

Newsletter

Hartlepool & District U3A
Issue 64, September 2022



Comments from the Chair

I am delighted to be able to tell you that four of our members have stepped up to the plate and joined our committee. This means that we have been able to plug the gaps that if left unfilled would have left us in a precarious position. We are still finalising who does what but this will almost certainly have been resolved before you read this. This does not mean we can rest on our laurels as we will still need members to come forward as some of the present committee will have come to the end of their tenure by next June when the next AGM is due. Please bear this in mind over the coming year.

I expect that you are all looking forward to our next speakers who will be the son and daughter in law of Norman Cornish who will be giving a talk on his life and works. This should be a real treat. This will be followed by a short demonstration of Shibashi by Marjorie Reynolds followed by refreshments of tea and coffee.

We are looking for volunteers to help run the kitchen as Mary has now retired from running this side of things after years of excellent service. It will be a hard job to replace her but I am sure there are those amongst you ready to take up the baton. Please make yourselves known at the next meeting.

The speaker for October will be Laura Moon, who is an archivist. She will give us an introduction to Teesside archives, cataloguing the four boroughs of Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland.

After the success of our fuddle after the AGM in July we will be having another one for our general meeting in January, so we all have plenty of time to prepare some tasty dishes. Hopefully not cold turkey sandwiches as we will probably have had our fill of them by the new year!

Roger Say

'Photography for Fun Group' Visit Ushaw, Durham.

Barry Liddle



The 'Photography Group' recently visited Ushaw College, now marketed as **Ushaw: Historic House, Chapels and Gardens**. Of course many of you will remember it as a former Catholic seminary with a long association with the Pugin family. Some of you will also have attended a guided tour of the chapels and interior with Chis McLoughlin's History group a few years ago. However, on this visit, the Photography group had two different objectives, first to photograph Ushaw's extensive grounds and gardens and second, to view a new major Exhibition of Railway Posters in one of the main halls. An article on the latter by Martin Green, will feature in next month's Newsletter.

The gardens at Ushaw were designed and created in the 1840s and cover almost 5 acres. A large area is covered in grassland and woods, but there is a well-established ornamental garden near the terrace to the main buildings. The latter has a number of large, curved beds planted with ericaceous (acid soil) loving shrubs. (Note the blue hydrangea in the photograph).

The design of the garden has largely remained the same since it was created nearly 200 years ago, although there were some changes in the 1930s and some extensive regeneration of the garden in 2014.



The original planting scheme for the gardens was mainly based on Rhododendrons -which are large woody plants that flower in the Spring and early summer. Originally native to eastern Asia and the Himalayas, this genus has over a 1000 species, many of which can be seen at the Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh.

The flowering season for Rhododendrons is spectacular but short, so in the 1930s gardeners at Ushaw added Azaleas, some other shrubs and trees to extend the flowering season for the benefit of residents and visitors.





Can you guess what part of the garden is featured in this photograph? Well, it is a lake? Or should I say, it used to be a lake.

Originally, the lake was excavated to obtain clay for the making of bricks for the main buildings. Unfortunately, according to Ushaw records, in the 1920s subsidence from underground mines damaged the lining of the lake and as a result the lake regularly dried up. Since then there have been several attempts to repair the lining – but none have been a lasting success.



The Bounds walls (in the background) were constructed in 1852 as a games area. The design of the stone walls is thought to derive from either the 'Fives' courts found at public schools or a form of handball found in local pit villages at the time.

In the 'Bounds Fields' students would play 'Cat' – which is believed to be unique to Ushaw. It involves two teams of seven and is related to games such as rounders and baseball and is played around a circular ring marked out on the grass (difficult to see in this photo).

Source: Ushaw

Music Appreciation Group

Phil Jefferies

Several people have lamented the Music Appreciation Group not restarting after lockdown. Unfortunately, Barry and Ray have both acquired other commitments and no longer feel able to make the necessary commitment to lead the group.

