

Cestria u3a at Chester- le-Street

Website – www.u3asites.org.uk/cestria

September 2023 Newsletter

Chairman's Corner

Monthly Meetings

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

Speakers

**6th Sept.....
The Beatles.....
Linda Davidson**

**4th Oct.....
Dr. Livingston I
Presume.....
Fran Sandham**

**1st Nov.....
The Early Years of
Gertrude Bell.....
Margaret Bozic**

**6th Dec
Christmas Event**

As an experiment we organised a free coffee morning on 20th June under the banner of CAMEO (Come and Meet Everyone). About 50 people attended and the general view was that the event was very successful as there was time to sit, chat and catch up.

The good news is that the events team will be repeating the CAMEO coffee morning, 9:30am until 12 on Tuesday 12th September in the Upper Room at Cornerstones. Please come along and bring a friend. It's all free! If the success of this type of event continues, I think we can look to put it into our u3a routine on a quarterly basis.

Interest groups are the lifeblood of the u3a. Many people don't attend the monthly meeting in Cornerstones because their experience of the u3a is through the interest group(s) that they attend. We have quite a few groups (with the Bridge Group to start in September) but we can always do with more especially as our membership steadily increases. If you have an interest you would like to share with a group then let Anne Lanigan (our Groups Coordinator) know. Anne would be only too pleased to help you get a group started (advertising, finding premises, early days financial support, collecting group fees etc etc). The more groups we have on offer, the more the chance that potential new members will come and join us.

Finally, to turn to the Chair situation. As you all know by now, we have a candidate willing to be nominated for the Chair's post in February 2024. I think everyone needed to know that the future of Cestria was looking more certain than of late, hence the decision to inform members of the position. However, it is right and proper that all members know that nominations for the post of Chair must be with Margaret Pescod, our secretary by 10th January 2024., the AGM calling notice will be going out in December 2023 and nominations would be welcomed after then.

If you are interested in the Chair's role please speak to either Margaret, Tony or me. In the event of there being more than one candidate being nominated, there will be a ballot by a show of hands at the AGM on 7th February 2024 to decide who the new chair will be. That person must be ready to begin their duties by completing the remainder of the AGM after I have stood down.

.....**Robert Berry**

From the Editor....



Looking back over previous newsletters dating back to 2006, I found this quotation, and four editors later, it is still applicable. 'This is **your** newsletter and much depends on **your** input, we would love to hear from you, tell us what you are doing, or plan to do, your experiences or stories.' Nothing had changed so keep in touch!!!

I was feeling quite nostalgic when I looked through past newsletters. Ray and I joined Cestria u3a somewhere between 2009-2010. We were a little timid when we entered the crowded meeting room at the Parish Centre.

But the first person to greet us was Kitty Easton, with a friendly smile and time to stop and explain everything to us, it made our first visit pleasant and worry free.

Kitty and David have been long standing members of Cestria u3a, but have now started a new adventure. They have moved to Farnham to enjoy the rest of their retirement, and are now nearer to family. I am sure you will wish them every success for the future. I do hope that when they venture out to new interest groups, there is a friendly face to welcome them, just as Kitty did for us.....

Moving on Maureen Weston has asked me to mention about local Heritage Days. An interesting speaker Judith Carruthers from the Little Theatre Gateshead, has been booked to talk to us about how the Little Theatre came about etc. It should be interesting as it goes back to war time, when the theatre was established. Judith mentioned that they are open on Saturday 9th September for Heritage Day. We hope this newsletter is issued in time so that anyone interested can visit backstagea date for your diary.

Hopefully there will be a little more Summer weather for us...and you can have an amble in Saltwell Park after the visit.....do enjoy!!!

.....Christine Logan

Just for fun..... ichthyology is the study of what???

Meet the Committee.....Rachael Burton



I am really a Southerner, as I was born and brought up in Swindon and Exeter, but have lived most of my adult life in the North East. I migrated to Newcastle to attend university and then lived there for 26 years. While my 3 children were small I was involved with the National Childbirth Trust and the National Housewives Register (NHR), later re-named the National Women's Register (NWR).

I moved to Chester-le-Street in 1998, partly to make my journey to work easier, as I was working at Sunderland F.E. College. (Getting across the Tyne Bridge in the rush hour isn't much fun!). Unfortunately, I then developed M.E./Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and was so ill that I had to retire early at the age of 51.

