

# Cestria u3a at Chester- le-Street

Website – [www.u3asites.org.uk/cestria](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/cestria)

December 2023 Newsletter

## Chairman's Corner ....

Christine has reminded me it's time for my piece in the Newsletter and also that it's my last piece as Chair. I will be standing down in February next year.



### Monthly Meetings

**1st Wednesday of  
moth Cornerstones  
Methodist Chapel  
9.30 – 10.00 pre  
meeting Coffee &  
Chat....10.00- Noon  
Main Meeting**

### Speakers

**3<sup>rd</sup> January.....  
Andrew Clarke ....  
Wartime Memories  
told through objects  
from the period**

**7th February...AGM  
Carol Dean....  
Hever Castle – a  
love story**

**6th March.....**

**T.B.A.**

I'd like to start by looking back over the 5 years of my tenure: Covid and Lockdown were the greatest challenges. It stopped us meeting face to face in Cornerstones from March 2020 until October 2021. Interest groups (with the exception of walking) were also not able to meet face to face.

To counter this we purchased a Zoom meeting licence and monthly meetings via this media commenced in December 2020. Our main meeting was held on Zoom – and we had speakers – and some groups also managed to meet via Zoom.

The thing is: we survived and kept going. We are still here, although membership numbers have not yet returned to pre-Covid levels. That Cestria survived and got through, is down to members making the effort to keep in contact and keeping our u3a together. Thank you to you all for that.

Keeping Cestria running has been a theme on your committee's mind over the last few months.

There are a number of key roles that are vital in having a viable u3a:

**Chair** – coordination and governance

**Business Secretary** - (Margaret Pescod) – communication, administration and correspondence

**Treasure** - (Tony Morrell) – all financial matters

**Speaker Secretary** - (Margaret Chilver) – identifying and booking speakers.

**Membership Secretary** - (Pat Rule) – all membership matters

We cannot carry without these roles being covered and if you are interested in helping us to continue please have a word with either me or the person currently in the role. It might be that you could "buddy up" with the current role holder and learn how it works. There is a need to put together a "succession plan" to give comfort for the future.

My successor will be confirmed at the February AGM and I will remain involved with Cestria through the two interest groups I attend and I wish you all well going forwards.....**Robert**

## From the editor.....

Happy Christmas and New Year everyone, where has 2023 gone???? This is why we should take plenty of photos, no excuse with modern phones, and keep a diary.



### Whitburn 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023

Our speaker for August 2022 meeting, was Steve, from the Wild Oyster Project, who told us about their initiative and aim to remove pollutants from an area of the North Sea. This would be done by using wild oysters, who filter the sea water and reduce nitrogen levels. Oysters have been dubbed "superheroes" of the oceans because of their ability to filter 200 litres of water a day.

Steve's talk was so inspirational, that one of our members became part of the team, and has been a tremendous help with this project !

In October the project came to fruition and 10,000 native oysters were released on to the manmade reef off the coast of Whitburn, and started doing their job cleaning the sea.

All oysters had to be washed individually, to prevent any cross infection entering the water, this was a mammoth task. Congratulations to all involved, and best of luck for the future.

### I hope to bring you updates of the project!!.....Christine

Whilst on the subject of being environmentally friendly, opting out of receiving the Third Age Matters magazine could have environmental impact, our Secretary has issued the following message:

'One of the benefits of being a member of Cestria u3a is that we contribute to the subscription of the Third Age Matters magazine. It's been quite some time since these lists were reviewed and now's the time to update our subscription list.

You can review your options and let me know if you wish to change. Please send me a reply if you would like to opt **OUT** of receiving this magazine or alternatively if you would like to opt back **IN**. Please don't reply if there is no change'.

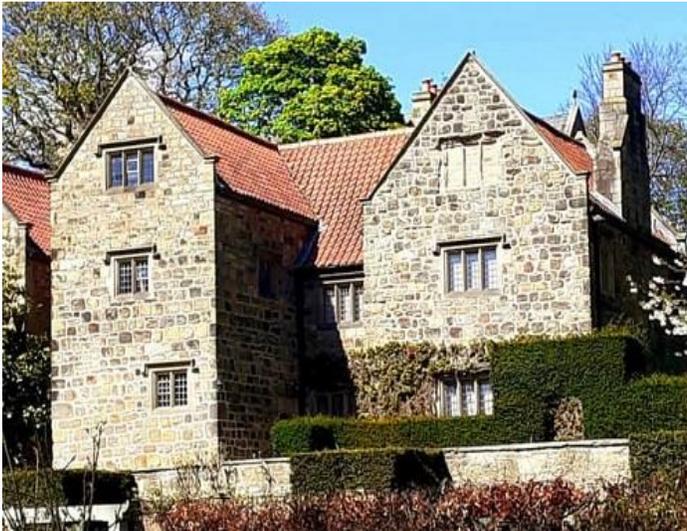
The link for Third Age Matters magazine is: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/news/publications>

