



## Members Newsletter April 2023

### A Message from the Chair

Hello everyone

It seems that Spring has sprung, although some of our recent weather might suggest otherwise. But the daffs are in bloom, hopefully suggesting that the weather is indeed changing for the better. I am certainly looking forward to walking our dogs without having to wrap a scarf around my ears!

You will see in this edition that we have an interesting programme of monthly meetings in 2023, and it has been gratifying that the attendance numbers are more or less back to pre-Covid levels. So please do carry on enjoying your meetings and Group activities. That's what u3a is all about!

Trevor Robinson

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**Monthly Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> February**  
**Louise Percival - “Traditional Chinese Medicine in the Modern World” - Is there still a place for it?”**

At the February meeting we had a very interesting talk from Louise Percival, who is a trained acupuncturist and a member of the British Acupuncture Association.

Acupuncture is a treatment derived from ancient Chinese medicine which started around three thousand years ago. Fine needles are inserted into certain sites in the body for therapeutic or preventative purposes.

It involves stimulating sensory nerves under the skin and in the muscles, this results in the body producing natural substances, such as pain-relieving endorphins.

Traditional acupuncture is based on a belief that an energy or life force known as Qi flows through the meridians of the body. When Qi does not flow freely this can cause illness.



Practitioners also believe acupuncture can restore the flow of Qi and so restore health. The following list is not exhaustive but merely a selection of conditions which may be improved with acupuncture: chronic pain, headaches, arthritis, digestive disorders, stress and anxiety, back and neck pain, sports injuries.

**Maureen Sayers**

## Monthly Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> March

### Tom Allen - “*The Early Northern Railways*” - Exploring the railways of old in the North

At the March Meeting Tom Allen gave an excellent presentation on Historic Railways of the North East focusing on the Alnwick and Coldstream Railway, more commonly known as the Alnwick to Cornhill line and the Alnwick to Alnmouth branch line.

When railways were first built it was out of necessity but soon rivalry and prestige took over without taking into consideration commercial success. The 1840s saw the biggest growth of railway mania with 6,220 miles of railways built.

In 1845 the Newcastle and Berwick railway was authorised by Act of Parliament, the first station in the Alnmouth area was constructed at Lesbury in 1847 but was only operational for about 4 years.

There was a station at Bilton, just south of the 18 arches main line viaduct, and this was operational from 1850 to 1892. The



third station was on the same site as the present station at Hipsburn which became operational in 1892. This station was built on a low budget and was not as grand as other station buildings on the line such as Warkworth.

The most impressive civil engineering feature on the Alnwick to Alnmouth

branch line is undoubtedly the Cawledge Viaduct (see picture opposite). This was constructed to a design by Robert Stephenson and carries the line for 135 yards over the Cawledge burn. It comprises 7 arches with a height of the central arch to the stream below of 53 feet. The arches measure 45 feet in span.



## March Monthly Meeting – contd

Services and traffic developed steadily and in 1885 Alnwick Town Council approached the North Eastern Railway (NER) requesting improved facilities as the existing station seemed inadequate. There was some initial reluctance from the NER, but they suddenly reversed their decision, possibly after pressure from the Duke of Northumberland who was keen to receive members of the Royal Family in a prestigious building. The magnificent station we now have – quite out of proportion for a small country town – opened on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1887.

Although the Alnwick to Alnmouth branch line was generally regarded as a success and the line survived the Beeching axe, it was closed to passenger traffic in January 1968 and to goods traffic in October of that year. Soon after the railway was cut in two by the A1 bypass, running round the east side of Alnwick. Unfortunately, in a short-sighted move, it was decided that it was not worth constructing a rail bridge over the bypass.

After the line closure in 1968, little happened until the Aln Valley Railway Society was formed in 1995. The original idea of the society was to open the complete line from Alnwick station to Alnmouth station as a heritage railway.

Feasibility studies showed the project to be viable, but early fundraising proved unsuccessful.



Eventually a plan was put forward to build a new station near to Lionheart industrial site to the east of the A1. This idea was accepted and Northumberland Estates, who had bought the trackbed from British Rail in 1971, granted a lease for the land to the Aln Valley Railway in 2012.

