



## Members Newsletter December 2022

### A Message from the Chair

Hello everyone

The next newsletter after the November edition was due to be published in January, but that would mean we would have missed Christmas. So here is a cheeky little Christmas edition. We hope you like it. And please do look at the item about our Christmas social on 15<sup>th</sup> December – see page 4.

Whether or not we see you on the 15<sup>th</sup>, we hope you all have a great Christmas and a happy New Year. This year has seen us recover well from the pandemic. Let's hope that 2023 will be even better for us all.

Trevor Robinson

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**November Monthly Meeting 17<sup>th</sup> November**  
**Understanding 18<sup>th</sup> Century Gravestones in Northumberland**  
**Mark Hatton**

At the November meeting our speaker Mark Hatton gave us an illustrated and enlightening talk to help us understand the symbolism on Gravestones.

Pre-Reformation the vast majority of common people were buried in unmarked graves. For the wealthy, stone sarcophagi were placed underneath the church floor, giving rise to the saying “stinking rich”. Often when churches were modernised these stone coffins were left outside of churches, too heavy to be moved very far.

The earliest gravestones appeared in Edinburgh in 1603 when James I ascended to the throne. Peace and prosperity reigned in Edinburgh and the people spread beyond the city walls which were no longer needed for defensive purposes. Greyfriars was declared a new burial ground and in 1603 John Jackson, a wealthy merchant, died. In 1606 his son raised the first memorial in Greyfriars. This started a trend amongst the wealthy to have their lives immortalised in stone. Gradually the tradition of gravestone marking spread further south, the earliest gravestone in Northumberland was reputedly at Slaley in 1635.



Understanding cemetery symbolism can help you learn about the person buried there, including, social status and beliefs about death. Memento Mori, a Latin phrase which means “remember you must die,” is a reminder for people who visit the gravestone to remember that they are also mortal. Clasped hands are a symbol of parting from a loved one who has died. They are also a promise of

reunion when the bereaved person goes to the afterlife. A book as pictured opposite depicts the bible or book of life and the winged angel is heralding the deceased to eternal life,

Snakes and serpents are ancient symbols of everlasting life and are often depicted on gravestones to create a circle, sometimes depicted as a snake swallowing its own tail, another representation of regeneration of life. Carvings of skeletons on gravestones are a depiction of ‘Death’ in human form, reminding visitors of their own mortality.



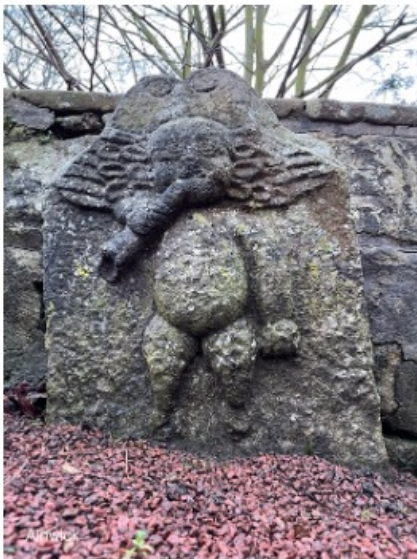
## November Monthly Meeting – contd



Scythes on gravestones represent the Grim Reaper, the 'Harvester of Souls', escorting someone from life to death, hourglasses represent the passing of time and the end of a person's time on earth. Often people's occupations were recorded on gravestones, for example farmers represented by wheat or corn, blacksmiths with an anvil or hammer, fishermen by boats or rods. Each gravestone an individual memory specific to the deceased.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century gravestones were becoming more commonplace and written inscriptions were popular (see right); these sadly removed the individuality once favoured by their ancestors.

Mark's concern is that gravestones that display symbols of mortality, resurrection and trade are not being looked after in several locations, and these important illustrations of our history will be lost forever if we don't do something about it.



This final photo is from St Michael's churchyard here in Alnwick.



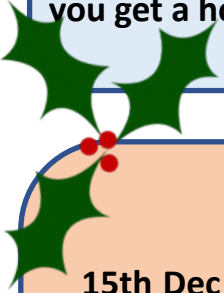
Photographs by Mark Hatton with permission

**Maureen Sayers**



# A Reminder

As explained at the November meeting, the entrance charge for our monthly meetings will be increased from £1 to £2, with effect from January 2023. The current charge has been in place for around 10 years. And don't forget, you get a hot drink and a biscuit!



# December Meeting

15th Dec 2022 - Jessica Turner - "The Life and Times of St Cuthbert" - plus our Christmas get-together

The Committee is planning a similar event to last year's Christmas get together, but this time we have a speaker. Many of you put your names down for this event at the November meeting. But if you were not able to do this, perhaps you could let Pat Ashton know if you will be attending, at [membership.alnwick.u3a@gmail.com](mailto:membership.alnwick.u3a@gmail.com). This will help us with planning the event.



