity groups which were filmed in the past months by Noel Adamson and John Cooke will be pleased to know that their **excellent promotional DVD has now been published**. Each **U3A** in the Region is entitled to **ONE FREE COPY**. This can be picked up at the January Regional Meeting in Ponteland. Please do not copy it! Orders for extra copies, only £5 each, will be taken from then onwards.

The Grant also went towards -

- the **purchase of varied I.T. equipment** which can be borrowed. A full list will be circulated and a training session in the use of the equipment will be arranged soon.
- **Three smart Velcro Display boards**, for your use if you so wish, are now housed in the north, middle and south of the region.

Here is a reminder of the other projects that Grant monies funded -

- Two new U3As were started,
 - Two successful Awareness Days were held and,
 - An Evaluation Day for Co-ordinators Leaders from 22 U3As.
- All appreciated the valuable contribution of Mike Long, National ED Officer, and took away much from the lively discussions.

Please note: The next Development 'happening' is an
Awareness Day at Marley Hill on January 11th 2010.

Bring your own lunch.

OTHERWISE ATTENDANCE FREE. PLACES STILL AVAILABLE

Margaret Minns and Joyce McKay (Regional Education & Development Contacts)

Your Education and Development Contacts - Joyce McKay and Margaret Minns - say
Thank you so much
to all those who took part in, and helped with, the successful and
enjoyable **Evaluation Day at Marley Hill**.

Please note Joyce would welcome an assistant

Northumbria Region U3A Birdwatchers go to Hungary

Colin Freeman writes Five members plus a friend set off for a Wildlife holiday in the Hortobagy National Park, a steppe habitat, for the first half of the week, and then to the Zemplen Hills near the Slovakian border for the remaining time.

Sometimes in the rural hinterland, it was like stepping back in time; from my hotel window I watched a lady carrying two buckets to fill at a street water-pump, and on another occasion a horse drawn cart carrying huge tree trunks. The barns were long and low, often with thatched roofs and sometimes 'wattle and daub' walls.

One of the delights when transferring between hotels, was crossing a river on a 'Chain-Ferry', only marred when we realised that we had left our thermos flasks at the previous hotel. Luckily there was a convenient café nearby.

We were lucky enough to watch Bearded Tits for several minutes at a distance of 10 feet, usually one is lucky to catch glimpses as they fly between reed beds.

The continental race of the Long Tailed Tit With its pure white head was a joy to behold, while the Red Backed Shrike (the 'butcher bird'), lost to Britain as a breeding bird, was a common sight on roadside bushes.



We found several Long Eared Owls roosting during the daytime, in the oak trees along a village street with a Syrian Woodpecker in an adjacent tree.

We also had very good views of four different species of Eagle, plus Saker and Red Footed Falcons, Montagus and Pallid Harrier, and many other birds too numerous to mention. We finished the week off in grand style with excellent views of a Ural Owl, usually difficult to find, and often missed by other trips, but our local guide Balazs came up trumps once more. We really appreciated his sense of humour, fluent English and identification skills.

Apart from birds we also saw Water Buffalo, White cattle similar in appearance to the Chillingham wild herd, a breed of long-haired pigs, Sousliks (the E.European version of the Meerkat), many Dragonflies, Butterflies, Grass Snake, Green-Backed Lizard, and a Serotine Bat.

One of the highlights was an evening spent in a Wine Cellar. The walls were coated with a fungus similar to Penicillin, which was used in the fermentation process. We took the proprietor's exaggerated tales of the wine's magical healing properties with a pinch of salt, but drank it anyway.

The local insects could give Scottish midges a run for their money in a tourist-biting contest, and the village dogs started to bark at 4.00am, the cockerels not to be outdone, quickly joined the chorus. We also could have done without the 6-hour wait at Heathrow Airport on both the outward and return journeys, courtesy of British Airways withdrawing flights at very little notice.



However these irksome details did little to detract from the enjoyment of a wonderful week and we can't wait for our trip next year to Lesvos in Spring, and Bulgaria in Autumn; we also look forward to Belarus in 2011.

Do you have a problem opening packages and containers, using 'helpful' gadgets, mobile phones or operating IT equipment?

You are not alone! Help is at hand.

