

DUNELM U3A GROUP REPORTS 2021-2022

Art Appreciation Group



The Tennis Party,
J. Lavery,
1885,
Aberdeen
Art Gallery

The Dunelm Art Appreciation group has met by zoom and in person during the past 12 months. We're glad to say we continue to attract a good rate of attendance and the 2022 programme has begun well.

One significant change is that we have moved premises from Newton Hall to Belmont Community Centre (opposite B&Q), Gilesgate Moor, Durham, DH1 2LL. The Centre offers excellent parking and facilities generally.

We meet on the 4th Tuesday of every month, from 10.00 am to 12.00, with the December session usually a small party (buffet food) plus art history quiz.

Regular 'open sessions' are very popular within our group. January and February 2022 began this way and we covered Games and Sport in art (see picture above) and Lesser Known Female Artists. If a member wishes to make a contribution (often just one picture), they will briefly research their picture, make a few notes and share them with the group. Some members provide and download their own pictures, others ask for (technological) assistance.

The meeting on 22 March focuses on a more specific topic covering the group known as the St Ives painters. One member will lead the session, selecting representative St Ives painters and asking if anyone wants to contribute. We find that some people want to join in and others prefer to watch and listen.

We welcome anyone interested in the history of art and throughout the year offer a range of art topics, periods and artists. Generally, our chronology slips back and forward between ancient, modern, well known and less familiar artists and genres. For instance, last year we covered children's illustrators, Aboriginal art and some early Renaissance artists – a great variety!

Please contact Carol Tritton (caroltritton@hotmail.com) for general enquiries or Liz Atkins (e.m.atkins@btpenworld.com) for a programme if you are interested in joining us.

Liz Atkins

Poetry Reading Group

This is one of the smallest groups in Dunelm U3A but what it lacks in numbers it makes up in the enthusiasm of its members. The group was reluctant to use Zoom during the period when physical meetings were prohibited, but we were able to continue our programme by email which proved a popular option. Actual meetings began in September in our new venue and most of our original members have returned.

Our approach is to read poems for pleasure rather than attempt to study them as was done at school. We are not experts, but enjoy the experience of hearing poems read out loud. In the past 12 months we have looked at works by well known poets e.g. Tennyson, W.H. Auden and Seamus Heaney; and less familiar, contemporary poets e.g. Fleur Adcock and Pauline Prior-Pitt. We also looked at poems on themes e.g. Journeys, Islands and Cities. Often a particular poem will provoke a discussion on wider issues, but it isn't all serious and we frequently have a good laugh.

If you think poetry isn't for you, this could be the group that changes your mind. Give it a try by coming along to one of our sessions. After all, U3A is about learning new things.

Pauline Butler

Craft & Hobbies Group

In early 2021 we continued meeting on Zoom, a real boon especially in January's icy weather, but as soon as it was possible to do so safely, we started meeting in person again.



There are about 6 of us who meet regularly, and a big vote of thanks is due to the group leaders who have warmly opened their homes to us.

We often make gifts for family and friends, and in between we continue to knit much-needed hats & scarves for the West End Refugee Services in Newcastle in the cold months, as well as knitting/crocheting incubator covers, small blankets, preemie cardigans & hats for a charity in the northwest called "With Love from William".

We all bring along whatever handiwork we're busy with and those needing assistance can generally find help while enjoying tea & cake and a friendly chat. Patterns & books are passed around and shared when designs take someone's fancy, in the time-honoured tradition of crafters everywhere.

Val Hodgson

Quiz Group

The Quiz Group continues to thrive despite the difficulties of the past 2 years. When we were unable to meet face to face we were active on Zoom. In 2021 we extended the hand of u3a friendship to Durham u3a and some members joined us on zoom.

September 2021 saw us back to our meeting place at Carrville Methodist Church Hall, on the first Monday of the month and we finished the year with our Christmas Event on the 6 December with a buffet lunch provided by Seventeen from Coxhoe followed by a seasonal quiz.

Currently we have 36 members on the register with an average attendance of 22. Some members have felt unable to return to face to face meetings at present but hopefully may feel able to participate in 2022. Dunelm Quiz group has inspired two new groups to set up – one at Durham u3a and the other at North Norfolk, so the influence of our system is spreading.

In addition to the monthly meetings at Carrville a small team take part in an inter-u3a quiz hosted by Ayr u3a. The team has never managed to be top of the leader board but continues to be challenged by the questions set by Ian from Ayr.

