

# Cestria u3a at Chester- le-Street

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

June 2023 Newsletter

## Chairman's Corner ....

I would like to start by thanking Christine and Ray Logan for supporting our Cestria u3a website for many years. Their task was not made easier by the complete crash of u3a websites in November 2022. Thank you for all your work on this. Thanks to a smooth handover from Christine and Ray, Steve Willan has now taken over the role.

A further thanks is due to the team who organised our History Wardrobe event "Monday is Washday" in March. We all thoroughly enjoyed this day and I know that a lot of effort went into organising the booking, the venue and the buffet lunch.

A date for your diary – Tuesday 20th June at Cornerstones : Come and Meet Everyone (CAMEO) 9:30 until 12. An informal coffee morning with free Coffee and biscuits. Bring a friend if you like, it's not a members only event.

I now turn to the issue of my replacement as chair. I will be resigning from the chair and committee at the AGM on 7th February 2024. That decision is irrevocable; after 3 years as treasurer and 5 years as chair, it is time to stand aside.

A number of members have already been approached and, rest assured, that I am making every effort to find a replacement.

**Should a replacement chair not come forward within the next three months, under the terms of our constitution and Third Age Trust rules, Cestria u3a will stop all activities and disband from the end of this year.**

That is a harsh truth but it is inescapable.

I am sure that members would like to continue and I am sure there is someone amongst us all who is capable of picking up this very rewarding role.

It is often said that "someone should do something" in circumstances like this and that someone could be you !

Have a word with Margaret, Tony or me if you would like to save your u3a.

.....**Robert Berry**

## From the Editor.....

Coronation day arrived, and I thought it would be a good idea to catch up with some jobs, and work on the computer whilst the ceremony played in the background and I could follow the events of the day.....**so wrong!**

I had not intended to follow the proceedings so closely, but I could not keep my eyes away from the colour, the pageantry and the history past and present.

As a 1952 baby, the trappings of the Queen's coronation had always been part of our



home, and now, although they are worth nothing more than memories, I have them in my home too. I have now realized I have started my second collection for the new 'Carolean Era', consisting of drinks coasters and stamps. Maybe, my grandchildren will be interested in these as they actually saw this coronation. Although, I have been informed I already have too much junk!!

On a more serious note. We all enjoy the companionship and friendliness of our u3a, so please consider Robert's notes overleaf. We cannot go ahead without a new chairperson. Our group has survived so far, so don't let us fall at the last hurdle!

.....Christine Logan

## Meet the Committee.....



I am Steve Willan, your newest Committee member. Having only joined Cestria u3a this year I rapidly found myself volunteering to administer your website. Attending a Committee meeting to discuss my new role I ended up being co-opted on to the Committee.

So how did I get here? Well, I grew up in Preston, Lancashire. Embarking on a career in local government finance there before moving to the then Chester-le-Street District Council in 1981. The most challenging period was undoubtedly managing the implementation of Poll Tax for the Council before attempting to administer and collect it while working on the introduction of its replacement, Council Tax. I am not sure that I ever quite recovered from stress of the Poll Tax

The demands of the job forced me to give up my role as voluntary tutor with the adult literacy scheme which I carried out in Lancashire and later in County Durham.

Unmarried until my fifties, I met Ann. Sharing a love of walking, good food and travel we married. When I retired we bought a motorhome and travelled the UK and Europe often for several months at a time. Reaching Sicily, Dubrovnik, Southern Spain and nearer destinations. Combined with home exchanges across the World we had fantastic time. Exchanges included a 19th floor Manhattan apartment with a view of the Brooklyn Bridge and a chalet on top of a Swiss mountain where deer ate wild strawberries from the garden and the boiler exploded leaving us without hot water for a week. Sadly, Ann passed away and although I have no family of my own she left me with a tremendous step family including a daughter, two married grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. So life is seldom dull.

I have always found Chester-le-Street a friendly and welcoming town and this extends to everyone in the u3a. I am happy help out with the website. Ray and Christine Logan have been doing a great job but a National website crash last year combined with poor health caused them to look for someone else to take over. With the help of the u3a office in Newcastle I have tried to restore data lost in the crash and identify improvements to the site. As the current system is now obsolete the Trust have identified a replacement and are preparing to roll it to u3as nationally, probably next year. I shall attempt make this new system attractive, informative and easy to navigate for members, prospective members and others. In the meantime if you have any questions or comments, please send me a message via the Contacts page of the website.