My health has gradually improved since then, although not back to "normal". As both my family and I had received a lot of help from the NHS I became involved with the local NHS—the Primary Care Trust. A while later I was appointed as a Lay Member of the Board of Durham and Chester le Street PCT, a part time post which I found very interesting but it ended after three and a half years due to a complete reorganisation of local health services.

After that I was approached to join the committee running the charity M.E. North East, based at Bullion Hall, which covered the whole of North East England. It was very successful for over 15 years but sadly the grants ran out and it had close just before the pandemic.

Following the breakdown of my marriage I lived on my own for about 7 years until I met Trevor. We have been together now for 15 years. At the monthly meetings we usually sit in the front row as Trevor is severely deaf and lip-reads. I joined Cestria U3A as an original member and have really enjoyed my membership, including several different groups. As a committee member I am looking forward to supporting the U3A to thrive in the years to come.....

ANYONE FOR BRIDGE?



**Begin on Monday 4th September at the Parish Centre.
1.30 pm for approximately two hours.**

All abilities welcome

**Contact Maureen Weston
jessweston38@outlook.com**

or 0191 388 5624

CESTRIA U3A



DISCUSSION GROUP – 2023

Meeting 10a.m. Chester le Street Library

REMAINING PROGRAMME

Date	Topic	Topic Leader
18 th Sept	What is our expectation of technology/medical advances in the next 20 years ?	
16 th Oct	Shamima Begum/ISIS Women – should they be allowed back into the UK ?	
20 th Nov	Has the Government, with a large majority become ineffective ?	
18 th Dec	Planning Meeting/ Discussion on the political state of the nation	

Note: Meeting now held 3rd Monday of the month, & every meeting will include a short discussion in Current Affairs.

For more details, please contact Robert Berry (cestriau3achair@gmail.com)

Chinese Lunch, Low Fell



The Imperial in Gateshead offers diners a chance to experience authentic Cantonese dishes without the fine dining price tag. Located on Durham Road, they are accessible to all. With their oriental interior and authentic recipes, diners are transported to a mini China in the heart of the North East.

Joan McElroy and Ray Gillingham were part of the Cestria dining group on 25th May and reported back:

'We were seated at two round tables which made it very easy to chat and socialise.

After we settled down, a large bowl of prawn crackers was placed on the Lazy Susan for us to enjoy.

The friendly staff served the soup and left the serving bowl for anyone wanting more. There was much laughter on our table when the turntable spun around and the drinks all ended up with the wrong people.

It was a good atmosphere, good conversation, and good food.

Thanks once again to Anne Lanigan for her organisation'.

Thank you Joan for the report for our newsletter, I was supposed to attend this function, but got a last minute hospital appointment.....fantastic for my health.....but devastating for my social life. Another trip is planned, so I will denitely make that one.....Christine

Dunston Staiths Walk July 10th 2023.....



The ultimate destination of the walk was **Dunston Staiths**, a dramatic relic of the area's industrial past. Throughout the walk we heard about the concentration of industries which used to be here, the natural features which encouraged early industry, the expansion in the later C19th and early to mid C20th and the subsequent change, via a **Garden Festival** to a residential area with pleasant riverside amenities.

We started at the terminus at Teams of the Gateshead trams, the site of the Cross Keys pub with its darker history, then another old pub, the Anchor (now the Tudor Rose) and the Dunston Excelsior Club which also housed a rifle range.

There had been coal mining in Dunston with Staiths on the Team and upriver on the Tyne along with manufacturing industry at least since the early C19th. With opening of the river by substantial dredging beyond Newcastle by the Tyne Improvement Commission from the 1850s large cargo ships could supply grain to the CWS Flour Mill, raw materials to the CWS Soap factory and there was plentiful coal for the large Dunston Power Station which continued to the later C20th.

Crossing the Team on a bridge which had carried the Carlisle to Newcastle Railway (to Gateshead) in 1837, over which the lines accessing the staiths later passed we walked along the Team to what had been the Saltwater Garden during the Gateshead Garden Festival in 1990 to talk about the task of cleaning the site of polluting industries and suitable for the festival and subsequent development of housing and light industry.

Passing under the Ekke wood pedestrian bridge built for the Garden Festival (who can remember what you can cure by sniffing the bark?) we emerged into the latest and largest residential development, the design instigated by Wayne Hemingway and again considered the Bolt and Rivet Works and Gasworks which had occupied the area.