# Monthly Meetings in 2023

Jan 19th 2023 - Sue Rogers "The Origins (and future) of the Rights of Way Network" - Find out how we can preserve our public rights of way

Feb 16th 2023 - Louise Percival "Traditional Chinese Medicine in the Modern World" - Is there still a place for it?

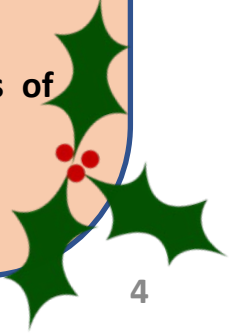
Mar 16th 2023 Tom Allen - "The Early Northern Railways" - Exploring the railways of old in the North

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

May 18th Andy Griffin - "Cuthbert Collingwood" - The Northumbrian who saved the Nation

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

July 20th Possible Summer Outing



## December Photos

This month's theme is **Stained Glass**. All photos taken by Maureen Sayers.



Marc Chagall Tree of Life, Sarrebourg, France.



A close-up of part of the Tree of Life.



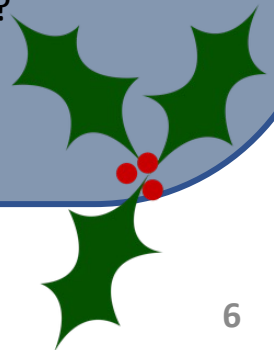
Liebfrauenkirche, Trier Germany, Modern Stained Glass Windows in a Medieval Church.



## Christmas Quiz



1. Which country first started the tradition of putting up a Christmas tree?
2. Which popular Christmas beverage is also called 'milk punch'?
3. How many ghosts show up in *A Christmas Carol*?
4. What do people traditionally put on top of their Christmas tree?
5. Where was baby Jesus born?
6. What Hollywood actor played six different roles in *The Polar Express*?
7. What colour are mistletoe berries?
8. Which fairytale was the first gingerbread house inspired by?
9. Who invented the Christmas wreath?
10. Where did the tradition of Christmas stockings come from?
11. What are the traditional 12 days of Christmas?
12. How do you say Merry Christmas in Spanish?
13. What was the coldest ever temperature recorded during a UK winter?
14. What are the chances of a white Christmas in the UK?
15. How many Christmas trees are grown in Europe?
16. Where does the royal family traditionally celebrate Christmas?
17. How many years do Christmas trees grow for before they are sold?
18. When do the royal family exchange their presents?
19. In *Home Alone*, where are the family going on holiday?
20. How many Christmas trees are in Buckingham Palace?





# Odds and Ends

When you die,  
people cry and beg  
for you to come back,  
but when you do,  
there's the running  
and the screaming...

Information is not knowledge  
Knowledge is not wisdom  
Wisdom is not truth  
Truth is not beauty  
Beauty is not love  
Love is not music  
Music is the best

Frank Zappa (1940 - 1993)

I went to visit a  
psychic. I knocked on  
her front door and she  
yelled "who is it?". So  
I left.

Don't use a big word when a  
singularly unloquacious and  
diminutive linguistic  
expression will satisfactorily  
accomplish the contemporary  
necessity

I paid for the whole  
speedometer. I'm  
going to use the whole  
speedometer

Son: I watched a guy do 50 push-ups. Can you do that  
dad?

Dad: Sure. Not to brag but I could probably watch  
someone do 100 push-ups



# Carers Rights Day



Anne McMillan and I represented Alnwick u3a at the Carers Rights Information Fair on 24<sup>th</sup> November, at St James United Reformed Church. This was organized by Carers Northumberland.

Many carers are older and feel socially isolated, so joining a u3a is ideal for them. We had our display panels on display, and we got some interest from the visitors. There were many other displays, from organisations such as the National Autism Association and Age UK. In fact, we managed to do a fair bit of networking. It was definitely worth attending

The event was opened by The Duchess of Northumberland, who is a Patron of Carers Northumberland.