By 2016 a recognisable station had emerged from the green field site. This included two platforms, an engine shed, workshop, café, museum, model railway, footbridge, signal box, car park, water supply for an operational steam locomotive, three historic diesel locomotives and a range of rolling stock.

## March Monthly Meeting – contd

In 2018 a further EU grant was obtained. This enabled the extension of the line and construction of a halt and run-round loop at Greenrigg as well as the purchase of a heritage BR coach for conversion to a mobile café to be stationed at the halt on running days. The railway would soon be halfway to Alnmouth station and had a destination for passengers! An EU grant for a Greenway was obtained which enabled the construction of a combined footpath and cycle way from Lionheart to Greenrigg.

Moving onto the Alnwick to Coldstream line, this 36-mile single-track branch line passed through some of the most beautiful but sparsely populated areas of Northumberland with most of its 10 stations servicing only small villages.

There had been several attempts to connect Wooler to the expanding rail network in the past, eventually the North Eastern Railway were prompted into action and in 1882 were granted permission to construct the Alnwick and Coldstream railway.

The Duke of Northumberland was supportive of the new Alnwick to Cornhill line provided it didn't cross Hulne Park. Unfortunately, this diversion meant a climb of over 400 feet to reach the summit on Alnwick Moor, in this section 500,000 tons of rock were removed.

Unlike the Alnwick branch line, the line to Cornhill was never a commercial success. It opened in 1887 but estimates were over optimistic from the start and passenger traffic peaked in 1890. This service was discontinued in 1930. Goods services continued until 1965 on the northern section and 1953 on the southern section.

Immediately beyond Edlingham station a 60 feet high viaduct with five spans of 40 feet crosses the valley of the Edlingham burn.

The next stop was Whittingham Station (see picture opposite) which was one of the most impressive stations on the line with an island platform, Station



