



A very Happy New Year to one and all. Whether you spent the Christmas break in the bosom of the family, partying like there's no tomorrow, or hibernating cosily in your jamas, let's hope you had a lovely time, and are raring to go in 2024. (Things in this household took an interesting turn when the fridge-freezer suffered a terminal breakdown on Christmas Eve, with housefuls of relatives due...Ah well. At least the turkey was despatched in record time,)

Please forgive the later appearance of this issue - see the calendar for events this week, including Thursday's monthly meeting on Glen Miller.

Finally, as we'll soon be merging with Dunelm, it would be nice to commemorate the years of Durham u3a. Do you have memories of special times that you'd like to share? Send them in and we'll do the rest!

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1 Chair's message

January already! I hope you all enjoyed your festivities and are now - like me - wondering how those extra pounds

have appeared. Hide the remaining chocolates is my solution.

It will not be long now before our final meeting in March as Durham u3a - but do please try and come to the remaining sessions. We have some interesting talks to come and lots to look forward to under the new arrangements. In the meantime all our groups are continuing as normal and so keep involved as usual.

The Steering Group have now reached the stage of setting up the new bank account, making arrangements for group leaders from both u3as to meet and get to know each other, and when we meet next time I feel sure we will be discussing arrangements for the inaugural AGM.

I am publishing the new constitution this month which we hope will be adopted at the inaugural meeting.

I think that is all for now so I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in the future.

Tina Naples

2 Making merry



We can't let Christmas 2023 go by

without a nod to the Durham u3a festivities, which provided a great end to the year. The party at Merryoaks, featuring singer Claire Steele - and an astronomical interlude - was a great success. Thanks to David (Willock) for organising the entertainment.

And there was oodles of good cheer at the Christmas lunch in Brambles restaurant at Shincliffe – witness the smiling faces above and below. Good job, Theresa (Mulkerrin) !



3 Reminder!

Group co-ordinators: don't forget the meeting and lunch with Dunelm u3a counterparts on 25 January at Bowburn Community Centre. Start time is 10.30.

4 It's A Wonderful Film

In December the Film Club had its festive outing to see 'It's A Wonderful Life' which was screened at the Durham Gala. It was a very enjoyable evening, topped off with mulled wine and mince pies, and a good time was had by all. Rather unusually for a film, there was a resounding round of

applause when the credits rolled.



The film is rather special and has been voted the nation's best Christmas film in the past ahead of things like Elf, Love Actually, and the Muppets Christmas Carol. Strange for a film made by Frank Capra way back in 1946, and shot entirely in black and white. It follows the fortunes of George Bailey, played so well by James Stewart, and explores some very dark themes. The film was one of the first to look at the topic of male mental health and to explore the human impact of failed financial fortunes and greed. In many ways I am reminded of Dicken's 'A Christmas Carol' which also looked at the darker side of human nature against the backdrop of a snowy Christmas. George's life begins to look pretty grim following a string of mishaps which lead him to contemplate suicide on a bridge one Christmas Eve. This is where he meets his guardian angel second class, Clarence Odbody, played so brilliantly by Henry Travers. In response to George's wish that he'd never been born, Clarence shows him what life would have been like without him. It is a real eye opener for George, who sees that he has indeed had a wonderful life and that his existence has touched the lives and fortunes of many. But like many of us, George has been too caught up in his busy life to take stock of all its blessings. Until, that is, life, misfortune and of course Clarence make George look afresh. Ultimately

human kindness triumphs and George is reunited with his family, community and loved ones.

At its core the film has a universal message about the power of human love, encouraging us all to step back and take stock of the many blessings we have in our lives and to share the abundance with others. In fact, the messages from the film are so powerful that Virgin trains have teamed up with the mental health charity Rethink to raise awareness about how the festive period can be difficult for some. Words from the film have been painted along the yellow lines of 14 stations across the UK, encouraging people to carry out acts of kindness at Christmas and throughout the new year. Pretty impressive for a 70-year-old film, proving that the power of human kindness, often overlooked, is indeed a universal and timeless message which binds us all and strikes a chord even (or perhaps especially) in the frantically busy and somewhat anonymous world of the 21st century.

With the film's message in mind, I hope everyone enjoyed a wonderful time over the Christmas period and take this opportunity to wish everyone a wonderful 2024.

By the way, if you are interested in joining Durham u3a Film Club, please get in touch with me, Paul Newby, via Beacon and I will put your name on the contact list. Our next visit will be to 'One Life' in January. You will be very welcome indeed to come along and join us for a film, a chat and a cuppa.

Happy New Year Everyone!

Paul J Newby – Film Club coordinator

5 Members' Corner

i) Remember all the snow we had in late November/early December? It created some magical scenes. The beauty below was captured by keen photographer John Liddle.



John Liddle

ii) Here's a poem from Ivy Hudson whose theme, the renewal of the cycle of life, is very fitting for this time of year.