Members of Northumbria Region are involved in addressing these issues.

Read on ... then add your penn'orth – contact Joyce Watts

Product Design Workshop on 12th November 2009 at General Hospital, Institute for Ageing and Health

The object of this workshop was to invite eight members of the U3A to consider specific consumer product designs with facilitated assistance from a commercial product designer, Kishen Gohil and members of the Institute for Ageing and Health at Newcastle University and the school of design at Northumbria University. This was a pre runner to the event on the 19th. Members took examples of what they thought was good and bad design. Amongst these examples were blister packed tablets, other products which were so tightly packed that it was impossible to get into (bacon, emery boards, light bulbs, batteries). Jars that were impossible to open even with the help of implements designed to assist the disabled.



Items of good design were a coffee grinder, a laundry airer designed in the 60s, a camera, a potato peeler, shampoo bottle. An interesting article that was deemed 'bad' design was a Dyson vacuum cleaner and coincidentally the product designer had deemed that this was an article of 'good' design. Comment was made that perhaps he had never used one. This was a good point for animated discussion! This just goes to show that some designs just don't suit everybody.



Signage was discussed and it was generally felt that there was too much and badly designed signage. For instance the sign on roads indicating to beware of older people was derogatory. It was agreed that it was not necessary to show older people but any person walking on the pavement should be regarded.

It was agreed at the end of the meeting that Kishen would go away and prepare a paper about signage to be used at the Design Event on the 19th (in the event this work was not prepared in time).

Joyce Watts

there's more



Design Matters: Design for All Ages

This one-day conference run jointly between Voice North and The Institute for Ageing and Health (part of Newcastle University) on the 19th November at the Centre for Life, Newcastle, was intended solely for U3A but did include some people from other organisations such as Age Concern etc. Of the 130 or so attendees at least 100 were U3A members from Northumbria Region.

Professor Mike Catt of Newcastle University opened the day, giving a background to the ageing population and the impact of increased life expectancy including statistics to demonstrate this.

This was followed by Professor Jim Edwardson from "Years Ahead"; his subject was "Design Challenges and opportunities: A user's perspective". His address was based on taking himself through a typical day and identifying issues where bad design causes problems, some of which were:

- New design of Nescafe jars - cannot grip new rounded lids
- Shelves in Supermarkets too high or too low
- Theatre visits - when does the performance end, allowing planned pick-up time.
- Setting Videos - even the Duke of Edinburgh has problems
- You only notice bad design when it goes wrong
- Nursing Staff ill trained to deal with Dementia
- Enormous potential for Industry in older people
- After Kaiser Supermarkets in Germany implemented improvements for older people turnover increased by 26% in first year and 100% in the second year.



Mike Pearson (a designer) made the following points:



- Designers tend to design what they want
 - We should drive change in which we are prepared to engage
 - A healthy society listens to the needs of the population
 - We should be a proactive voice and not reactive
 - Ten percent of Health Budget is spent on dementia

Professor Robert Young of Northumbria University made the point that -

- designers can be used to design services as well as products. Maybe we should look at a comprehensive re-design of Third Age Trust services?

The final speaker was Professor Peter Gore of Newcastle University who compared the differences between Assistive Technology and Inclusive Design. He showed that in almost every case Inclusive Design eradicated the need for Assistive Technology.

In the afternoon we broke into a number of small groups and considered our own ideas of good and bad design. The results will be analysed by the Institute of Ageing and Health and hopefully we shall see a report in due course.

John Leiper

"That was Then Project" 2008-2010

(Target - to involve a total of 24 schools over 3 years)

Year 2 (2009-2010) - autumn term

- We have visited 7 schools, a good start to the year.
- We have bookings for 2 in the spring term and 2 for the summer
- leaving 4 spaces to complete this part of the "That was Then Project".



Six of the schools visited wished to hear about children during WW2, evacuees in particular. The 7 "evacuees involved" all had had very different experiences.

One school (St. Peters R C Primary School) surprised us by asking if parents or grandparents could come along. The "evacuees involved" agreed. The children prepared questions in advance and read them out themselves. The adults were impressed and very interested in the topic. At the end they also asked questions the first being -"Was it true that during the war brides made their wedding dresses out of net curtains and/or parachute silk!?"