The staiths had to be viewed through locked gates and in panorama from the banks of the Tyne, access restricted following fire damage.

Although designed to ease safe and efficient transfer of coal from trucks to ships, the job was heavy manual work and dangerous. Coal loading ceased after 1979 but the impressive structure was in the limelight as the northern end of the Garden Festival site, with the giant ball of string and an impressive demonstration of balletic strength and skill by Wayne Sleep as a charity event.

At the end of the walk, several members headed for the Staiths Cafè for refreshment.

.....**Lawrence Bryson, Walk Leader**

.....**Photo Angela Hamilton**

Exploring Elswick organised by Margaret Bozic

June 5th arrived, a bright sunny morning, perfect for a guided walk. My trip into Central Station Newcastle went hiccup free, I met Margaret in the station and we took a bus that stopped right outside of St John's cemetery Elswick... which was the main topic of the walk. On arrival we met another 5 members, which was just a nice number to walk with, as we could hear well, and chat freely to each other.

Once in the cemetery we started to walk downhill towards the river Tyne, and it was then that I realised it hadn't been a good time to break in a new pair of walking shoes.....ouch!

The foundation stone of St. John's Cemetery was laid in 1856, and the cemetery opened 1857. It became the largest cemetery in Newcastle, and is still in use. The 20 acres of land were purchased from Richard Grainger, who lived in Elswick Hall. It replaced the graveyard at St. John's Church Grainger Street Newcastle, as this had to be closed after the Cholera outbreak in the city. Demand became so great that Elswick cemetery was extended in 1899.

Designers Johnson and Knowles won a competition in 1855 to design the impressive gateway. There are two Gothic style mortuary chapels linked by a high central tower, the west chapel being designated as C of E, and the east chapel to non-conformists. Both again designed by Johnson and Knowles.

Margaret pointed out some gravestones of Quaker interest, including the Richardsons, who were owners of a large tannery on the riverside, and built houses for their employees, although they resigned as Quakers and became C of E. Also the stone of John Theadore Merz, a German British chemist, born in Manchester, educated in Germany, and then went on to found and be vice chairman of the Newcastle on Tyne Electric Supply Company in 1869. He was very sympathetic to the Quaker viewpoint, but felt unable to join them, as he was not a pacifist and said 'it is the duty of everyone to defend his country'.

A very ornate tomb had been purchased by the Mather family. They had been a poor family who had nursed a wealthy stranger back to health, and as a reward had inherited his fortune.

A moving story was also recorded about the Montagu Pit disaster of 1925. Being the worst mining disaster in Newcastle, 38 men and boys lost their lives, when the Low Montagu pit in Scotswood, flooded from the Paradise pit.

Newcastle has had its share of sad accidents. The Fire Brigade memorial, was dedicated to 3 men who died from inhaling nitric acid fumes during a fire at Mawson Swan's in 1890, tragically a fourth firefighter also died after falling under the wheels of his appliance.

At the western end of the cemetery a walled section was designated for Jewish graves, it was extended in 1889 and used until 1963, holding over a thousand ornate gravestones. Originally, it has its own gate and mortuary chapel, what tales those headstones call tell!

I loved the whole place, there's only Margaret Bozic who could make a walk in a churchyard come to life!

Heading down the hill towards the river Tyne we passed St. Joseph's home dating from the 1860's and now operated by 'The Little Sisters of the Poor' as a nursing home. (The Little Sisters arrived in Newcastle in 1866, and moved to St. Joseph's in 1868). We passed the sites of many big houses in the area: Elswick House owned by Sir William Haswell Stephenson, Lord Mayor 1910, North Elswick Hall, Ashfield House-home to the Richardson's, The Gables belonging to the Richardson leather works family – demolished 1988.

Elswick Hall built 1810 on the site of a medieval tower, was Richard Grainger's home 1839-1842, it was demolished 1981 and now boasts a modern swimming baths for the use of locals.

The Cruddas Park flats are a Newcastle landmark, named after George Cruddas, who co-founded the Elswick Works with Lord Armstrong. Terraced houses were built; lasted until the 1960's and were replaced by 10 blocks of flats but only 5 of these blocks have survived, 5 were demolished. The Loadman Street Estate, was another housing initiative, but sadly that failed, due to a bad build quality.