2021 is the end of the 13th year of quizzing at Dunelm u3a. The group continues to welcome new members. The success of the group is thanks to the help, support and efforts of all the group members who assist the running of the group and take their turn in setting questions – some questions more fiendish than others. Thank you to all the group.

Jennifer Banks

Lunch Group

During Covid restrictions the Lunch Group was more or less out of action. We have now however started up again. Last month the lunch was at The Seven Stars, Shincliffe and this month at The Pavillion, Iveston. The Pavillion is a Cantonese restaurant and is one of our favourites. As to be expected prices have increased.

We are a friendly group and welcome newcomers. Any suggestions for new venues are also very welcome.

A notice is always displayed at the monthly meeting of the next venue and date and time. The day of lunches can change every month as I try not to clash with other groups. If a lift is needed this can always be arranged as members are always willing to help. If you are unable to attend the monthly meeting please phone me on 0191 3721533 and I can give you details of the next outing.

Rita McGarr

History Group

By the time 2021 got underway the History Group had fought through the problems experienced in 2020 and had establishing a new routine based on meeting on Zoom.

A programme was in place underpinned by my Britain Discovered Documentaries and interspersed and supported by external speakers and some of our female members who followed through on Cyril's plan to discuss the lives of Henry VIII's wives.

In fact, we were meeting 3 times a month until June when we cut back to 2 meetings. This was to make good economic use of our Zoom Licence. The outings on the first Thursday in the month however could not restart due to Covid restrictions so that the empty outing slot was filled by a zoom meeting.

Our live meetings restarted at St John's Hall, MEADOWFIELD on Jan 20th 2022 with a Britain Discovered Documentary, A DRAMATIC ICON looking at the construction of the Ribbleshead Viaduct.

Feb saw a visit from John Heckles the first of our external speakers. During this meeting Cyril's hard work over 17 years as founder, leader and Speaker Finder was acknowledged with a presentation of a book and Picture based on Durham's History (Photo: Alan Morrison).



The location of external visits are still in the process of being decided when conditions improve and this will need members to volunteer to organise them.

The Groups live meetings on the 3rd Thursday are able to continue because Deborah Blindt has taken up the position of leader to organise the speaker programme. A big thank you to her for this. Like any leader, her success will be influenced by the support she will get during her period of office.

When I joined History we had several members who were willing and able to contribute to what we call the pre Tea Period. Sadly this period needs reviving with members offering some talk ideas. For example, during the year I announced 2025 will be the 200th Anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway and it will see huge potential for us to involve ourselves in research and activity associated with this and truly call ourselves A LOCAL HISTORY GROUP.

John Campbell

Walking Group

We've been walking "normally" now for almost exactly a year, so all the difficulties of the previous year are largely forgotten! We're even completing the day's outing with a pub lunch too, although really only starting with the excellent Christmas Lunch at the Avenue in High Shincliffe.

There have been a variety of starting points and walks. Some have been fairly local, like Broompark picnic area and Littleton, and some have been further afield, like Barnard Castle and Blanchland. Once there, the format has been broadly similar – 5 or 6 miles on country paths. The one option from previous years we haven't yet revisited is the linear walk (up the coast, for example) with a bus-ride back. A bit ironic really, as for years I was one of the minority without a bus-pass! Now that I've had one for a couple of years, I've hardly used it!

This year, we're starting to venture a bit further afield still, with walks planned at Wolsingham and High Force amongst others. Our plans are helped enormously by the contributions of the members, with one walk a month planned by a different member of the group. This not only halves the burden on the group leader, but also takes us to places that just one person would never have thought of! I'm very grateful for these extra contributions – I think the system is working very well so far.

We normally have 8 – 10 walkers, and, of course, everybody is welcome. If the idea appeals, come along – I'm sure you'd enjoy it! It's great to be out in the fresh air, enjoying the views, enjoying the chat, losing a few pounds and then putting them back on again at lunch-time!

Richard Dennis

Wine Tasting Group

The wine group restarted meetings in October 2021, at Lyn Jordison House, Belmont. We have a group of 10-14 who meet on the 3rd Wed evening of the month. We discuss and taste 5-6 wines, which are brought by members. This year we have sampled wines from Argentina and New Zealand in October and November.

We held no meeting in December because of other Christmas commitments, but had a late Christmas party in January, with members bringing food to pair with their favourite Xmas wines. Red wine and chocolate was quite a success. In February we tasted Rose wines to celebrate Valentine's Day.