We continue to be delighted with the response from Gateshead Primary schools and impressed by the standard of behaviour, quality of questioning and the children's and the teachers' enthusiasm for the topic being explored.

Simon Wooley, Beamish Education Officer and Peter Bolger, Gateshead Grid for Learning Manager, Gateshead City Learning Centre continue to be pleased with the work produced by the pupils and consider that everything so far has been both successful and worthwhile.

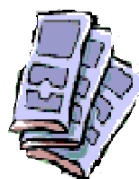
The Web Wanderers have now started phase 2

Gateshead Library asked us to produce a set of history leaflets about the people in the Twentieth Century in the Whickham Urban District based on the information on our website.

The first leaflet *Along the Turnpike Road* is now in print. This was done in conjunction with Francis Newman, Joan Telford and Sunnyside History Society.

Three more leaflets are to follow-

- Twentieth Century Dunston,
- Swalwell and
- Whickham.



*Whickham U3A Web Wanderers
The Lead Partner
That was Then Project
December 2009*

Saltburn-by-the-Sea - a short history

The town of Saltburn as it is today was founded in the 1860s by Henry Pease, a well known local Quaker. But the history of the area goes back much further with the discovery of a stone axe from the Neolithic period. The name Saltburn first appears after the Anglo-Saxon invasion and is derived from the Saxon name for the local stream - Sealt-burna or salty stream.



Henry Pease was walking along the beach from Marske to Saltburn when he envisaged a "heavenly" town arise from the cliffs above old Saltburn, reminiscent of the description of Jerusalem in the book of Revelations in the Bible. Within the next 20 years he built a pier, valley gardens and a water-powered cliff hoist. At the centre of the town he built the Zetland hotel with its own private station for the railway from Darlington. The group of so-called "jewel" streets along the seafront (Coral, Garnet, Ruby, Emerald, Pearl, Diamond and Amber streets) are said to be a legacy of this vision.



Saltburn's more covert past lies in smuggling and the town is immensely proud of its famous smuggling past. One of the best known was John Andrew who was landlord of the Ship Inn which is still in use today. Saltburn has also had its share of famous people and events -

Malcolm Campbell set his first unofficial record of 138.08 mph while driving Bluebird on the sands on 17th June 1922.

David Coverdale of Deep Purple was born here and grew up in the Red Lodge on Marine Parade.

George Hardwick the footballer was born in Saltburn

Chris Rea lived in Saltburn before moving to London

Tony Mowbray ex-Middlesbrough player was born here

Nicholas James Macdonald Patrick - astronaut was born in Saltburn on 22nd March 1964

Jimmy Savile often visited cousins in Saltburn.



Saltburn also has a Miniature Railway running from the sea front through the valley gardens. There is also a large community of surfers using the North Sea breakers to there advantage.

Our thriving U3A group has over 600 members and over 36 activities available to members.

Howard Leake

There are still spaces left for the next **Awareness Day**
January 11th at Marley Hill Community Centre.

Registration 10 am finishing 3.30 pm

More details available from Margaret Minns.
email mitzi200@supanet.com or 0191 414 3924

Florence hosted



Two "lucky!" members of Northumbria U3A were paid out of European Funds, through Newcastle University, to attend the First Oasis Conference representing British Elderly! In five three hour sessions over three days we had over 30 presentations of how Europe is to help improve/provide "Quality of Life for the Elderly". We were overwhelmed with statistics of demographic changes, figures on current and projected costs of care, the definition(s) of elderly and how Ontologies were needed to solve problems.

Facts that the ratio of "workers" to "retired" was falling rapidly from 7:1 to 2:1 and the costs of caring for the elderly was rising both in cash terms and number of carers meant other solutions had to be found. The degree of acceptability of robotic help in the many differing forms left great doubt in my mind. The extreme of a micro chip insertion into my body to give/offer help and/or care fortunately will not come in my life time!!

Not sure the costs of my input to the conference could be justified!

John Lloyd

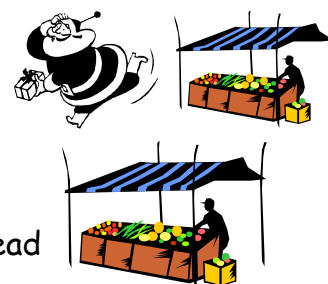
Richmond reports ...

