

In Contact



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Editorial

I remember a couple of lines from a poem learned at school:

March brings breezes, loud and shrill,
Stirs the dancing daffodil.

Beautiful flowers – possibly my favourites.

Some of you will already know having been at the February monthly meeting of the latest news on the proposed merger front. Decisions have been taken to align the financial and membership years of Durham and Dunelm u3as. This will work for us more efficiently even if the merger does not happen. But importantly, it means that our membership year will now end on the 31st March instead of 30th September. The committee have decided that your membership will be rolled over for 6 months. So, if you are one of the few who pays by standing order, please cancel it. Secondly, the steering group have decided that the annual fee for the new u3a will be £11.

The next thing concerns a new name for the potential new u3a. Everyone had the chance to make suggestions and between Durham and Dunelm we have a list of eight possible names.

Our vote will be taken at our March meeting. You will be given a voting slip and asked to choose your top three. Dunelm's vote will be taken after their AGM on 31st March after which all the votes will be counted together, with the counting done by members from both u3as. So please come along on 16th March to cast your vote – we are doing in-person voting only.

Once we have a new name, we will be able to move ahead to prepare a new constitution and, when we can, to hold the EGM to take the critical votes to allow us to go ahead.

New French Group

Bonjour!

Another French Group is being formed – a name is yet to be decided. The inaugural meeting is on 6th March at 3pm in The Bishop's Mill in Walkergate, Durham – near the theatre. Further information from Mike Gibb at mike.gibb1952@sky.com.

Off The Wall

Don't forget to mark your diary for this event on 10th May. It's £5 and you need to book a ticket. I've got mine already. Further information at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/off-the-wall> which also contains the link to book to attend.

In the week leading up to the day there will be on-line events. I'm pleased to say that the Monday Crime Club is definitely involved in this event having suggested a mass readathon of a crime novel connected to Hadrian's Wall. The historian and novelist Adrian Goldsworthy has agreed to take part and we are looking forward to discussing *Vindolanda* with him.

Monthly Meeting

Don't forget to contact Maureen Craik if you need or could offer or could offer a lift, and we will try and match people. mcraik-40@hotmail.co.uk.

The future talks are also on the website Events page via the Calendar button. Ed.

From James Gilman

ROLLING DOWN TO RIO

My teenage escape

*'I've never seen a jaguar,
Nor yet an armadillo,
Dillo-ing in its armour,
And I s'posee I never will!*

*Unless I go to Rio! Go rolling down to Rio!
I'd love to roll to Rio before I'm very old...*

The year was 1948; I was 15 years old; this was a popular song of the day; as it happened, I was living in Southampton at the time; so one day I determined that I, too, would roll down to Rio to find my own jaguar in the new life I was ready to make for myself in that fabulous city before I, too, was very old But first, I needed some cash.

In the Autumn of 1947 my dad had returned from the Far East and, taking a job in Southampton, he'd moved our family from its comfortable berth in Barnet in North London to a semi-detached house in the pleasant Southampton suburb of Shirley. Life would have been pleasurable enough, but for two factors.

One was that my father had had no experience of living with a 15 year-old teenage son, while I'd been used to a household gently ruled by my mother. We just didn't get on. The second was that from my happy life at my Barnet grammar school where I'd begun to make a name for myself, I was thrust into the arms of King Edward VI School, a Southampton day (as opposed to boarding) Public School established by His Majesty King Edward VI who, on viewing his generous endowment, promptly fell ill and died. I wasn't surprised. The school's foundation of 400 years' tradition was upheld by prefects called Praepositors with the right to cane, with some enthusiasm, those of us younger than they.

I hated the place which, in its turn, cordially hated me back; I was bullied by my fellows and, being also at odds with my father, Rio offered a far more attractive sanctuary, and I had £15 - more than a month's wages in my later first job - burning a hole in my pocket, to set me up in a new life over there.

An advert had appeared in the Southampton 'ECHO' newspaper, seeking teenagers to be extras in a J. Arthur Rank film then in production starring Googie Withers and Joan McCallum, and entitled 'It Always Rains On Sunday' (still being shown occasionally on UK TV). My friend Barry and I applied, were interviewed in Southampton's Civic Centre, were accepted, and a few days later were whisked away by coach to become, for 3 successive days, part of a street market scene where we were pelted by constant pouring rain, probably to justify the film's title.

It was an interesting experience for a 15 year-old. While the film was set in London, the market scene was being shot in a separate location near Southampton. Each morning we were coached there, costumed made-up, filmed (over and over again), treated to a (for us) lavish meal, had a £5 note thrust into our eager hands, were de-costumed, un-made up, and coached back to Southampton - all without our parents being aware that we hadn't spent the day at school. It was brilliant!

With £15 squirreled away, I made my plans to stow away on the *S.S. Georgic*, one of the white & gold liners that weekly set sail from the docks to their sunny destinations. Children in those days didn't have their own passports, and it was a simple matter for me to mingle with the embarking passengers, attach myself to a couple with 2 children to make a new family of 3, and stroll past the Customs Officers with my new parents. Once on board, as my 'family' disappeared below decks, I found myself a vantage point by the ship's railing overlooking the quayside and watched the colourful scene unfurling blow me.

Crowds of people thronged the quay, all eager to give family and friends a memorable send-

off. A band was playing patriotic airs; streamers were being flung from shore to ship and from ship to shore, people were waving and cheering; the ship's siren was hooting its farewells; and slowly we began our journey out to sea. It was all noise and colour and gaiety, and tremendously exciting. This was the life! I'd given no thought as to where I was going to spend the nights, nor where and how I was going to be fed – we teenagers aren't all that good at forward thinking. But who cares?