Cynthia Bolton

Photography Group

For most of 2021 the Group was meeting on Zoom. This worked very well and all of our members continued to take photos throughout the pandemic. Our first meetings in person were in October when we had an outdoor event to take night shots in Durham and also our first meeting in person at Bowburn.

During the year we tried our hand at a variety of topics including: Still life compositions; the use of leading lines, rule of thirds, natural frames, space to move into, blurred background; photos of the same subject with different exposures; Portraits; Street photography and much more. We also have a very active programme for the coming year.

New members are always welcome at group meetings which usually take place on the third Monday of each month. No experience necessary and you don't even need a camera (if you have a mobile phone).

Alan Morrison

Theatre Group

The Theatre group resumed meeting on the third Tuesday morning of every month in the autumn. We meet on the first floor landing of the Gala Theatre at 10:30 am, where we



decide what events we want to attend. We usually travel by mini bus from Sutton Street at 6:30 pm, there is plenty of parking nearby and the bus station is very close.

We managed to attend two performances in 2021, one at the Little Theatre in Gateshead and another at the live Theatre on the quayside in Newcastle. We made our own way to these productions by shared car and public bus, as there were too few of us for a mini bus.

It was a sad year for the group as Joyce Robson, who had been expertly managing the group since its beginning soon after the inception of Dunelm U3A died in June. Maureen Bargewell who had been doing the bookings in recent years has also decided to step down since the pandemic.

David Holmes who we have used for transport for several years no longer has a bus and we hope to use another company in 2022, but costs are increasing following the recent political crises. We have booked 4 trips for early 2022.

If U3A members are unable to come to the Tuesday meeting, they can join our mailing list or sign up at the main meeting, if there is room on the bus.

Nancy Gemski

Sue Vanden Bon

E-reader group

Over the past year the e-reader group has continued to meet every month to discuss a variety of books. The books are chosen from Kindle books, usually costing 99p. Some of the books have been *The Ship of Brides* by Jojo Moyes, *The Apothecary Rose* by Candace Robb, *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrick Backman, *The Authenticity Project* by Clare Pooley and *The Fair Botanists* by Sara Sheridan. The books are discussed, which often leads to other discussions too. The group decide on the next book and we have a month to read it. We are a small group but this means all can take part in the discussion. We meet in my house (usually) which means there is no monthly fee. We enjoy tea and biscuits after our discussions. We would welcome any new members - just contact me for details. **Val Burgess**

Creative Writing

Over the past year, Dunlem U3A Creative Writing Group has continued to flourish. Two members left the group, as they wished to live nearer to their families. Recently we welcomed a new member, so we now have nine people meeting together once a month to share our writing.

We started the year by meeting on Zoom, which worked very well. However, when things were easing up with regard to COVID regulations, we decided to meet in the garden of one of our member's during the summer months. We really enjoyed sitting listening to and discussing each other's writing and in such a lovely outdoor environment. As autumn drew near, we realised that we would have to make a decision about how we would continue to meet as it was getting too cold to sit outside. Some of our members felt uncomfortable about meeting indoors while there was still the danger of COVID hovering over us all. They preferred to go back to using Zoom while the rest of us were happy to meet in the home of our kindly host.

So, we set up a hybrid system which is what we continue to use up to the present time. This has worked out very well because we have been able to welcome our newest member who does not have access to Zoom but is able to attend the live meeting. With the help with a special microphone which was kindly donated by one of our group, we find the hybrid session works very well indeed.

I am in regular contact with all of the members on my list, so that they can be kept informed about each new session, have access to each other's writing before we actually meet, and also be sent any other useful information that might be useful to them re our creative writing.

Everyone is keen to write with total freedom to enjoy expressing their ideas in a range of modes and literary styles. However, we also like the discipline of writing about a theme which has been chosen by mutual consent.

All of our writing is done at home, so we have a month to put our thoughts down on paper. If someone finds inspiration from another idea or wishes to rework something already filed away, we are happy to enjoy hearing that piece of writing too. ("No pressure, is our motto!").

It is always a delight to be part of this group and to enjoy the surprise when someone produces a really wonderful piece of work or when our discussions are particularly stimulating.

Some of the themes we have covered this year include:

- Memories.
- Steps
- Achievement

and...also challenges such as: inspiration from a newspaper cutting, a modern fairy tale, a graphic poem

We warmly welcome anyone who would like to come and join us either on Zoom or in our home venue.

Irene Wilkinson