

Beverley & District



Our Mission

The advancement of education and, in particular, the education of older people and those who are retired from full-time work by all means, including associated activities, conducive to learning and personal development.



Editor – Graham Buckton
Reporter – Helen Kitson

Welcome to the second issue of 2023.

This edition has been slightly delayed to allow for the reporting of the Annual General Meeting [AGM], which has seen significant changes to our committee. I'm sure you will offer them all your support in the coming months to help them take our u3a forward.

24th AGM held on Thursday 15 June 2023

From our outgoing chair – Doreen Osuch

On behalf of those members who stood down from the committee at our recent Annual General Meeting I would like to thank you for all your support, and hope that you will all continue to contribute to the running of our u3a. My thanks go to Christine Benson, Ann Scruton, Phil MacMullen and Mike Farrimond, who have now relinquished their posts. I am also standing

down as chair but will continue to be involved in u3a activities through my role as coordinator of a number of interest groups. It is always worth reminding you that the u3a is 'run by the members for the members', and volunteers will always be needed – especially as we have an increasing number of groups on offer to members. I wish our new chair and members of the committee all best wishes for the future.

From our new chair – Pam Buckton

At the AGM we said farewell and thank you to a number of committee members who had worked hard for our u3a for many years. The previous committee steered our u3a through the Covid pandemic, ensuring that as many activities as possible could continue, thereby retaining the vast majority of members. Thanks must go to Doreen Osuch for her tireless leadership during those challenging times.

I would also like to thank Graham Buckton, who is passing on the editorship of this newsletter to our new publicity officer, Simon Tull. Graham and Helen Kitson have produced some fascinating insights into our groups' activities over the past 15 months.

I am delighted to be elected as your new chair and look forward, along with the new committee, to helping this amazing organisation to continue to flourish.

The New Committee

Chair/Groups	Pam Buckton	pamelabuckton@outlook.com	01482 865330
Facilitator			
Secretary	Nadine Tull	nadinetull@ymail.com	07786 763179
Treasurer	Jo Herrick	treasureru3abeverley@gmail.com	07970 815442
Membership Secretary	Colin Robertson	membershipbevu3a@gmail.com	01482 873918
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Compliance Officer	John Kilner	jckbeverley@gmail.com	07803 137870
Publicity Officer	Simon Tull	simontull@ymail.com	07795 809522
IT Officer	Adrian Ramsdale	adrianitu3a@gmail.com	01482 881095

There are still a couple of vacancies for new committee members, and I would like to invite anyone who may be interested in learning more about how we operate to sit in on a committee meeting, with absolutely no obligation to take it further. Please contact me at pamelabuckton@outlook.com or 01482 865330 if you would like to consider this.

Finally, I would like to advise you that, after consultation with group leaders, we have changed the name 'group leader' to 'group coordinator' to better reflect the collaborative nature of our groups. The current committee role of groups coordinator has now changed to 'groups facilitator'.

Copies of the Financial Accounts 2022-23 may be obtained from the secretary

Membership

Statistics

Our membership currently stands at 588, which has seen a slight decline since the last newsletter due to the start of a new subscription year. We expect the numbers to recover, as they have in previous years.

Out & about with our members

u3a 2023 Event - Vindolanda/Off the Wall

On 10 May several hundred u3a members descended on the Sill Youth Hostel and Landscape Discovery Centre, one mile from Hadrian's Wall between Hexham and Haltwhistle, Northumberland. The "Off the Wall" event was open to all u3a members for just £5.00, including all-day car parking.

Like the Roman Army itself many members came from far afield and the u3a laid on buses from Carlisle and Newcastle, as well as lunch if required. A lot of people, like me, decided to make a week of it, and I booked in at the wonderful Saughy Rigg Farmhouse B&B, just a mile and a half up the hill from the Centre.

There were 3 excellent and informative talks in the Learning Room, which was packed to the gills.

'**Hadrian's Wall through the Ages**' dealt with the structure and construction of the wall over a six year period from AD 122.

'**Vindolanda, a People and Frontier in Transition**' told the story of the discovery of the ruined Roman Fort and the ongoing efforts of the Vindolanda Trust and its volunteers to excavate the site.

Alan Leslie delivered '**At the Edge of Empire**' showing that the Wall was surprisingly porous, allowing people and goods to pass in and out of the Roman Empire via guarded 'mile-castles'.

Empire troops would also foray north of the wall in order to fight the 'Barbarians' more effectively on open ground.

Photo courtesy of <https://museumcrush.org/>

Besides talks there were practical workshops on Roman cookery, jewellery, art and decoration, a local geology walk and a guided tour of the Sill's turf roof.