Nemesis did. Suddenly a hand gripped me firmly by the shoulder spun me around, and I was peered at by an immaculate uniform set off by a white officer's cap. "***There's someone would like to see you, my lad!***" and, propelled by one hand while another opened doors at our approach, I was steered through endless corridors to reach and, after knocking, enter a large cabin resplendent with brass portholes and gleaming furniture. A large, bearded officer sat behind a large, polished desk. We came to a stop in front of both.

There followed a series of questions for which I was totally unprepared, and gradually my story came out. Silence. "***I think we'd better send you home!***" was the verdict of the Court. I was taken back on deck, to a section reserved for crew, there to be placed in the charge of a seaman who carefully steered my feet on to the first rung of a rope ladder which took me down and into the Pilot's ship, which then pulled away to chug quickly back to shore.

As he handed me over to commence my descent of the ladder, Nemesis stopped me, looked into my eyes and, with the ghost of a smile, uttered its final command. "***Next time, laddie, don't wear your school uniform!***" and, with a salute, he was gone.

So I never did make it to Rio. But then, neither did the S.S. 'Georgic' which, it later transpired, was bound for New York instead. Well, we all make mistakes. But I did make my escape, a year later, after taking and passing (with some distinction) my School Certificate Exam. I managed to get King Edward to expel me from his premises, with a sigh of relief on both parts, made my way to London, found myself accommodation, accepted the offer of a job at New Scotland Yard, and started a new life as a (very) young adult.

I did eventually make it to Rio, some 23 years later, in 1972 and accompanied by my wife and 4 children, en route from Australia to England. The city proved every bit as glamorous as it had seemed to my 15 year-old younger and greener self.

But I never did see a jaguar. Nor yet an armadillo. Not yet, anyway.

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Another Vacancy

Our committee member, Alan Thompson, has had to stand down due to domestic issues. We thank him for his time with us and will miss him. But we do need to find someone willing to be co-opted. Please don't wait for the tap on the shoulder but get in touch with me. If you have a basic level of proficiency on your computer, we will have pleasure in hearing from you. You will get more out of your membership if you join the committee. If you are unsure, why not come along and listen to the proceedings?

I'd love to hear from you.

Tina Naples

On-Line Groups

There are many groups that meet on-line via zoom on the u3a website. Some duplicate what we have locally such as foreign language and book groups. Others are ones that we do not offer. If you are interested, please follow this link <https://u3asites.org.uk/trustu3a/groups> and scroll down to see a long list of groups. There is everything from Archaeology to Creative Writing. It costs £12 per year and might be of particular interest to members who are finding it a bit difficult to get out at the moment.

More From the u3a Website

There is so much to keep you going on a rainy afternoon. Try Aileen's Game <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/aileens-game>. It's a totally addictive word game – if you like Wordle, you'll like this. There are also lots of online events and talks. For instance, the wonderful Jim Al-Khalili is doing a talk on 17th March about the Dawn of Quantum Biology. I've already signed up for that one. Follow this link to see them all. <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

What's on in March

You can also consult the Groups section on the website and contact Group Convenors from the Contacts page.

16.3.23 Secrets of Your Brain by Robert Pullen	Durham Monthly Meeting	Bowburn Community Centre	1.30 for 2.00pm
31.3.23 AGM	Dunelm Monthly Meeting	Bowburn Community Centre	1.30 for 2.00pm (Take membership card)
6.3.23	Book Group	Contact Terry Birchmore for venue on 0191 378 0563	10.00 am monthly.
Every three weeks	German	Contact George Schlesinger for venue on 0191 384 9056	
7.3.23	Topical Discussion	The Beefeater, Broomside Park.	10.00 am monthly.
8.3.23 Flass Vale 22.3.23 Wolsingham	Strollers	Contact Ken Naples or see the website for details. 07711 979098	10.30 am
Wednesday 2.00 pm and Monday 10.30 am (Conversation)	Café Français and Français Amical	The Gala Cafe	Both meetings weekly
2.3.23	Circle Dancing	Sacriston Methodist Church	2.00 pm monthly.

6.3.23	New French Group	Bishop's Mill, Durham	3.00pm
Thursdays at 9.45 am.	French	Contact Elizabeth Morgan for venue on 0191 384 6874.	9.45 am weekly except 2nd Thursday
13.3.23	Poetry	Gala Theatre Cafe	2.00 pm monthly
9.3.23 23.3.23	Shakespeare Study	Gala Theatre Café	10.15 am
20.3.23	Monday Crime Club	Lanchester Garden Centre	10.30 am monthly
15.3.23	Scrabble	Contact Maureen Craik for venue on 0191 371 9521	2.00 pm monthly
25.3.23	Music Appreciation	Carrville Methodist Church	2.00 pm monthly
Check with Sylvia	Pub Lunch	Variable arrangements. Contact Sylvia Buxton on 0191 373 1644	As Arranged
7.3.23	History	Sacriston Methodist Church	2pm monthly
20.3.23	Quiz	Sacriston Methodist Church	2pm monthly
27.3.23 Egypt	History Too	Sacriston Methodist Church	10.00 am monthly
As Arranged	Cinema	Odeon Cinema, Durham Contact Paul Newby on 07814 518100.	As Arranged

And Finally.....

Don't forget you can contact me at the address below if you have something to contribute. I have space in the next edition.

Tina Naples (tina.naples@aol.com)