The latest edition of Northumbria u3a's Messenger is available now from the Northumbria u3a website: [u3asites.org.uk/northumbria/page107889](http://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria/page107889)

## Visit to Washington village led by Margaret Bozic on 28th Sept.....

We met on the pleasant village green, surrounded by many old buildings including the old Forge, now a restaurant. We admired the decorated bird boxes and the blooms for which Washington has won awards. Also the two fine trees planted by President Jimmy Carter and PM James Callaghan in 1977. Strictly speaking, the tulip tree planted by Jimmy Carter had to be replaced as it didn't survive long.

We proceeded to Holy Trinity church - the "Church on the Hill" built by Benjamin Green who also built Penshaw Monument. The previous, much earlier church on the same site was deemed unfit. The churchyard is being tidied after many years of neglect. One of the ground's volunteers showed us into the church and gave us a talk. We were told about Jane Atkinson who was blamed for a disease that wiped out all the village cattle. She died during her "trial" as a witch in 1696. A white lady is said to be her ghost.



We moved on to the New Hall built for Isaac Lowthian Bell and the birthplace of Gertrude Bell, his granddaughter. Margaret talked about Gertrude's life at the October meeting. We heard about the young sweep who suffocated up a narrow chimney. New Hall was later a Barnardo's home and is now flats.

Then on to the site of the Glebe mine, one of 27 in the Washington New Town area. And so back to the green to see the norman arch in a nearby wall.

All this within a relatively short walking distance. Finally, off for a coffee - very important!

Thanks to Margaret for a most interesting walk, very well researched.....**Mike & Nina Parker.**

## Chinese meal Imperial Low Fell.....

After a false start on 6<sup>th</sup> October, due to the bus strike, our happy band of lunchers got together for a fun and friendly meal on the 27<sup>th</sup> October.

As always expertly organised by Anne Lanigan.....

## Website Update.....

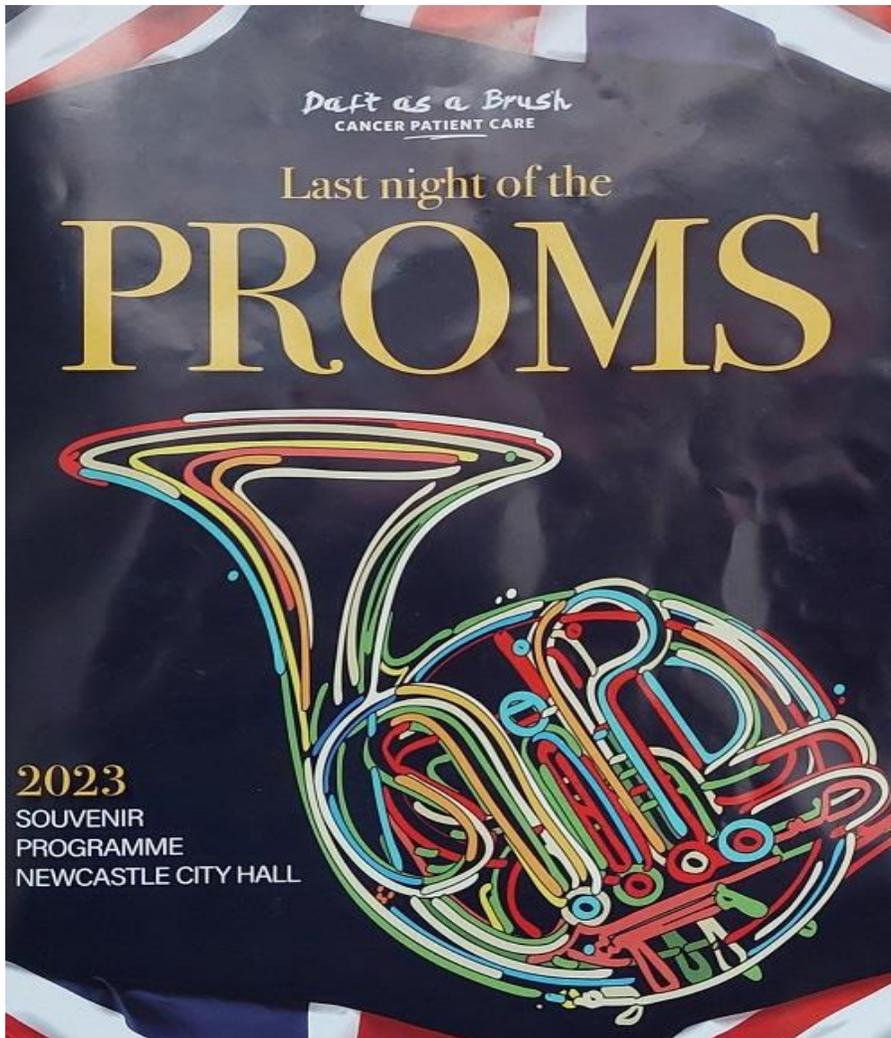
If you haven't opened our website recently, have a look: you may notice a few changes. You can find it at <https://u3asites.org.uk/cestria/welcome> or simply Google "Cestria u3a"