St. Michael's RC Church is one of two churches in the area. Built in 1891 it is a magnificent grade II listed building designed by Dunn, Hansom & Dunn, and chosen as the place of his marriage by Dec of Ant and Dec fame. The other church St. Stephen's, had its foundation stone laid by Lord Armstrong in 1866, but unfortunately, did not fare so well, supported financially by the Cruddas family, it lost its congregation due to the housing clearances, closing in 1984 it was demolished by 1988. Although the grade II handsome spire was saved, and is cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust.

The riverside walk took us past the site of Armstrongs hydraulic crane factory. The 5.5 acres of land was bought by William Armstrong in 1847 and the factory expanded to become the biggest employer in Newcastle. In 1899 a second factory was built to supply warships and armaments. It became Vickers Armstrong, and ultimately was named only Vickers, closing in the 1970's. The Newcastle Business Park now stands on the site.

From this point, in years gone by, we could have looked across to Kings Meadow Island and Clarence Island, but these disappeared when the river was dredged, so that Lord Armstrong could move his assembled ships straight down the river. From here we got a lovely view of Dunston Staithes across the river, the subject of our next walk organised by Margaret!

We carried on with a lovely walk, but in the past it would not have been so pleasant, we would have passed the Richardson's tannery, the smelly Gas works, the leadworks, which used ore from Weardale and Teasdale, and had huge railway sidings behind it., Shot Factory Lane, Skinnerburn, Stephenson's Locomotive works and Hawthorn's Engine Works dating back to 1872.

The bridges over the river Tyne looked magnificent on such a bright day, our last lap was up the hill that is Hanover Street, past the site of the bonded warehouses constructed in the 1840s, for use as storage for goods before excise had been paid. Unfortunately, these were irreparably damaged by fire in 1997.

Our last goal was now in sight St. Nicholas Cathedral, where we enjoyed tea and delicious cakes, in their comfortable Café 16.

We were able to get a bus home, from right outside the Cathedral.....a weary happy bunch, that had had the most pleasant and informative day out.....you can't beat the u3a for that.....thank you Margaret!

.....**Christine Logan**

Cestria u3a

Coffee and Amble – 2023

Walking shoes or boots are recommended/required for all walks.

Please contact Margaret Pescod for more information.

Remaining Programme

September 15th	Norman Cornish Trail in Spennymoor	In front of the town hall. Free parking is behind the town hall	Mike & Nina Parker
October 20th	Rainton Meadows	Car Park DH4 6PU	Neville Anderson
November 17th	T.B.A.		
December 15th	Christmas Lunch		Margaret Pescod

This is a friendly group of 10 -14 people who enjoy fresh air and a healthy walk, but not a hike. We usually walk for about an hour at a gentle pace, chatting as we go and we walk as fast as the slowest person.

We round off the stroll with a tea or coffee and a scone (or even more) at any nearby watering hole.

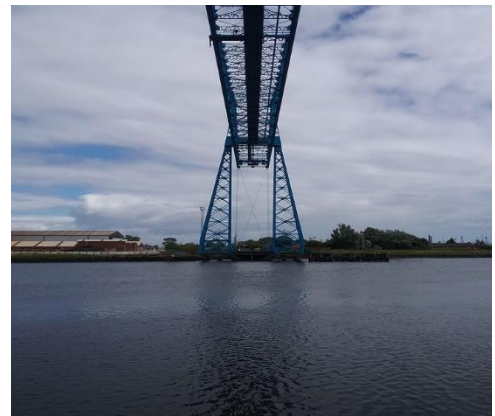
The walk starts at 10.30am on the 3rd Friday of every month at various points. Once a year a programme is prepared by the members of the group suggesting suitable walks and volunteering to lead. You must complete a Disclaimer form before your first walk with Cestria u3a and your details are stored on the Beacon database.

An up to date program is always on the Cestria website at <https://u3asites.org.uk/cestria/page/17017>

Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge.....



In June 2017 our u3a had an outing to the Transporter Bridge, it wasn't fantastic weather, but it didn't spoil our day. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, but it wasn't until recently, I found out that John Denny had enjoyed it so much that he went back again the next month to share the experience with his wife Dorothy and their grandson.



He has just this month put his photographs on the Cestria u3a Photography Group site, to share with the other members. It's great when we get such positive feedback from our outings.



Sadly the bridge has been out of commission since 2019 for repair. Although, since opening in 1911, it is the longest working transporter bridge in the world and an iconic symbol of Teesside's engineering and industrial heritage.

Thank you John for your pictures and fantastic memories.....



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 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.

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