We are plodding along quietly - membership, though small by some standards, is steadily increasing, but we have a dearth of males!! The House groups are continuing to meet: both French and German are thriving but we are still searching for folk to lead Italian and Spanish conversation circles.

Recently, some Oral History group members visited the Catterick Garrison library to be **interviewed and videoed** by pupils from a local primary school who were compiling an archive of material from the 2nd World War. The recently formed Computer group continues to meet twice monthly in Reeth - they are hoping the winter weather will not cause transport problems.

In late November a party (**led by a 92yr old youngster!**) is visiting the **German Christmas markets**. This is the third year well-travelled Rita has organised a similar trip..... could she be the most senior leader in the region?? The group will return in time for the 6th Christmas Carvery Lunch at Richmond Golf Club when we are looking forward to being entertained by the well known local group "The Dales Folk".

In the New Year we are anticipating the formation of a steering committee to organise an **Ambling and Architecture** group which has a putative membership of 35, whilst discussions are taking place to form a Theatre Visit group in conjunction with some other local organisations.



If your local U3A would like to visit historic Richmond, we would be pleased to welcome you and assist in organising your trip. Please telephone 01748 (822584) or (824824) for information. Our monthly newsletter is available from judyacton@btinternet.com

MJS

Offers from other U3As to host visitors would be welcome. Please contact the editor.

Stockton ... recruits!!

At our AGM in March we decided to hold a 'recruitment/open' day to raise the profile of Stockton U3A in our local area, and also to try to increase our membership by 10%.

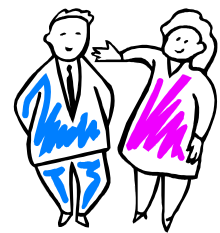
Where to start ? We booked our venue in the Conference Room at Stockton Library, which is centrally situated and well used. We formed a small sub-committee well in advance of the proposed event on 10th August. Then we set about our publicity drive.



1. First of all we did a broadcast on Radio Tees, we prepared posters, banners, bookmarks and information leaflets.
2. A week before the event, we contacted all the local newspapers and managed to get a mention in each of them, covered the area in posters - newsagents, hairdressers, fish shops, supermarkets, dry cleaners - we had a great response from each of them.
3. Finally, as a stepping stone to the final event, we held a stall in our local Shopping Centre on market day. We spoke to 47 interested people and many more passers-by.
4. On the big day, the rain came down in torrents and we thought 'Shall we even bother to set up our tables?' However, despite the weather, to our amazement and sheer joy over 50 people attended, inspired by our advertising drive - and the offer of free tea and coffee and homemade biscuits !! More importantly they were able to meet both existing and other prospective new members in an informal and friendly atmosphere - if at times slightly chaotic - after all it was the first time we had organised such an event.

Were our aims achieved ? They certainly were:-

- We **increased local knowledge** of Stockton U3A
- We **increased our membership** by 10%
- New members are **introducing friends**.
- The situation seems to be gathering momentum and membership **continues to grow** and has exceeded our expectations.



Our aim now is to repeat the exercise next year.

The editor regrets: It is not practical to include photographs in the printed or emailed version of the Northumbria Messenger.

No matter how good the quality, many do not photocopy well, especially into black and white.

They can use up a lot of memory and so take a long time to transfer for those not on broadband.

They also use up a lot of ink and time when printing direct from a computer.

Those wishing to share photographs are invited to put them on the regional website:

www.nru3a.co.uk and/or display them at regional meetings.

Wooler writers take up the challenge

A chance comment at the Wooler U3A's film screenings has led to the setting up of a creative writing group.

"One of our members commented that the lead character had had an interesting life," says Helen Astley, leader of the new writing group. "I thought, yes, but everybody has interesting lives in one way or another, it's just that we usually leave it too late to try and get family stories written down."



So Helen set up a creative writing group to encourage people to jot down family histories, memories and anecdotes as short stories.

The group meets for two hours every month and members read out something they've written. Each member of the group responds with comments - something they like about the story and then something they feel might make it even better and finally another positive comment. The main aim is to encourage the writer and help them improve their work.