There is a little more information on the interest groups and their forthcoming meetings and events as well as a link to contact each group leader. Links to the other u3as in our local network whose groups we can join are also present as well as recent editions of this newsletter.

We expect to be introducing a new website in the next year or so which should bring even more improvements. Watch this space for updates or keep an eye on the website itself.

**Steve Willan - Website Administrator of Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street**

**WOW!!  
And What an Amazing Night !!**



Earlier in the year, I along with many other U3A members signed up for a trip organized by Ann Lanigan to Newcastle's City Hall for an night of music and entertainment, in aid of 'Daft as a Brush'.

We travelled independently to Newcastle to meet up at City Hall for a fun night.

Once the doors were opened, everyone made their way to their seats and within a very short space of time the theatre was full. Hats and Union Jack flags were on every seat spreading the atmosphere of fun and jollity!!

We were entertained throughout the evening with a very witty compere, Ray Spencer, who introduced each performance. Needless to say there was much hilarity and fun!!

There was a wide range of entertainment from classical to modern musicians, individual to group performers, choirs, dancers and singers, accompanied by a very enthusiastic audience, flag-waving and singing, rounded off by stirring performance by the 102Bn REME Pipes and Drums.

It was a great night all round, with something to please every-one and for those members not born and bred in this region it was an opportunity to "larn horse sum geordie"

Many Thanks to Ann Lanigan who organized our u3a participation, including suitable bus times and theatre opening times to ensure everyone could arrive on time and travel back safely. It was a splendid night.

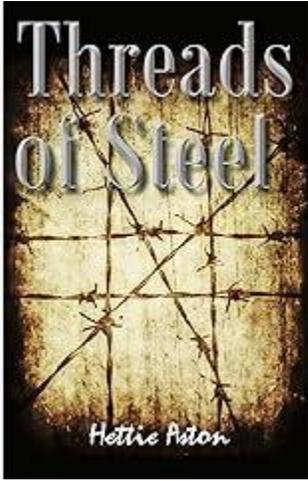
( All of proceeds of the evening go to "Daft as a Brush Cancer Care Charity).....**Irene Marwood**



## Cestria u3a Christmas Quiz 2023- Questions

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 Hollywood actor played six different roles in The Polar Express?
5. Which fairytale was the first gingerbread house inspired by?
6. Who invented the Christmas wreath?
7. Where did the tradition of Christmas stockings come from?
8. What was the coldest ever temperature recorded during a UK winter?
9. How many Christmas trees are grown in Europe?
10. How many years do Christmas trees grow for before they are sold?
11. How many Christmas trees are in Buckingham Palace?
12. Where does the word 'winter' come from?
13. What King was crowned on Christmas Day?
14. Which country first decorated Christmas trees?
15. What is the most fragrant real Christmas tree?
16. What is the name of a male turkey?
17. In which US state would you find the town Santa Claus?
18. What is the name of the carrot in Aldi's Christmas advert?
19. How many gifts are there in the 12 days of Christmas song?
20. In what year was the Queen's speech first televised?

## Many talented people in our u3a .....



I attended the October meeting of our reading group in Birtley Library, and met a local author (Hettie Aston) that I was sure I already knew from our u3a.

Our group asked her about her hard work and success as a writer and she told us this:

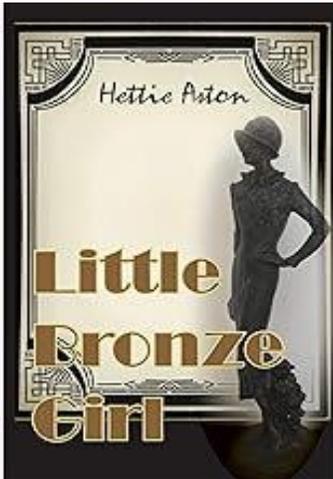
'Everyone has a book in them is an old cliché, the origins of which are lost in time.