The afternoon highlight was a guided tour of Vindolanda Fort itself, a mile away. It has been under excavation by volunteers at the Vindolanda Trust since its discovery in the 1970s. Entry fee is £15.00 and includes entrance to the interactive 3D Roman Military Museum 10 miles away.

Our guide brought the old stones to life with descriptions of how between 500 and 1000 soldiers served, lived, bathed and relaxed at the northern frontier fort. Alongside the fort, camp followers lived in the nearby 'vicus' which provided shops, drinking establishments and gambling dens to the military. Vindolanda museum is on the same site as the fort and houses such treasures as 'postcards' written on clay tablets received by soldiers, and everyday articles left behind whenever the fort was periodically burned and abandoned.

The u3a laid on bus transport between the Sill and Vindolanda, although some intrepid souls braved the half hour march in the drizzle. In spite of the weather, a good time was had by all, and I will definitely return next year, making sure to book early!

Many thanks to all the organisers and volunteers who made this event possible. [Helen Taylor]

Art Appreciation

At the beginning of May the group went 'art appreciating' three times.

The first occasion was a private tour of Beverley Art Gallery's 'Philip Larkin' exhibition, guided by Curator Hannah Willetts. The exhibition had been commissioned to celebrate the life and work of renowned Hull poet Philip Larkin and was based on one of his poems, 'Home is so Sad', which was written in 1958 following a visit to his mother, but not published until 1964.

You may assume that a local artist, probably from Hull, would have produced the works but there was a twist.



The two artists, Yeonkyoung Lee and Sam Robinson, live and work in South Korea, a country that is almost a desert as far as access to the poet's work is concerned. Apparently there is just one translation of Larkin's work available in the Korean language. However Sam, having studied his work, is very knowledgeable about Larkin and his poems.

Although based in Korea, the two artists are no strangers to this country, as Sam is British, and both studied for degrees in art here. It



was only after graduating that they moved to Korea to carry on their work. Hannah was aware of their work and approached and commissioned them to produce the artwork. Although on the other side of the world, this did not present a major problem, as modern technology overcame the distance problem, even to the extent of Sam being able to 'model' the 'white gallery' on-line. Amazingly, the first time they saw the art gallery was when they brought their artwork over immediately prior to the setting up of the displays.

The two of them have different styles, with Sam working for six months on a range of paintings depicting the view through the window of Larkin's now demolished house in Hull. Yeonkyoung Lee works in a totally different medium, mainly fabrics, and is fascinated by every day, decorative objects.

Although now closed, the exhibition presented a range of abstract and challenging images of Larkin's poem 'Home is so Sad' and augers well for the future of the gallery under Hannah's curatorship.

The second exposure to 'art' was something totally different, with a number of group members attending the streaming of the film 'Vermeer – The Greatest Exhibition' at the Parkway Cinema in the Flemingate Centre. The exhibition, which was actually staged at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, featured 23 of Jan Ver Meer's known total output of around 37 paintings. There is an argument that says paintings can only be truly appreciated when seen 'in the flesh' but having seen them up close on the big screen I'm not convinced.

The quality of the images and the fine detail, which cannot be seen in a gallery, proved just what a superb artist Ver Meer was. As was constantly remarked by the commentators, it was not possible to see any brushstrokes, even very close-up, thereby confirming his genius. Paintings that are relatively well known, such as 'The Little Street' [above], took on a new meaning when seen in such close up detail. What was even more revealing was the technical research, which had been undertaken prior to hanging the paintings. Scanning proved that Ver Meer was not afraid to change the content of paintings during the very long production process. In the case of The Little Street he moved people around and added two children to add interest, which would not be apparent by simply standing in front of the image in a gallery.

So, it is not necessarily the case that you have to stand in front of the actual image to fully appreciate it – seeing it close up on a cinema screen can be just as rewarding.

The third event was a consequence of the developing relationship with the Art Gallery, as all group members received a personal invitation to attend the official launch of the 'Matisse – Drawing with Scissors' exhibition on 27 May. This colourful and joyous display of his later works is available to view until July and is well worth a visit. [Graham Buckton]

Garden Interest



Since the last newsletter, our members have enjoyed various activities. In February, we had two groups visit a 3 acre garden in Leconfield to see snowdrops and aconites. Unfortunately, the weather was not so kind on the second visit but that did not deter us!

In March, Colin Bradshaw came to speak to us on “Britain’s wild flowers, true, false, and unbelievable”. This was followed by a delightful spring visit to Ellerker House whose wonderful garden was planted out with some very unusual shrubs and early spring flowers. We had visited the garden last summer and the owner kindly invited us back in the autumn to see the changing colours.