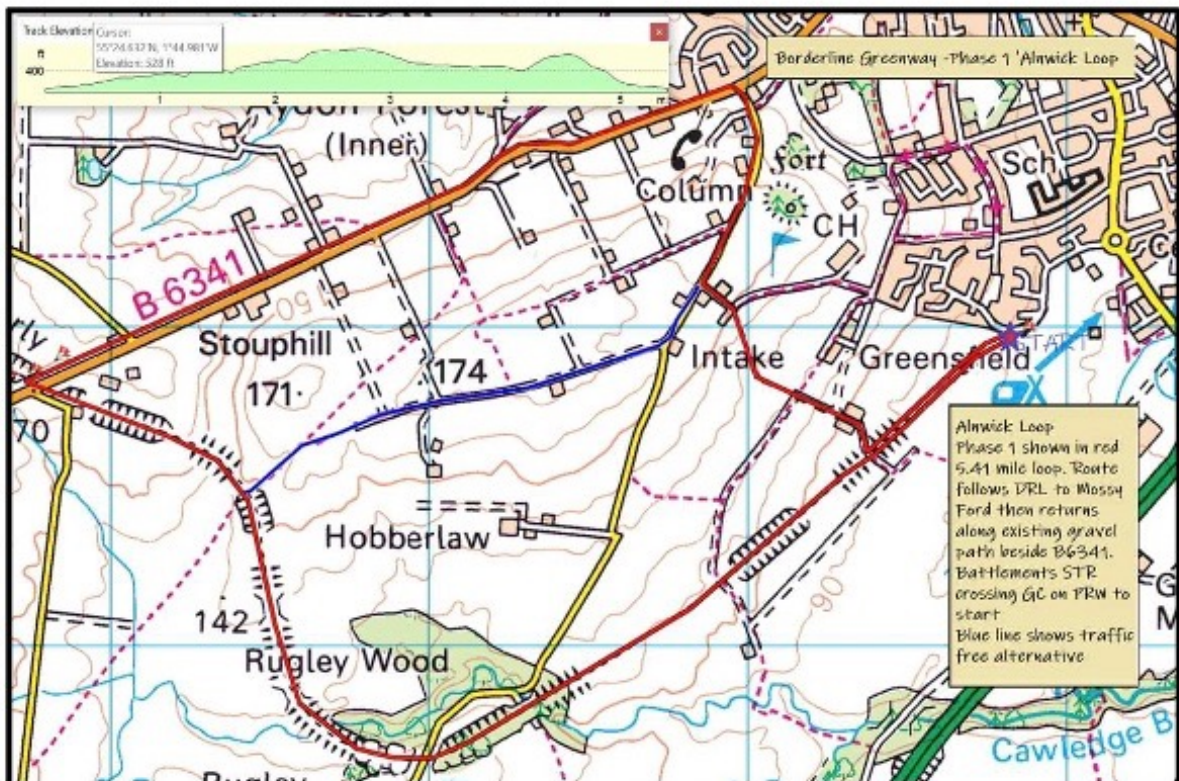
## March Monthly Meeting – contd

master's house, cottages, carriage landing, cattle dock, goods shed, coal drops, lime cells and a water tank. The station is approximately 1½ miles from Whittingham village which only had a population of 437 in 1937.

Once beyond Wooler the line followed the valley of the River Glen, several bridges were needed to complete the line to Cornhill.

Colin Davidson, from Borderline Greenway Group addressed the meeting to inform everyone of their progress in opening up part of the disused rail track as a multi-use trail for the general public.

The map below shows the proposed route of phase 1; anyone who would like to be informed of their progress should contact Colin at: [borderlinegreenway@gmail.com](mailto:borderlinegreenway@gmail.com). He will update everyone with their progress. They also have a Facebook page with more information.



**Maureen Sayers**

(Photographs courtesy of Alan Sayers and Colin Davidson)

## **Special General Meeting**

### **A message from our Treasurer, George Ellames**

At our last AGM back in October I explained that, although I was not at that time proposing to raise our Annual Subscriptions for 2023-4 (i.e. the Subs we will ask you to pay this coming September), I did expect it would be necessary to do this at some time during the year. This was because we all knew that costs for heating were increasing and we knew that this would also apply to the owners of St Michaels Hall (St Michaels PCC). As a consequence we could all predict that they would want to increase our rent to compensate for this, but we didn't at that time know when and by how much. We can only increase our Annual Subscriptions with your approval at either an AGM or at a specifically convened Special General Meeting. In the past, we have added such an SGM to the start of one of our monthly Plenary Meetings held on the third Thursday of each month. We plan to do the same on this occasion.

We should recognise that our rent at St Michaels Hall has remained unchanged at £3000 per annum since we moved there in 2017. St Michaels PCC want to increase our rent to £3600 from September 2023. This is not an increase that we can sustainably absorb without increasing our Annual Subscription. Our membership approaches 200 each year. Your Committee proposes that for the year 2023-4 our Annual Subscription be raised from £24 to £27, payable in September 2023. We are formally giving you notice that we are calling an SGM to seek your permission to do this at the May Plenary Meeting to be held at 2:00 pm on May 18th.

Our Subs are set to meet our needs. We do not seek to make a profit. We hope you will understand our need to raise our Subs in this way and support this proposed increase.

**George Ellames, Treasurer**

## Monthly Meetings in 2023

Apr 20<sup>th</sup> Maria Chester - "The Art of Bonampak" - Learn about the culture of the Mayans from their art

May 18<sup>th</sup> Andy Griffin - "Cuthbert Collingwood" - The Northumbrian who saved the Nation

June 15<sup>th</sup> Dinah Iredale - "Bondagers" - The forgotten workers of Northumberland and the Borders

July 20<sup>th</sup> Possible Summer Outing

Sept 21<sup>st</sup> Professor Brian Ward, American Studies, Northumbria University - "Transatlantic Blues: 60's N.E. Music Scene & the Civil Rights Movement"

Oct 19<sup>th</sup> Edward Cartner, Published Author - "Amusing tales from the R.A.F."

Nov 15<sup>th</sup> Sam Stephenson, Senior Coastguard, Seahouses - "The work of the Coast Guard"

Dec 14<sup>th</sup> Martin Shingler, Senior Lecturer in Radio and Film Studies, University of Sunderland - "Diana Dors: Film Star, Actor and Paperback Writer"

Note that the December date is one week earlier than normal, due to hall availability. The Christmas Social will also take place on that day.