So we [Wendy Borthwick and Phil Jefferies] put our heads together and discussed a few possibilities, taking into account the way the Natural History group has flourished without one single leader. We decided that we could each commit to making 2 presentations in the first year. If we could find 4 other people who were prepared to do the same, that would give us a year's worth of presentations at one per month. We could get the same result if we could find 8 other people who were prepared to make 1 presentation in the first year.

Then we discussed the possibility of having 2 meetings each month, as had previously been the case. One idea was that we could have a communal session each month, where we nominate a category in advance and invite members to bring a CD, DVD or memory stick with a favourite track in that category. We would then go round the room and play whatever had been brought, inviting people to say a few words about why they had chosen that particular track if they wished to do so. Categories could be quite varied and suggestions from group members would be welcomed, e.g.

- Female soloist (vocal or instrumental)
- Track with a title including a place name, e.g. Streets of London, Africa, La Isla Bonita, Annie's Song (which strictly speaking doesn't qualify, but it's by John Denver so we might accept it)
- Something that always makes you smile

If you are interested and feel you could contribute either the occasional presentation (either by yourself or collaborating with a friend) or a more regular track for the communal sessions, then please come and talk to us or **email us on hartlepoolu3a.memset@gmail.com**. Don't worry about the technology: if you want a DJ to play your carrier bag full of CDs or to screen your DVD, we can provide help.

We can't do this on our own: the future of the Music Appreciation Group is in YOUR hands. If there is sufficient interest we would expect to resume in October, with either 1 or 2 meetings per month on 2nd and/or 4th Tuesdays. Watch out for further announcements.

Natural History Group: 'Big Butterfly Count' 4/8/2022

Irene Archer

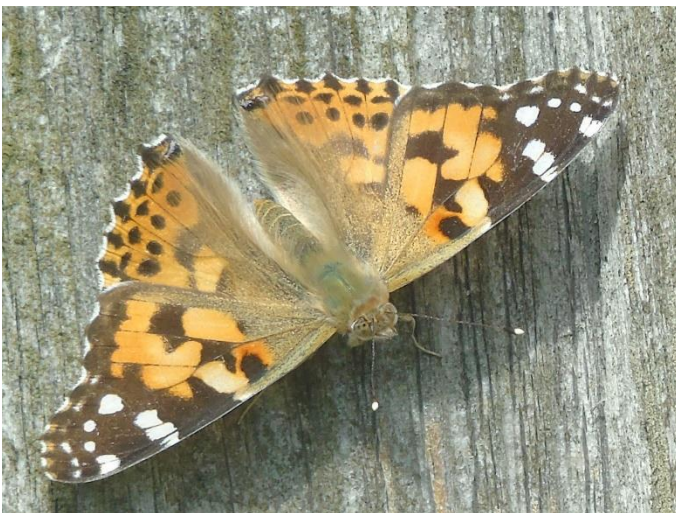
We met on a sunny afternoon at the Headland car park. It was good to welcome a new member to the group. We headed to the Croft gardens to do a "Big Butterfly Count" which involved looking for different species of butterflies and how many were seen of each species over a period of 15 minutes. We observed 3 common blue and 3 small white which were feeding on the nectar of Buddleia and Hebe flowers. These results were submitted to the butterfly count web site so that a national record could be made of the health of the butterfly population.

Sadly reductions of more 70% between 1976 and 2015 have been recorded in 10 species of butterflies. Damage to and loss of habitat are the most threats to butterflies. Paving and decking in gardens and use of insecticides have contributed to their decline. Why not let an area of your garden grow wild or plant wild flower mixes. Even a tub of wild flowers is better than nothing.

Our next meeting is on the 1st of September at 1.30 at Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park.
Turn off the A1185 Seal Sand Link Rd, Billingham. Meet in the car park.