Cyclamen

*Last year my son sent me
a flowering Easter basket
of lilies, sedum succulents and
white wallflowers.*

*The wallflowers lasted till
Whitsuntide
when I replaced them
with a cyclamen.*

*Blooming white lilies, red succulents,
and pink cyclamen
constantly dying back,
reviving, reinventing their selves,
shouting their floral praise to their
Creator
who patiently waits.*



Ivy Hudson

6 National u3a Festival



You may have read in *Third Age Matters* recently about the inaugural National u3a Festival to be held at the University of York from 18 to 20 July.

Being so close to us here in Durham, the festival offers a great opportunity to meet other u3a members from different parts of the country, as well as getting involved in a host of different activities such as creative writing, yoga, flower arranging, family history and much more. Events will include musical and sporting activities. So there should be plenty on offer, with something there to suit everyone.

Regarding costs, there will be a single

fee per day to attend the festival, which on day one includes dinner and musical entertainment.

Accommodation is also available if you plan on staying at the university. This will cost £54 per person for bed and breakfast and should be booked directly through the university website.

So, if you're looking for something interesting and fun to do this New Year, why not take a look at

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/festival-2024> , where you 'll find more information and booking details? Festival organisers can be contacted at festival@u3a.org.uk .

Paul Newby, Durham u3a Interest Group coordinator

7 National u3a online

If you're starting 2024 with ambitions to do something a bit different, why not check out the opportunities available through the national u3a? This month, for example, sees no fewer than 15 online learning events on offer, from Secrets of the Human Brain and a Holocaust survival story to fun mathematics and stress-beating laughter yoga. Definitely worth a look. See the events page at

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events> .

8 Durham u3a memories

Don't forget - if you have any stories or pictures from past u3a events that you'd like to share, please do get in touch, ideally before mid-Feb, at:

lauramw100@gmail.com

Here are a few more pics of cheery faces from last month – what a jolly lot we are!



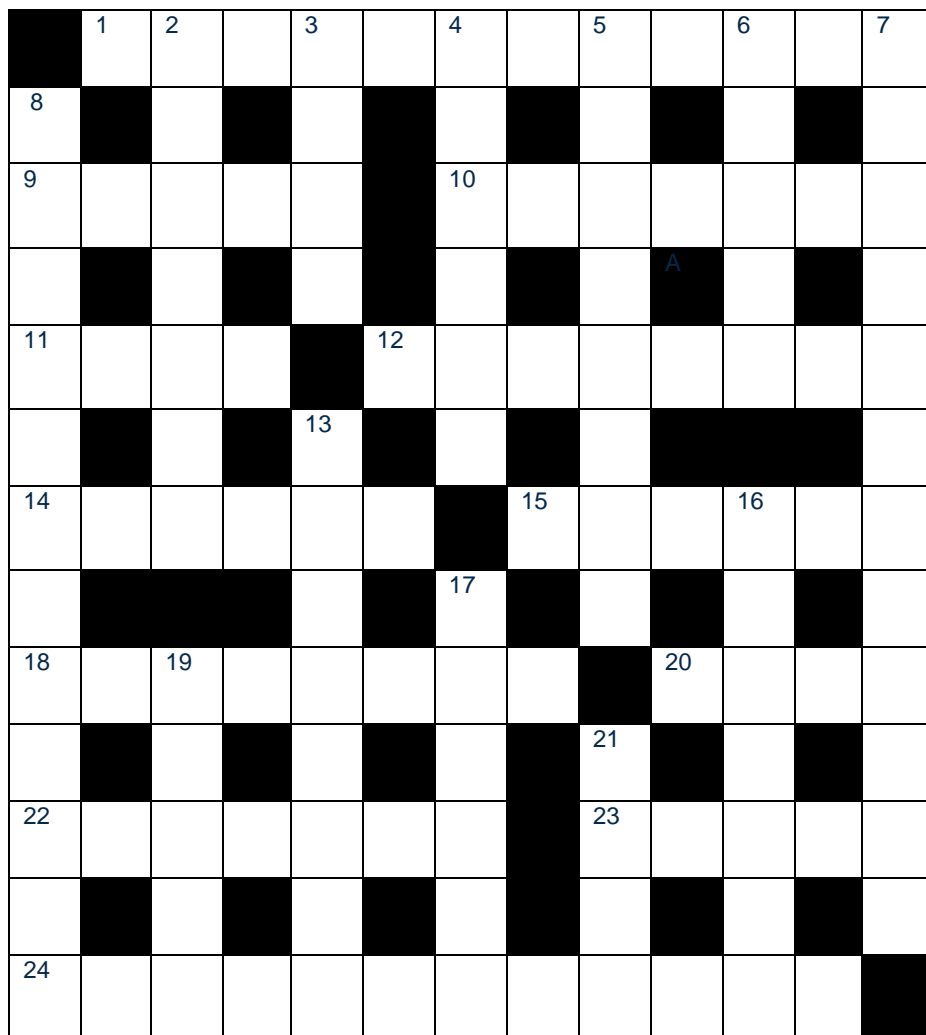
Scenes of good cheer from Brambles, above. Below: Members of Français Amical decamped to an Italian restaurant for their celebration



All contributions gratefully accepted, including reports, reviews, poems, stories and photos. Please provide any material for the next issue by 26 Jan. Thanks. lauramw100@gmail.com

A New Year's Crossword

Clues are a mixture of straightforward and mildly cryptic – but none are too devilish. Answers in the next issue.