### Tom's Tales

These sentences actually appeared in Church bulletins, or were announced at Church-----

The sermon this morning : Jesus Walks on the Water

The sermon tonight ; Searching for Jesus

Next Thursday there will try-outs for the choir. They need all the help they can get.

Please place your donation in the envelope provided along with the deceased person you want remembered.

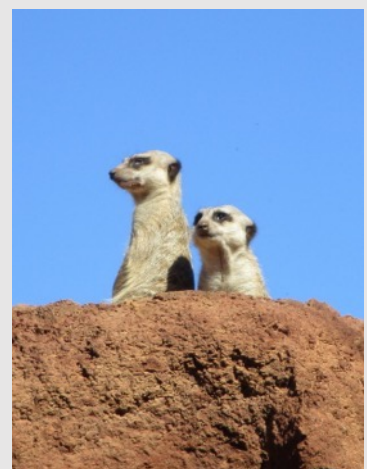
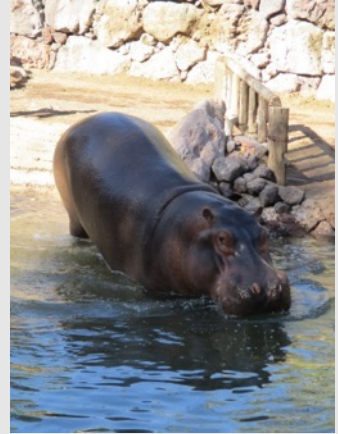
Weight Watchers will meet at 7pm at the Church. Please use large double doors at the side entrance.....

**Tom Burroughs**



# April Photos

Photos taken by Shelley Willis at Fuerteventura Zoo



## Quiz – Music and Dance

1	The highest note can be reached by which female voice?
2	Which composer, from an Australian family of musicians, was known as the 'Waltz king'?
3	In which country was the composer Debussy born?
4	What does the musical term fortissimo mean?
5	Arthur Sullivan wrote the music for the famous Savoy Operas? Who wrote the words?
6	Nijinsky was one of the greatest of all ballet dancers. Why did his career come to a premature end?
7	In which city did jazz have its origins?
8	Musical instruments are divided into four classes. Strings, wind instruments and keyboard are three of them. What is the fourth?
9	Which aria from Puccini's Madame Butterfly has become an 'opera pop song'?
10	At what age did Mozart die?
11	What does the musical term lento mean?
12	Which composer wrote the Emperor Concerto and the Ninth Symphony?
13	Which Tchaikovsky ballet has Princess Aurora as a heroine?
14	A plectrum is used to play which music instrument?
15	What is a paradiddle?
16	Who wrote the Enigma Variations and The Dream of Gerontius?
17	What were Bach's given names?
18	Which dancer was strangled by her own scarf?
19	Who wrote the opera Gloriana in honor of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953?
20	Which ballet uses music by Chopin?

## **Feedback & contributions are very welcome!**

Please send any comments on this newsletter, suggestions for improvement and contributions for future editions to:

[Newsletter.Alnwick.u3a@gmail.com](mailto:Newsletter.Alnwick.u3a@gmail.com)

The next newsletter will be published on 5<sup>th</sup> June, and the contributions deadline is 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

## **Website Update**

The website is more or less in the position it was in prior to the server problems late last year.

Most Groups now have their 2023 programmes, where relevant, showing on their web page.

TAT is changing the SiteBuilder software which is used by many individual u3as, including us, for web development. This will be a phased transition, with support from TAT, so it is hoped the process will be smooth. We shall see!

There has been one useful development on the website group pages. We do not put group leaders' email addresses on the website, for Data Protection reasons. However, each Group page now has an image which, when clicked, directs an email from you directly to the group leader's email address, which remains anonymous. The image is a Bluebird, shown below:



**Click to send a message!**

# Odds and Ends

I cut myself shredding cheese. I wanted to blame someone else, but then I remembered: with grate power comes grate responsibility

Alligators can live up to 50 years. This significantly increases the chances that they will, indeed, see you later

I broke my leg in three places...perhaps I shouldn't have gone to those places

Some people find Thursdays to be very depressing. But remember – if you think Thursdays are bad, just wait two more days. It will be a...sadder day.

Kirk to Mr Spock: What's the new crewman's name?