Butterflies in My Garden

Barry Liddle



The photograph on the left of a **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa Cardui*) was taken in my garden in 2019 - the year when unusually high numbers of this migratory butterfly arrived in the UK. In fact, the '**Big Butterfly Count**' for 2019 counted 30 times more of these butterflies than in 2018. During that summer of 2019 it was common for me to see up to half a dozen of these butterflies sunbathing on a south facing wall in the back garden. The butterfly on the right is I believe a **Holy Blue** (*Celastrina Argiolus*) which re-visits the same bush in my garden every year.

The Cover Girl!?

Ken Williams



In the July issue of the Newsletter, Barry Liddle asked if anyone could identify the unusual bird he photographed at Blackhall Rocks. So, my question is, did you recognize the bird?

It is the right shape and size to be a member of the tit family, marsh tit or willow tit, perhaps? Not so, for while it had similar general colouring to them, they both have black caps and white cheeks.

Perhaps one of the finches? Once again, no; for finches have broader stout, chunky bills – ideal for dealing with their normal diet of seeds and grain.

Well, could it be a warbler; perhaps our most common, the willow warbler or the very similar chiff chaff? Once again, no; well, not quite, but a close relative – the whitethroat. Ah yes, but was it a common whitethroat or a lesser whitethroat? Well, the odds are in favour of it being the common, for whilst they are both British summer visitors, the lesser whitethroat is a rather scarce passage migrant in these parts, and is, broadly speaking of a grey colouring.

The common whitethroat, whilst not numerous, is not uncommon in our area, and has gentle chestnut-coloured upper parts, just discernible in Barry's photo; so common whitethroat it is.

So once again, 'Well done, Barry!' Particularly so, as, except for males for a short spell at this time of year, whitethroats tend to be shy, skulking individuals, spending most of their time in thickish undergrowth. This tendency is such, that in former times, country folk actually called them 'nettle creepers' or 'nettle thrushes'!

Bird of Prey



A couple of weeks ago I took these photographs of a bird of prey in the middle of my lawn, surrounded by the feathers of a common wood pigeon. I thought at first it might be a Peregrine Falcon, but on reflection it is more likely to be a Sparrowhawk. If anyone knows for certain, please let me know. I've seen evidence of birds of prey in the garden before, but this is the first time I've been able to capture one on my camera.

Barry Liddle

Squirrel Damage to Trees



In a recent edition of the Newsletter Ken Williams wrote about squirrels and mentioned that grey squirrels are often associated with damage to trees. I mentioned this article to my brother Brian, who has previously complained to me about the damage they have done to the trees in his garden and he has sent me these photographs as evidence.

Barry Liddle

A Dash of Nostalgia

Jacky Armstrong

My neighbour knocked on the door 'Jacky, could you save your papers for Bruno. He likes comfortable bedding'. Bruno is their grand- daughter's guinea pig.

'Yes, I can save the papers. Sorry, it's the Daily Mail but there's probably some articles or pictures for Bruno to see that may be interesting.'

Saving the papers always brings to mind my childhood. I hope that you can share this nostalgia. Each week it was my job to fold each page of our newspaper into four (I think it was the Daily Herald). I would tear it neatly and stab a hole in the top left-hand corner. Then I would take a piece of string, loop it through the hole of about 10 pieces, tie a knot in it and lo and behold, it was our loo paper. I would do a week's supply. The added advantage of this type of loo paper is that you had something to read while you were contemplating in the cold outside loo.

Next job with the newspaper. My father would go and collect sea coal from the beach so that we could back up our fire on a night. Take one sheet of newspaper, place a shovel full of sea coal on it and wrap it. The wrapping was the same style as wrapping fish and chips. We always kept it damp as that way; the burn would last longer.

Next job was to take a double sheet of newspaper and start at the bottom right corner and roll it until all your paper was in a tube. Then flatten it, fold it in two and plait it. These zig zag spills could then be used to help get the fire to light.

I'm not finished yet. My father was from Wolverhampton and each week his father sent him The Express and Star newspapers so we could keep up with all the local news and, most importantly, the progress of Wolves. Wolves at the time was a fantastic football team with Billy Wright as their captain. They were real footballers in those days. Leather boots, leather footballs, no high wages and no tattoos.