"Everyone has got something to say," adds Helen. "There's no shortage of ideas and we all agreed at the beginning to take nothing we hear outside the group."



"Later we might decide to do an anthology but it will be up to the authors which parts of their work they're willing to publish."

Meanwhile the group is just enjoying the newfound freedom of putting pen to paper and sharing their short stories with each other.

Making use of what you've got is one of the tenets of the U3A, so Wooler U3A members took themselves off on a magical history tour of their neighbourhood.

... as do the local history buffs

Making use of what you've got is one of the tenets of the U3A, so Wooler U3A members took themselves off on a magical history tour of their neighbourhood.



With local history buff Ron French leading the way, we stopped first in Elsdon where we found the beautifully renovated pele tower that had once belonged to the vicars of the village and the twelfth century St

Cuthbert's church. After lunch at Otterburn Mill, organised by Ron's wife Jean, we set out for Holystone Grange with its Bastle Tower in the grounds and the impressive balustrading (which came originally from Haggerston Castle) around the main house. On to Holystone village and the stunning Lady's well, set in a grove of trees with its crystal clear water flowing abundantly out of the square pool. Final stop was Biddlestone Roman Catholic Chapel, in the grounds of what was once Biddlestone Hall, home of the Selbys for nearly 650 years. Originally a pele tower, the house was later enlarged and the chapel built on the base of the old tower. It has recently been renovated by the Historic Chapels Trust who opened it for our visit.



The day was rounded off with tea at Clennell Hall and stunning scenery as we drove home, leaving only one question on everyone's mind... When's the next one Jean and Ron?

Looking ahead into 2010 with the Events Sub-Committee



Wednesday January 27th 2010 - 9.30am for 10am (note the earlier start time)

This is the date of the next **Regional Meeting** which will be at **Ponteland Memorial Hall**. It will be an all day meeting with Ian Searle the Third Age Trust Chairman and Terry Hardie the National Treasurer in attendance to answer your questions. It is particularly appropriate that we should have this meeting now given the fact that the Third Age Trust has just issued a paper on Regional Support. I would recommend that you read this before the meeting. As usual an Agenda will be sent out prior to the 27th so make sure you get hold of a copy.

There is a **limit of 100 people** for this event and **LUNCH IS FREE** there are still places left but **booking is essential** so if you wish to go please contact me on 01890 840494 or lorbottle@tiscali.co.uk

Wednesday March 17th 2010.



This is the date of the Science Day to be held at the Centre for Life. All those who have booked should now have the information to enable them to book their choice of subject. If you have not yet made your choice please see your U3A contact for this event.

Design Events

There have been two of these in November organised by the Institute for Ageing and Health, part of Newcastle University and they are looking for us to co-operate in another survey early in the New Year (details at the regional meeting and from local committees). I hope you will all take part. We are hoping to produce a paper from this survey which we are hoping to present to the prestigious International ICADI Conference to be held at the Sage in September.

I do have to apologise on behalf of the IAH for the fact that they have run these and other events but have given us very short notice. We have pointed out to them that if they want our co-operation then they must give us more time.

Tall Ships

I would ask you all to support Brian Prickett and the Regional Choir at the Tall Ships event in Hartlepool in August 2010. Contact Brian (Ponteland U3A) for more details. (01661 825129).



We still need U3As to volunteer to run Study Days. Please do not leave it all to the Events Sub-Committee.

It is quite likely that there will be a repeat of the Bowes Day as there will be new displays to see later in the year and we are looking at organising a Science Summer "School" early in 2011 if we can sort out the details satisfactorily.

John Leiper

Prudhoe & District's calendar girl ...

Some 18 months ago I decided to start collecting photographs with a view to producing a 2010 calendar for my U3A group. Having come to destination, the printed product (almost sold out now!) I thought I would put down a few thoughts, to maybe encourage others to do the same for 2011.



I needed 13 pictures, the 12 monthly pages plus cover, and I wanted a good variety, covering indoor and outdoor, social and academic activities, formal and informal shots, and showing as many members as possible. This is quite a time-consuming venture.