Mr Spock to Kirk: It's Lance. Is that a common human name?

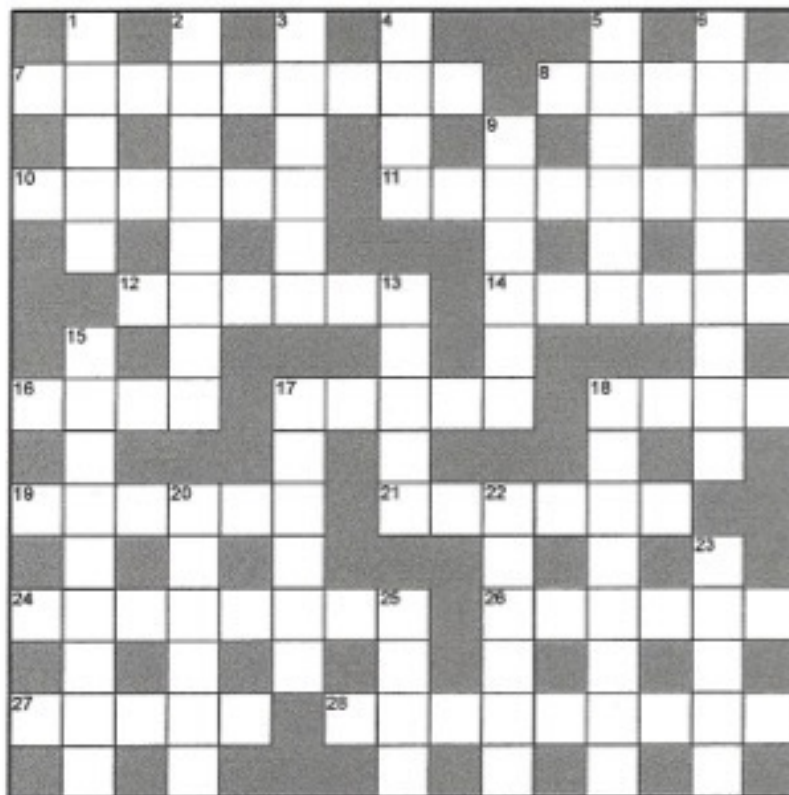
Kirk to Mr Spock: Not now. But in the Middle Ages, people were actually named Lance a lot

When I was a child, I wanted to play a musical instrument really badly.

And after years of hard work and practice, I can now play a musical instrument really badly.

# Crossword

(courtesy of Maureen and Alan Sayers)



## ACROSS

- 7 Ella and Gilly, once they got together, acted unlawfully (9)
- 8 Breed of cattle found in the Northumbrian hills (5)
- 10 Puts forward some proposals (6)
- 11 Note what's on fire is a candle (8)
- 12 Sort of doll that could explode (4-2)
- 14 You'll need this to boil the fish (6)
- 16 The chief part of one's anatomy (4)
- 17 That's the way to go! (5)
- 18 Complain continually about the fish (4)
- 19 One imagines that this is the place where everything's perfect (6)
- 21 Happy to have a celebratory drink (6)
- 24 Preoccupied with what was eaten (8)
- 26 Tailor-made crossing (6)
- 27 She's precious (5)
- 28 Taking this off will only end in tears (5,4)

## DOWN

- 1 Float about overhead (5)
- 2 Lady in red joined the mutiny (8)
- 3 Was uncooked back in Poland (6)
- 4 Dreary looking apartment (4)
- 5 Office key worker (6)
- 6 They like to travel downunder (9)
- 9 Bring down the equipment (6)
- 13 Measure the depth exactly (5)
- 15 Vessel out to wreck the enemy (9)
- 17 Kingdoms mentioned in a genuine manuscript (6)
- 18 Fall in a mountain pass due to a lack of concentration (8)
- 20 Father's attempt at making a delicacy (6)
- 22 Pub brawl in Cumbria (6)
- 23 Leave bare a section of land (5)
- 25 Valley in a broadened landscape (4)

## Your Committee Members

This is a feature where Committee members can say a bit about themselves. This month it is **Trevor Robinson**, our Chair, and leader of the Science Group.

You'll never know this from my accent, but I was born in Newcastle and my family came from South Shields. We "emigrated" to Kent when I was very young, hence my accent.