At the end of May 38 members were fortunate enough to enjoy a guided visit of Bishop Burton College gardens, led by the very informative head gardener. We were indeed lucky, as the garden is no longer open to the public, so thanks to Eileen for arranging. [Sue Symonds]

“Keeping Fit”



Do you sometimes feel you need to do more physical exercise and are struggling to find a solution?

The answer might be staring you in the face. We have a special deal with East Riding Leisure, part of East Riding of Yorkshire Council, whereby u3a members get a discount on the monthly fee. The top of the range ‘Premier’ package is yours for only £27 per month, a saving of almost 20%. This covers all the facilities offered by the Leisure Centre, including reviews of progress and high tech

assessments. You can even round off sessions in a health suite or sauna, followed by a reward in the café, with 10% off selected purchases.

To qualify all you have to do is produce evidence of membership of this u3a but please ensure you understand and agree with the conditions of membership, which are detailed on the application form.

Our activities

Monthly members meetings

20 July

The Brontës

Catherine Rayner

Catherine, a Life Member of The Bronte Society, has studied and researched the lives of the Bronte family for over forty years, leading her to write two theses on Emily Bronte, plus various articles.

August

Sorry no meeting

News from the groups

The number of interest groups now stands at 47 and below we feature a number to demonstrate the kinds of activities on offer. If your personal interest is not covered by our programme of groups, why not talk to Pam Buckton about the possibility of setting up a new one.

Although some groups are fully subscribed, they operate waiting lists, which allows vacancies to be filled if members leave or, should numbers be sufficient, new groups to be formed.

Book Circle 1

'Moving', 'vivid', 'perfectly constructed', 'a perfect little gem', 'I'm so pleased I've read it'. These were just some of the comments from the fourteen members of Monday's Book Circle 1 as they shared their impressions of the novella 'Small Things like These' by Irish writer Claire Keegan.



I was quite moved myself by the sharing that went on in this book group. All had found depth and resonance in this story of an Irish coal merchant who, himself born illegitimate but saved by the kindness of

his mother's employer from adoption, discovered the cruelties of the nuns' regime in his local Magdalene laundry. In the end his conscience overcame his fear of being ostracised and forced out of business, and we left him as he was rescuing one of the girls to take her home to live with his family. "It stopped when the story was just beginning," said one of the group, and indeed the book left many questions unanswered, especially how the community and his family would react to the challenge he had posed to the established power structure. We could only imagine and discuss...

Members shared their own experiences, professional and personal, of clients, friends or family who had children adopted because of stigma and economic necessity, or who had suffered institutional cruelty of other kinds. We talked about how this was universal, not just in rural Catholic Ireland, and we discussed the complicity of ordinary people who could feel powerless in the face of any abuse of power.

Many were impressed too by the writer's style in ratcheting up the tension, and her extraordinary descriptive powers: "Did you feel the winter?", and "The description of family life was an absolute delight".

Sushila managed the group well to ensure everyone's views were heard, and she updated members on the news from those who were unable to attend.

Just like a good book, this visit stayed in my thoughts for some time. [Helen Kitson]

French for Beginners - The Coronation French style

"I wonder if the French know more about the Coronation than we do?" wondered one of the group I visited on the eve of our big event.

Pourquoi? Because Mark, the informal 'tutor', had brought along a text taken from the 'Europresse' website which explained much we didn't know about the planning and history of the extravaganza, in French of course.

We were interested in the French take on Charles's desire to make the event have a bit more 'austérité', which they put down to our country's 'cost of living crisis and the poverty of the Royal Family'. Hmmm, we'd all noticed the first but maybe not so much the second.

We were also tickled by what seemed to be their main point of interest, the delayed start of the Premier League matches. They also had to remind us that the abbey had been used since the time of 'Guillaume le Conquerant' who was, naturellement, French.

Taking turns to read paragraphs, we all helped each other to translate. I was relieved that my rustiness wasn't too exposed as I'd half expected to have to speak only in French, but thankfully not. This was after all a beginners' group, and everyone was relaxed and obviously having fun



with such a topical text. There was the odd irreverent translation offered, so 'heritiers' (heirs) became 'hangers on', but despite our different views on the monarchy we all retained our politesse. And no one mentioned quiche. [Helen Kitson]

Maritime History

Maritime history operates in a different manner to most other groups, being conducted online via Zoom. Meeting face-to-face is not an option, as some of the eight participants are members of other East Yorkshire u3as. Not living locally, they participate thanks to the reciprocal arrangements of the ACCORD group of u3as.