Across

- 1** Timely greeting? (5,3,4)
- 9** It's closely watched by eleventh hour revellers (5)
- 10** Much used in oriental new year celebrations (7)
- 11** Sparkler for the party? (4)
- 12** Met tiara (anag) – nutty biscuits (8)
- 14** Conservative lists? What the host does before – and after – the party (6)
- 15** A fragrance – climb? (5)
- 18** They do things differently north of the border at this time of year (8)
- 20** Baking it, having it and eating it is a Christmas custom (4)
- 22** Nun tale (anag) - a little ring (7)
- 23** What conscientious cooks do to the turkey before roasting it (5)
- 24** Fighting an imaginary enemy (12)

Down

- 2** One of a Christian band of 12 (7)
- 3** Found in fresh water - or an olden-day foot soldier's hand (4)
- 4** “_ _ tangere” – Touch me not! (4,2)
- 5** Gust race? It's both an English river and a boat with Caribbean connections (8)
- 6** Happening (5)
- 7** Celebrate New Year with bells on, you might say (4,2,3,3)
- 8** What crossword solvers might do if a clue proves tricky? (7,5)
- 13** Form of printing favoured by the likes of Albrecht, William and Pablo (8)
- 16** Tie loan (anag) – the excitement felt by New Year revellers at the strike of 12... (7)
- 17** ...is likely to dissipate once the bill for this is presented (3,3)
- 19** Mediterranean seaport, birthplace of a famous explorer (5)
- 21** Agile mountain-dweller (4)

January Calendar

Group	Meetings	Contact
Monthly U3A meeting Every 2 nd Thursday, 1.30 for 2	11 Jan: Glenn Miller: King of Swing Bowburn Community Centre	If you need a lift, contact Maureen Craik: 0191 371 9521/mcraik-40@hotmail.co.uk
Book Group Every 1 st Monday, 10 am	8 Jan: Small Island (Andrea Levy)	Venue may vary Lynn Bilsborough via u3a contacts page
Circle Dancing Every 1 st Thursday, 2 pm	4 Jan Sacriston Methodist Church	Linda Murdie via u3a contacts page £2 for room hire; refreshments
Film Club As arranged	8 Jan: One Life Odeon, 1 pm	Paul Newby 07814 518100 or via contacts page
French: Français Amical Wednesdays, 2 pm	Gala café	Mike Gibb via U3A contacts page Group full
French Thursdays, 9.45 am	No meetings on 2 nd Thursday	Elizabeth Morgan 0191 384 6874 Group full
German Every 3 weeks		George Schlesinger 0191 384 9056 Contact George for details
History 1 Every 1st Tuesday, 2 pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Kim Jennings via u3a contacts page. All welcome. £2 room hire; refreshments
History Too Every 4th Monday, 10 am	Sacriston Methodist Church	David Willock via u3a contacts page. All welcome. £2 room hire; refreshments
Monday Crime Club Every 3 rd Monday, 10.30 am	15 Jan: Avarice (Pete Brassett)	Tina Naples Group full: waiting list to be set up
Music Appreciation Every 4th Saturday, 2 pm	27 Jan: The Words and Music of Cole Porter Carrville Methodist Church	Stephen Brand via u3a contacts page
Poetry Every 2 nd Monday, 2 pm	15 Jan : Relationships Gala café	Ivy Hudson, 0191 384 4317 New members welcome!
Pub Lunch Monthly, as arranged		Sylvia Buxton 0191 373 1644 for details
Quiz Mondays, 2 pm	Sacriston Methodist Church	Contact via u3a contacts page
Scrabble Every 3 rd Wednesday, 2 pm		Maureen Craik 0191 371 9521 for details
Shakespeare Alternate Thursdays, 10.15 am	11 Jan Bowburn Community Centre	Members select extracts/poems Sue Childs via u3a contacts page
Spanish Alternate Tuesdays, 2pm	Gala café	Mick O'Sullivan via u3a contacts page
Strollers Alternate Wednesdays, 10.30	2024 programme tba	Ken Naples 07711 979098
Topical Discussion Every 1 st Tuesday, 10 am	Beefeater, Broomside Park	Janis Goodson via u3a contacts page