I was raised by my Grandparents and I am of an age where, as a child 'children were seen, but not heard'. Due to this phenomenon, I was excluded from adult conversation. Hence, I became extremely adept at listening in; learning about operations, affairs, births, deaths and marriages – the list is endless. In the event of salacious subjects being gossiped about I was sent into the front room with instruction to "look, but don't touch" the trinkets in my Auntie Maggie's china cabinet, causing me much annoyance.

I also have always enjoyed people watching and observing interactions with each other, their children and their pets. We've all met them:

1. The shy quiet, mousey type who then goes on to nab the guy with the Porsche. The male equivalent, more often than not but not always, hitches his wagon to type 3.
2. The extrovert – fun at a party but can be annoying,
3. The very direct, formidable person who calls a spade a spade, what you see is what you get type – often a front for bad manners.
4. The conscientious type – can be taken advantage of and then becomes a martyr.
5. The bully who enjoys humiliating others then becomes the victim if confronted.

There are many others for sure, with different amalgamations, creating what is known as personality.



In about 2017 my late husband announced to me that he was about to begin writing a book. I encouraged him to make a start, but prevarication prevailed. I then remembered the words of the song Ethel Merman belted out in the picture, 'Annie Get Your Gun' – "Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better". I casually mentioned my desire to also write a book which then spurred him into action!

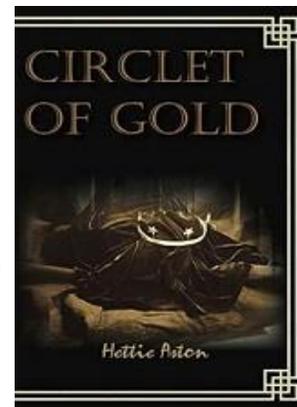
So, there we were – him downstairs, with a cat for company, writing his masterpiece. Me, upstairs, with the other cat writing various compositions, each one becoming a chapter. Having had a career in nursing of over 40 years, along with all that listening in and people watching meant I had plenty of material.

'Where to begin?' I asked myself. You need a plan I was told, and I did give planning a try, but it fell at the first hurdle as I found my characters had minds of their own, leading me down paths I'd never dreamed of. The plan, along with the Dictaphone were quickly ditched. I found that a pen and a hard backed, lined, paper pad worked for me. I did however and, rather to my surprise, enjoy researching life as it was in Northeast England in the 1930's. A period in our history between two wars, pre-NHS and little in the way of a benefits system.

Then one day my first book was finished, and a publisher sought, which (Hazard Warning) is akin to walking on hot coals. There are many ways to publish and, as I'm not thick-skinned, a household name or related to royalty, I went down the self-publishing route.

So why did I write the books? It's a solitary activity and I'm not usually the solitary type. I guess it's because I could and, perhaps, Ethel Merman spurred me on.

If you do choose to read my books: - 1. Threads of Steel, 2, Little Bronze Girl and 3. Circlet of Gold, by Hettie Aston, I hope you enjoy them and, to any aspiring writers I would say, 'Give it a go'. There's plenty of material out there'.



Hettie Aston

**...I did purchase the books !!!**

1st December 2023

**To Members of Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street**

This letter gives notice of the Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street 18th Annual General Meeting.

The date of the AGM will be Wednesday **7th February 2024** at our regular monthly meeting on that day.

A Nomination Form for committee positions is attached together with the Agenda for the meeting.

**Appointment of Officers and Trustees - as set out in the Cestria 2018 Constitution**

At every Annual General Meeting, the serving Officers shall retire from office and the members shall elect from amongst the membership, individuals to serve as Officers. The term of office is one year from the date of that meeting until the next Annual General Meeting. A retiring Officer may be re-appointed provided they remain a member of The u3a and subject to the limits on periods of service as set out below.

Chairman four years. Treasurer six years. Secretary four years.

Those up for re-election or replacement are:

Robert Berry - Chairman (Served 5 years) To step down in Feb 2024  
Tony Morrell - Treasurer (Served 5 years)  
Margaret Pescod - Secretary (Served 8 years)

**Appointment of Non-Officers and Trustees - as set out in the Cestria 2018 Constitution**

At every Annual General Meeting the Non-Officer members of the Executive Committee shall all retire. A retiring Executive Committee member may be re-appointed provided they remain a member of The u3a. A person may not serve more than six consecutive terms of office as a Non-Officer member of the Executive Committee.