I studied physics at university, graduating in 1972. I was not a very good physicist, so I followed the money into what has sometimes been called the second-oldest profession: accountancy. I worked for various public bodies, mainly local authorities, qualifying as an accountant in 1976. To quote Disraeli, I "climbed the greasy pole", moving between different employers until I got to the top of the pole as Finance Director for the London Borough of Hillingdon.

A very minor claim to fame is that one of the unsuccessful candidates for that job was Bob (later Sir Bob, then Lord) Kerslake, who subsequently became the Head of the Civil Service. It occurs to me that three other people I worked with subsequently got knighthoods. Mine must have got lost in the post.

On the way up the pole, at West Midlands County Council (now defunct) I was involved in the expansion of Birmingham Airport, as the project accountant on the development team. This was the most interesting job of my career.

I left Hillingdon in 1999 to join the Greater London Authority (GLA) Transition Team, the group which set up the GLA. I moved over to the GLA itself when it went live in 2000, which meant that after the May elections of that year I was working for Ken Livingston. Interesting times!

My final job was Finance Director of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive, and I took early retirement in 2007. After that I had a few non-executive roles with bodies such as an NHS Hospital Trust in Coventry and a Government quango, Ofqual. We moved to Northumberland in 2016 when my wife retired.

Since 2017 I have indulged in my original interests of astronomy and space, through being a trustee of Kielder Observatory, and studying these subjects with the Open University. The photo on the right shows me in front of the Space Shuttle Atlantis, demonstrating that I am a space geek! Please ignore the T-shirt.



# Science Group Outings

Last year, the Science Group had two successful outings: a trip to Kielder Observatory in March, and a visit to Rock Distillery in August.

I am looking at arranging these outings again, but as last year interest was expressed by people not in the Group, I thought I would open the trips up to other u3a members.

The Distillery visit will probably be in August, and is limited to a maximum of 10 people, although if more people are interested, I can easily book another one. Cost last year was, I think, £7 each, although it may be a bit more this year; I haven't checked yet. For this, you get a tour of the distillery (which is not that big!) followed by a gin tasting session and the opportunity to buy gin from their wide range of flavours.

This year's Kielder visit will probably be in October, when the skies are darker again. Possible themes for the evening include Secret Life of Stars, Origins of the Universe, Our Moon, Myths and Legends and Jewels of the Universe – click on the link below for an idea of cost and start times (usually about 20:00 and finishing at 23:00).

<https://kielderobservatory.org/our-events>

You need to be aware that for most people it will be around 50 miles each way, so it will be a late night! We did car sharing last year, which worked well.

We had a very enjoyable meal on the way to Kielder at The Holly Bush Inn in Greenhaugh, so we could go there again.

If you are interested in either or both of these outings, email me using the Bluebird clickable link on the Science Group website page.

**Trevor Robinson – Science Group Leader**

## Quiz Answers

1	Soprano	11	Slow
2	Johann Strauss	12	Ludwig van Beethoven
3	France	13	Sleeping Beauty
4	Very loud	14	Guitar
5	W.S. Gilbert	15	A drum roll
6	He suffered from mental illness	16	Elgar
7	New Orleans	17	Johann Sebastian
8	Percussion	18	Isadora Duncan
9	One Fine Day	19	Benjamin Britten
10	35	20	Les Sylphides

## Crossword Answers

**ACROSS** - 7 Illegally. 8 Kylee. 10 Offers. 11 Tealight. 12 Blow-Up. 14 Kettle. 16 Head. 17 Route. 18 Carp. 19 Utopia. 21 Bubbly. 24 Consumed. 26 Rialto. 27 Pearl. 28 Onion Skin.

**DOWN** - 1 Aloft. 2 Rebelled. 3 Warsaw. 4 Flat. 5 Typist. 6 Potholers. 9 Tackle. 13 Plumb. 15 Destroyer. 17 Realms. 18 Collapse. 20 Pastry. 22 Barrow. 23 Strip. 25 Dene.

### End Piece

*Aurora Borealis*

*Magical illumination*

*Floating tulle of light emeralds the night*

*Stunned into silent awe*

**Mary Atkinson**