## **Lunching at the Biddick Inn.....**

Lunching at the the Biddick Inn 3<sup>rd</sup> March was such a great success, that everyone booked to go back 21<sup>st</sup> April and were not disappointed.



## **Let's Play Bridge.....**

I am currently setting up a bridge group for our members. I anticipate that the group could be formed to commence playing in August/September. There are currently eight members who have indicated an interest and if you would like to be involved please email me on [jessweston38@outlook.com](mailto:jessweston38@outlook.com) and I will send further details.

**.....Maureen Weston**

**A HISTORY WARDROBE PRESENTATION  
BY LUCY ADLINGTON  
MONDAY IS WASH DAY**



Plunge into the suds and stains of historical laundry and discover how to get your toga, petticoats or collars white than white!

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We were informed and entertained in style by Lucy Adlington and Lucy Ridley on Tuesday 14 March at Cornerstones. They said that Lucy Worsley was scheduled to join them but as it was market day she hadn't been able to find a parking space!

Proceedings opened with the ladies marching through the gathering armed with the weapons of laundry, the Dolly and the Posser. They outlined the history of laundry from the earliest times slapping clothes on stones by the river, through village communal wash houses to washing at home in metal tubs. They went on to describe the development of soap from solid blocks to mid- 20<sup>th</sup> Century soap flakes that we could all remember. Stain removal was described in some detail but I shall refrain from listing the substances used in the past, lest you are eating as you read this!

The Lucies continued by describing a typical wash day from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century starting with lighting the fire under the boiler to produce the very necessary hot water. Clothes were washed in the tin bath and a scrubbing board employed to help eliminate those challenging stains. The process continued with rinsing and for The Whites, Dolly Blue to enhance the brightness. Of course, the laundry was women's work and women judged each other by the brilliance of their white wash.

It was then necessary to peg out the washing and professional assistance was provided by Anne Lannigan and Pat Rule. Pat also gave a vote of thanks to the Lucies for their informative and entertaining presentation. As I left, I suspect I was not the only u3a member feeling grateful for my automatic washing machine.

**.....Jennifer Ritchie**



## Friday Walking Group.....



The Friday walkers first walk of the year was a five mile from Souther Lighthouse to the National Glass Centre.

**Still looking glamorous in the cold!**

Snowdrops in Hawthorn Dene a February walk from Nose's Point .....



A walk to Wrekenton in  
April stopping off at the  
Gasteshead Angel on the  
way.....



Walking in the wind  
in Littleton.....





A 6 miler around Bishops Park and Bell Burn Woods, which was very muddy for the time of year.

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May, a beautiful walk from Low Burnhall Woods through Houghall woods. Just as coffee time approached this fantastic seat presented itself.



**Come and join us to have fun, keep fit and see the countryside, we meet every Friday 10am.....**  
**contact Angela Hamilton.....hamangl@aol.com**



## **Cestria u3a – Accounts Summary as at May 2023**

We are now going into the sixth month of 2023 and the financial state of the u3a is much better than anticipated at the AGM. An anticipated deficit of £340 now is expected to be a surplus of £230.

This is due to a combination of factors including membership numbers increasing, attendance at group meeting being higher than anticipated, a 50p increase in our capitation fee was voted down by u3as at the Third Age Trust AGM and the History Wardrobe event returned a surplus.

During the previous AGM I stated: “The cost of membership fees, monthly meeting fees and group fees are driven by membership numbers and inflation, hopefully, if numbers increase and inflation levels out, this will result in an unwantedly high bank balance, should this occur we will then be in a position to review these increases”.

In order to reduce the anticipated bank balance the committee have agreed to reduce the monthly meeting fee to £1 for the June 2023 meeting and all meetings to December 2023. The anticipated deficit is now expected to be £148.