My father would read the paper from top to bottom, back to front and then put it to one side. Throughout the days the pile got higher. Each Sunday night my father would tie the papers with string ready for Monday morning. Every Monday, dressed in my Elwick Road Junior School uniform of green and gold, I would carry a pile of papers to school. Then Miss Kindred, the formidable headmistress, would come in to the classroom to see how much salvage we, as a class, had brought. Then each girl with salvage would walk into the cloakroom, where the salvage was piled high. Every now and again, a huge lorry would come and take all the salvage away. We had done our bit for the country.

Who would have thought that an innocent piece of newspaper could have so many uses. Of course, not to mention wrapping fish and chips and getting print all over your hands and nether regions.

Don't forget all these tips might be useful this winter when inflation is projected to be over 11% and we can't afford the heating! Nothing is new, just cast your mind back and remember how we lived, and survived, and were happy with our innocence.

Keep warm!

Comedy Drama at the Transporter Bridge.

Barry Liddle



My mam and dad first started 'courting' at the end of the Second World War. One Saturday my dad offered to take mam to Middlesbrough, a town believe it or not, she had never visited. So they caught the bus to Port Clarence. On arrival my dad turned to mam and said all you have to do is climb up to the top of the bridge, walk along the top and scale down the other side. Having no head for heights, my mam reacted in horror. Dad had a little chuckle and then explained that alternately they could just pay a few pence and go across on the gondola. I always remembered that story every time we visited Middlesbrough.

Another comic episode involving the bridge took place in March 1974 when I was in my last year at school. The comedy actor Terry Scott (best known for the BBC sitcom '*Terry and June*' and several '*Carry On*' films), was travelling late at night when he mistook the Transporter Bridge for a regular road bridge and so drove his Jaguar straight off the end of the road. He was only saved from a watery grave by some safety netting suspended over the first few feet of the river.

A third comic episode involving the Transporter Bridge came about in 2002 in the third series of multiple award-winning BBC comedy drama: '*Auf Weidersehen, Pet,*' which saw the bridge being dismantled and re-erected in an Indian reservation in the USA. The work was undertaken by the regular crew of misfit construction workers including Dennis & Ozz from the North-East and my 'brummie' namesake Barry. The special effects were so good that the local council received calls from people worried that the bridge was really being pulled down, and according to Wikipedia this led to the BBC adding a disclaimer on the end of the final episode of the series stating that 'The Transporter Bridge is still in Middlesbrough'!

Kiplin hall sojourn

early august
bright day
venture into
Kiplin grounds
trees
tower overhead
gentle breeze
rustle of leaves
low flying swallows
gathering insects.

peaceful, serene
woodlands
pair of small whites
dance around each other
mating ritual perchance
red admiral gathers nectar
from welcoming buddleia
twigs crackle
underfoot

open land
grove of
matured lime trees
Tolkien - like
imperious imposing
dragonfly slips by
unidentified moth
drifts by
knapweed abounds
some in full bloom
attracting insects
including flies
unsung pollinators
removers of detritus
fluffy floating
white seed heads
carrying gift of life
drift along
with the breeze

Roger Say

A bricklayer called Billy McGarry,
Wanted to repoint York Abbey,
But to his dismay,
There was no way,
'cos his ladder was far too shabby!

Pete the plumbers mate,
Wanted to learn to skate,
He tried various devices,
On all of the ices,
But always fell flat on his face!

A fireman called Ian McGuire,
Wanted to put out a fire,
With the help of his daughter,
He used plenty of water,
But in the end he had to retire!

A holiday maker called Fran,
Wanted to get a nice tan,
She would lay in the sun,
'til the day was done,
But sadly it didn't go to plan.