The Duchess opening the event



A neighboring stand



The u3a stand

Trevor Robinson

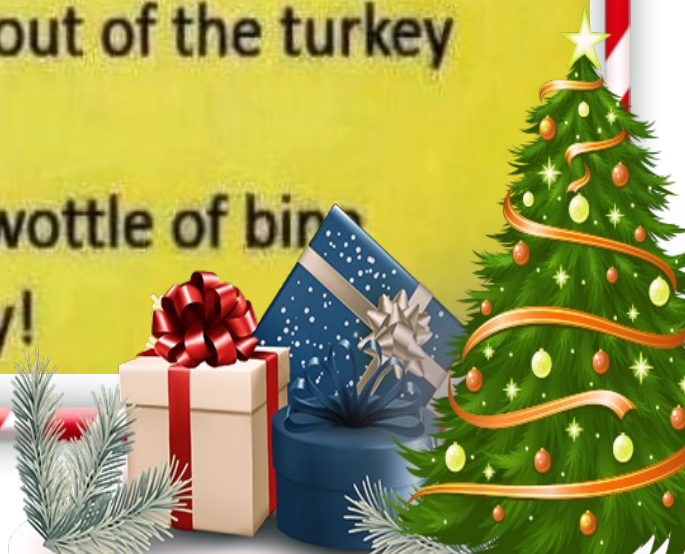
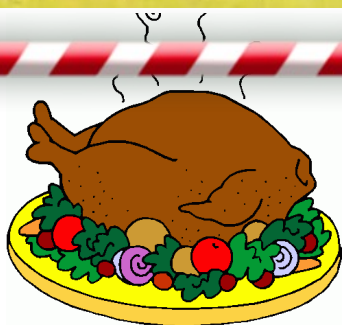






## How **NOT** to Cook a Turkey

- Step 1. Buy a turkey
- Step 2. Have a glass of wine
- Step 3. Stuff turkey
- Step 4. Have a glass of wine
- Step 5. Put turkey in oven
- Step 6. Relax and have a glass of wine
- Step 7. Turk the bastey
- Step 8. Wine of glass another get
- Step 9. Hunt for meat thermometer
- Step 10. Glass yourself another pour of wine
- Step 11. Bake the wine for 4 hours
- Step 12. Take the oven out of the turkey
- Step 13. Tet the sable
- Step 14. Grab another wottle of bing
- Step 15. Turk the carvey!



## Christmas Jokes (blame Maureen Sayers for these!)

I have this incredible ability to predict what's inside a wrapped present. It's a gift.

Why did Santa go to A&E? Because of his poor elf.

What does Santa do when his elves misbehave? He gives them the sack.

Did you hear about the man who stole an advent calendar? He got 25 days.

I got a universal remote control for Christmas. This changes everything.

What do you call an old snowman? Water.

What do you call people who are afraid of Santa? Claustrophobic.

I bought my son a fridge for Christmas. I can't wait to see his face light up when he opens it.

What do you call a snowman with a six pack? An abdominal snowman.

How did Santa learn to play the piano? He was elf taught.

Who is a reindeer's favourite singer? Beyonsleigh.

Who is Santa's favourite actor? Willem Dafoe-ho-ho.

Why did the turkey join the rock band? Because it had drumsticks.

What is Santa's favourite pizza? One that's deep-pan, crisp and even.





## Website Problems

Those of you who visit our own website may have noticed that the site went down on 19<sup>th</sup> November. This problem has affected all u3as that use SiteBuilder to edit their website, as we do; over 400 u3as are affected. The Third Age Trust issued the following statement:

*Due to circumstances beyond our control, SiteBuilder websites – used by a number of our u3as – are down due to technical difficulties with the organisation that hosts the websites. The Third Age Trust (the SiteBuilder volunteers and senior staff) are working very hard to help resolve this.*

At the time of writing, the website is accessible again, and Group pages, for example, are visible. However, we cannot access sub pages, such as Policies and Welcome Pack. The TAT are working on this, but we may have to reload all our documents again.

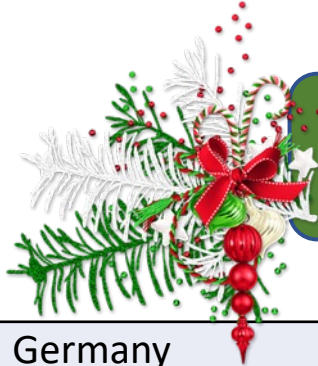


### **Feedback & contributions are very welcome!**

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 6<sup>th</sup> February, and the contributions deadline is 3<sup>rd</sup> February.



## Christmas Quiz Answers



1. Germany	11. The last six days of the old year (26 to 31 December ) and the first six days of the New Year (1 to 6 January)
2. Eggnog	12. Feliz Navidad
3. Four	13. -27.2 °C
4. An angel	14. The chances of a White Christmas are just 1 in 10 for England and Wales
5. Bethlehem	15. Nearly 60 million
6. Tom Hanks	16. Sandringham
7. White	17. 15 years
8. Hansel and Gretel	18. Christmas Eve
9. A German Lutheran pastor named Johann Hinrich Wichern	19. France
10. The original Saint Nicholas put gold coins in the stockings of 3 poor sisters	20. Three trees

### End Piece

*December*

*Advent is anticipating the Christmas celebration with greetings and gift giving.*

*Advent is anticipating joy and peace coming for winter's consolation.*

*Advent is anticipating the Christmas celebration.*



**Mary Atkinson**