### **Cestria u3a - Actual & Budgeted Spending compared to Budgeted spending per AGM for 2023 as at May 2023**

	<b>Actual &amp; Budgeted Spending 2023</b>	<b>Budgeted Spending per AGM 2023</b>	<b>Better/(Worse) than AGM Budget</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Subscriptions</b>	<b>2,967</b>	<b>2,696</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>Deposit interest</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sale of books</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>(1)</b>
<b>Monthly meetings</b>	<b>(902)</b>	<b>(623)</b>	<b>(279)</b>
<b>u3a National and regional expenses</b>	<b>(1,655)</b>	<b>(1,605)</b>	<b>(50)</b>
<b>Groups</b>	<b>(136)</b>	<b>(330)</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Cestria u3a running expenses</b>	<b>(657)</b>	<b>(566)</b>	<b>(91)</b>
<b>Surplus social activities</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>(£148)</b>	<b>(£340)</b>	<b>£192</b>

**.....Tony Morrell**

## Bird Walk 25<sup>th</sup> April....

In late April thirteen of us enjoyed another bird walk in the Derwent Walk Country Park near Winlaton Mill led by ornithologist Michael Turner.



The weather was cool but still which gave us a chance to hear the birds as well as to see them. It was Michael who did most of the listening for he has excellent hearing. He is also very good at bird impressions. His fighting Robins demonstration is wonderful.

We began with a lesson on how to use binoculars. Then we walked into the park to see what birds were around that day. Of course we were always on the lookout for Red Kites, whose original name was forky tailed puttocks (he claims). Red Kites had been introduced into the Derwent Valley area between 2004 and 2006 when ninety-four young kites were released into the valley. It was in the final year of the release programme that the first red kites began to breed in the north east region. No one knows how many there are now. Michael told us that the best time to see them is in the middle of Winter.

Birds can call and they can sing. Singing usually is a more melodious sound, while calling often is sharper and more direct. Calls are used either as a loud alarm note to

communicate danger, or as quiet chatter to locate mates and other birds of their species. There was plenty of both in the woods. And the Chiff Chaff does both, constantly.

There were many other species to observe and to listen too, including a heron which posed beautifully for us. A Buzzard, Black Caps, Crows, House Martins and the first Swallow of Spring. A Mistle Thrush and a Song Thrush singing a duet. Swans on their nest in the pond.

Unfortunately, we never saw the Kingfisher although he does exist in that area. The smallest bird was a Gold Crest, 9 cm long and weighing only 6 grams, the same weight as a 20 pence piece. The smallest bird in the World is the Bee Hummingbird is but can only be found in the Caribbean. It is too cold for it here. We also saw some Badger setts on the Nine Arches Viaduct. To us it was just rough earth but Michael could identify it by the smell. They have their latrines nearby although the setts are kept very clean.

Michael is about to have a book published about birds in this area. The book is 'A History of Birds in the Derwent Valley' and will be available from the Land of Oak and Iron Heritage Centre, Gateshead Central Library, possibly St Mary's Heritage Centre, a few small outlets in the Derwent Valley and hopefully the Lit & Phil. It will retail at £18.

We hope to have another bird walk in the Autumn.

**.....Margaret Bozic**

**What a great article, excellent as usual.....thanks Margaret. Just this week our son took Ray and I there to walk and birdwatch, yes it was freezing, we didn't see the Kingfisher either, but still fabulous. And we have this right on our doorstep. The Land of Oak and Iron has been a great success.**

**Members might remember the u3a outing we had there, when we heard the history of the Crowley Iron Works, the largest 18<sup>th</sup> century iron works in Europe ....Crowley recruited up to 1000 workers from across the country and paid them the highest wages. They had their own laws and social security system.**

**Crowley's famous nails, shackles, chains and branding irons were sent all over the world.**

**..... Christine**



### Monthly Meetings

**1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of  
month Cornerstones  
Methodist Chapel  
9.30- 10.00 Pre  
Meeting Coffee &  
Chat....10.00-Noon  
Main Meeting.**

### Speakers

**7<sup>th</sup> June .....  
Water Aid.....  
Nadia Nicolas**

**5<sup>th</sup> July.....  
'The Secret Brain'....  
Robert Pullen**

**2<sup>nd</sup> August.....  
'Return of the Red  
Kites'...Harold Dobson**

**6<sup>th</sup> September.....  
The Swinging Sixties  
& The Beatles.....  
Linda Davidson**

**4<sup>th</sup> October.....  
'Dr. Livingstone I  
Presume....  
Fran Sandham**

### Committee 2023

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

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 form 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*