You need to keep up with a lot of groups, and some activities are not very obviously photogenic. Plus an unforeseen problem - some very quiet, unassuming members managed to get into nearly every picture that I took! I checked out local printers but decided early on to go through a web firm, www.fileprint.org. Everything was done online, but they are based in Gateshead so I felt that I was supporting local industry. You create a PDF file, using jpg images, and for a £1 fee they will store it for 12 months so that you can reorder. The process is time-consuming, and not always easy to follow, but a lovely lady called Olga, who has the patience of a saint, answers pleas for help by telephone or email.

Pictures need to be good quality digital, in landscape format (3x2). They are slotted into a pre-set template, but you have a choice of background colours. You can create your own wording for the cover, and also add a logo, contact details etc, which appear on every page. I found their service and quality excellent - orders were delivered unfailingly within 24 hours. I belong to a photography website, through which I could obtain a substantial discount, but even without this the prices are very reasonable. And most important - unlike local printers they do not require a minimum order; you can just buy one copy if you want.

The calendar has proved popular with members wanting to show their activities to friends and family. It has also been useful PR - we have given complimentary copies to a number of organizations that have supported us over the year.

And yes, before you ask, people have asked if we are going to do a nude calendar next time. I've said that I'm happy to take the pictures!



Moira Wooldridge

Morpeth and District show appreciation ...

We hosted a very successful Awareness Day in October, led by Margaret Minns. It was well attended and led to much debate.

Maryan Duckworth

This is a great way to meet other members and get new ideas – will your U3A act as hosts in 2010? Contact Margaret Minns or Joyce McKay – details on page 13

Teesdale Pass 200

Yes, we now have over 200 members. So we are appreciating our new venue, the Jersey Farm Hotel.

One of Teesdale's specialities, prehistoric rock art, formed the subject of a **lecture to our Archaeology** group by a local expert. and later a tour of Barningham Moor. It is a great subject allowing much speculation and discussion as to what it's all about.



Two dozen of our Travel group got away from the British summer with a visit to **Mallorca**. Calla Ratjada lying next to a national park gave some excellent guided walking, by courtesy of Preferred Travel.

For the time that outside visits are not so congenial we have arranged extra monthly meetings for small specialist gatherings and have already had an excellent talk **on bird ringing at Cape Wrath** by one of the staff of the Foxglove Covert local nature reserve Catterick and also a talk on **Aroma Therapy** by one of our members, a practitioner.

Great good fortune has befallen our **Geology** group. A professional geologist joined us just as he was retiring and set up a series of tutorials. Up to 36!! members have attended to share in his enthusiasm and are really learning.



A day of fine weather in December favoured a ramble in upper Teesdale and a good lunch at the Langdon Beck Hotel.

A big event in the area was **The Antiques Road Show at the Bowes Museum**. One of our members was interviewed and filmed about his grandfather Charles Willis who was an artist at the turn of the 19C, and painted the Queen Mother.

Finally after some tricky quizzes and a good lunch at the Jersey Farm we were entertained by **an excellent sextet, the Dalesiders**, playing music with a suitable flavour for Christmas.

Barry Cook

News from Wessington in Washington

A very happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year to other U3As.

Our membership is growing slowly which gives us a good chance to get to know new members as they join.

Instead of a normal meeting in December we decided to have a Christmas lunch. This was held at our usual venue and the restaurant there provided a very good meal. It was an enjoyable afternoon with a raffle, a festive quiz and crackers



that contained synchronised whistles and music sheets so we formed our own musical ensemble of Christmas carols. This created lots of fun and laughter.

A wonderful atmosphere to end the year and hoping to be able to do similar next Christmas.

Norma Harrison

Don't miss these ...

Monday 11th January	Awareness Day at Marley Hill (see pages 8 & 13)
Wednesday 27th January	Regional Meeting in Ponteland (see pages 2 & 17)
Wednesday 17th March	Science Day at Centre for Life (see page 17)
Wednesday, 28th April	Regional Meeting & AGM - 10am at the Angel View Inn, Gateshead (check start time)
In the pipeline:	
May or June	Bowes Museum - incl. Textiles (no other details yet)
For Tall Ships in August 2010	Regional choir practices (see page 17)

**Final copy date
for the next edition of The Northumbria Messenger is
Saturday 12th March 2010**

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Northumbria Regional website www.nru3a.co.uk