Those up for re-election or replacement are:

Kathleen Atkinson (Served 5 years)  
Margaret Bozic (Served 5 years)  
Rachel Burton (Served 1 year)  
Margaret Chilver - Speaker Secretary (Served 7 years)  
Ann Lanigan - Groups Coordinator (Served 6 years)  
Christine Logan - Newsletter Editor (Served 8 years)  
Angela Hamilton (Served 3 years)  
Pat Rule - Membership Secretary (Served 4 years)  
Maureen Weston (Served 1 year)  
Steve Willan - Website Administrator (Co-opted July 2023)

**The following committee posts have not been filled and therefore nominations for replacements are required:**

None

If you are interested in joining the committee and feel you would like to know more, please contact me or another committee member to get more details.

*Margaret Pescod*

Secretary of Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street  
Registered Charity Number 1163334

**Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street  
Annual General Meeting - No.18  
Wednesday, 7th February 2024**

**Agenda**

- Chairman's opening remarks
- Treasurer's report
  - 2023 Accounts
  - Appointment of 2024 Auditor
- Election of Officers and Committee members to February 2025
- Any other business
- Date of next AGM - Wednesday 5th February 2025
- Close of meeting



**Cestria u3a at Chester le Street**  
**Annual General Meeting No. 18 - Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

## Nomination Form

**Nomination of members to stand for election as Officers and Non-Officers of the Cestria u3a at Chester le Street**

The form below is to be used for nomination of members of Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street to stand for election in the role of Officer and Non- Officer as described above for the period of one year from the date of the A.G.M.

Members nominating any Cestria u3a member for election to the Committee in the roles shown in the below form must obtain the signature of the nominee, which will serve as the nominated members acceptance of his/her nomination for that particular role.

Nomination forms received without the nominee's signature will not be considered.

In the event that there is more than one nominee for any of the committee positions shown in the table below then an election by ballot will take place, the winner will be declared by a simple majority of the vote.

Position	Nominee Name	Nominee Signature	Proposers Name and Signature	Seconders Name and Signature

Prior written nomination of any candidate for appointment as an Officer or a non-Officer of the Executive Committee at an Annual General Meeting shall normally be required, made by a proposer and seconder from amongst the membership of The u3a (not being themselves Officers or non-Officer members of the Executive Committee), **to be in the hands of the Secretary of Cestria u3a at least 28 days before the meeting.**

## **Cestria u3a Christmas Quiz 2023- Answers**

- 1. Germany**
- 2. Eggnog**
- 3. Four — the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future, and Jacob Marley**
- 4. Tom Hanks**
- 5. Hansel and Gretel**
- 6. A German Lutheran pastor named Johann Hinrich Wichern**
- 7. According to tradition, the original Saint Nicholas put gold coins in the stockings of three poor sisters**
- 8. The coldest temperature ever recorded during a UK winter was -27.2 °C**
- 9. Nearly 60 million Christmas Trees are grown each year in Europe**
- 10. 15 years**
- 11. Three trees**
- 12. The word winter comes from the Germanic wintar which in turn is derived from the root wed meaning 'wet' or water'**
- 13. King William I of England in 1066**
- 14. Riga, Latvia in 1510**
- 15. Balsam Fir**
- 16. Gobblers**
- 17. Indiana**
- 18. Kevin**
- 19. 364 gifts**
- 20. 1957**

## Committee 2023

- **Chair:** Robert Berry
- **Treasurer:** Tony Morrell
- **Secretary:** Margaret Pescod
- **Groups:** Anne Lanigan
- **Membership:** Pat Rule
- **Newsletter:** Christine Logan
- **Speakers:** Margaret Chilver
- **Website:** Steve Willan
- Kathleen Atkinson
- Margaret Bozic
- Rachael Burton
- Angela Hamilton
- Maureen Weston

Contacts for the above from our White Cards or website.

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*Cestria u3a at Chester-Le-Street is a Registered Charity no1163334*

*Cestria u3a (University of the Third Age) is an autonomous, self-help organisation run by the voluntary efforts of its members.*

*It is a member of the Third Age Trust (a Registered Charity) which is its national support and advisory body. The word "university" is used in its original sense of people coming together to share and pursue learning in all its forms aims to encourage and enable older people no longer in full-time paid employment to help each other to share their knowledge educational, cultural, recreational, physical and social.*

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