Surprisingly, not all the members have a maritime background, with only three having worked at sea. The remaining five have no seagoing experience, other than holiday cruises or ferries to the Continent. However, that does not stop all of us contributing, as every member has researched and presented chosen subjects over the past two and a half years.

But it is not just about producing a presentation for the Zoom session on the fourth Tuesday evening of the month. Having researched their chosen subject, members produced a briefing paper which is issued at the beginning of the month. The other members can undertake additional research to add to the briefing paper and ensuing presentation and discussion, which is a vital element of the process, as it reinforces the learning process.

The chosen subjects have ranged far and wide, both in subject matter and location; from *Anson's 1740-44 Circumnavigation of the Globe*, through the *1904-05 Russo-Japanese War*, to the *Development and Building of Lighthouses*. Subject matter for the remainder of 2023 includes '*That fishy on your little dishy: the North Sea herring (& mackerel) fisheries over the centuries*', '*The WWII Battle of Mattapan*' and '*WWII Artic Convoys*'.

May's chosen subject, 'The French Navy', or more accurately 'Marine Nationale Française', was a challenge, as not a great deal has been published on the subject in English. However, French naval history is every bit as interesting, and stretches back as far, as that of the Royal Navy. The father of the French King's Navy was Cardinal Armand Jean du Plessis, 1st Duke of Richelieu and Fronsac [left]; **yes**, the very same sworn enemy of the fictional Three Musketeers! Richelieu was Louis XIII's First Minister and Grand Master of the Navigation, making him the most powerful person in France. As Grand Master of the Navigation he controlled not only how the navy operated, but also the merchant marine, thereby enabling him to turn France into a major maritime power. Starting from zero, by building new warships and borrowing Britain and Dutch ones, he created a ninety-one ship navy. Colbert, his successor, introduced reforms to naval administration that would not be emulated in this country until the 19th century. In the mid-17th century the state provided free education for children of naval personnel, built hospitals for injured naval seafarers and registers of seamen that spread the burden of staffing the fleet around the nation. He also ensured naval personnel's wages went their families and not to wine, women and song when they were ashore!

From the high points of Richelieu and Colbert the fortunes of the Marine Nationale have waxed and waned over the centuries, with the final ignominy being the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Ironically, Napoleon had better designed and built ships, so how come he lost?

The answer – the Royal Navy crews were thoroughly trained, and the gunnery was infinitely better.

However, the 21st century has certainly been a period of renewed strength, importance and visibility. It came as a surprise to discover that the Marine Nationale is presently larger, and probably more capable, than the Royal Navy. With 109 warships in commission, compared to our 70, their fleet operates with just 36,000 personnel, whereas ours needs 44,000, meaning the Marine Nationale is more efficiently crewed.

Which goes to show that not all we are led to believe is actually factual! [Graham Buckton]
Contact Graham Buckton on grahambuckton@outlook.com or 01482 865330.

Stop press - New groups

English Language for Interest (ELFI)

Starting in September, this is intended to be for people who are interested in the history of English and how it has developed into the rich and complicated language that we know today. We hope to include topics such as dialects and accents, rhymes and sayings, foreign influences, how pronunciation has changed over centuries, discuss whether spelling matters, slang and secret languages, what is comedy, a taster of Old English, and English as a global language. It is intended to be fun and interesting and certainly won't be a classroom for teaching grammar and spelling!

For further information contact either Jo Herrick on joherrick@gmail.com or 07970 815442 or Ann Scruton on scrutona@yahoo.com or 01482 867421.

Greek for Holidays –

This new group started on 7 June and meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 2pm at the Lairgate Hotel. Group coordinator Nan Griffin will help you learn words and phrases to enhance your holiday enjoyment. Beginners are especially welcome but, even if you have a little knowledge, you will benefit from practising pronunciation and expanding your vocabulary.

For more information or to arrange to attend a trial session, please contact Nan at nanagriffin123@gmail.com or 07951 114108.

Current Affairs Group

Three meetings of this group have been arranged for the autumn on the 1st Wednesdays in October, November and December at 10.30am at the Lairgate Hotel. Bill Jones will present three topical talks preceded by briefing papers.

If you would like to join the group please contact Christine Benson on christine@abenson.karoo.co.uk or 01482 883347.

As this was only ever intended to be a short term role, this is my last edition as editor of the newsletter and I am handing over to Simon Tull, the new Publicity Officer.

I have thoroughly enjoyed producing the five issues over the last 15 months and wish to thank Helen Kitson for her wonderful articles and the members who have also contributed pieces or welcomed me to their meetings.

All that is left to do is wish Simon every success in the role. Graham Buckton