John Grange

Classic Novels 'Hunger' by Knut Hamsun

I'm continuing to dip into my personal library to re-read books which made a big impression on me when I first acquired them back in the 1970s. In recent issues of the Newsletter I've reviewed works by Albert Camus and Solzhenitsyn. This month, I would like to recommend 'Hunger' by Knut Hamsun. All three authors are very different, but they share a common accolade in being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

'Hunger' was Hamsun's first novel and was published over a hundred years ago in 1890. My paperback copy, translated into English by Robert Bly was published by Picador in 1977 and cost me the princely sum of 80p! They say never buy a book by its cover. Well this is an exception to the rule, the wonderful cover illustration drew me to the book, having never heard of the author Knut Hamsun. By being seduced by the cover, I was rewarded with a memorable novel set in the Norwegian city of Christiania (now Oslo) at the end of the 19th Century.

The central character (rarely named in the book) is a struggling and sometimes homeless writer. We know very little about him before he abandoned his normal life, although we can infer that he was previously well educated, well dressed and probably from the professional middle classes. So it seems his impoverished circumstances are self-imposed.

He spends his days walking the streets of Christiania dividing his time between searching for food and searching for the inspiration needed to write and sell occasional articles to local newspapers. What little money he earns is often given away to others in acts of chivalry, charity, altruism and foolishness. It is as if he can never quit appreciate how poverty stricken he has become. For example, early on in the novel he strikes up a conversation with an elderly vagrant and feels he should give him something for his troubles. Realising that he has no money, he asks the old man to wait whilst he goes and pawns his waistcoat. Having passed the old man some coins, he is elated at having done the honourable thing – whilst discounting the fact that he now has no waistcoat as the Scandinavian winter approaches and he only has the remaining clothes he is standing in.

The reader is swept along with the central character's life as he interacts with local characters and is moved along by the police, whilst vainly maintaining an outer shell of respectability. The whole novel is in effect a study in introspection as we interlope on his thoughts and interactions with others as he slowly slips into deeper and deeper levels of madness and psychotic behaviour.

Looking in from outside, it is probably true to say his crumbling existence is largely self-imposed and self-destructive. But in his darkest moments he settles blame for his plight on God, but then his mood can just as quickly flip into almost manic humour and contentment. When he eventually reaches rock bottom, he perhaps learns everything about himself that he needed to know all along and just in time, he manages to cheat a pauper's death and in one decisive moment engineers an exit into a better life.

Barry Liddle

Directory

Committee Members

Chair –

Roger Say

Vice Chair –

Wendy Borthwick

Secretary –

TBA

Treasurer –

Phil Jefferies

Membership Secretary –

Wendy Borthwick

Group Co-ordinator –

TBA

Speaker Organiser –

Jessica Scott

Minutes Secretary –

Linda Sargent

I.T. Support

(Website and Beacon) - Phil Jefferies

Committee –

Keith Alder;

New Members: Irene Archer & Don Taylor.

Interest Group Leaders

- **Archaeology/History Group.** Chris McLoughlin.
- **Board Games.** Irene Williams.
- **Bowls:** Ray Elliston.
- **Bridge:** Phil Jefferies.
- **Chess Group.** Roger Say.
- **Creative Writing Group.** Roger Say.
- **Family History:** Ray Elliston.
- **Film Group.** Contact Phil Jefferies.
- **Fun with Fabrics.** Ann Say
- **Gardens and Gardening Group:** **Vacant** (Not meeting at the moment.)
- **Luncheon Group.** Jacky Armstrong (Not meeting at the moment.)
- **Music Appreciation Group.** (Not meeting at the moment.)
- **Natural History Group.** Group Leader role shared.
- **Photography for Fun Group.** Ray Elliston.
- **Quiz Team** John Campbell.
- **Reading Group** Irene Williams
- **Shibashi Exercise Group.** Marjorie Reynolds.
- **'View to Vue'.** Roger Say.
- **Walking Group.** Keith Alder



Copy Wanted for This Newsletter

Articles, Short Stories, Interesting Photographs (with captions), Limericks & Poems.

All contributions to the next Newsletter are most welcome.

Copy deadline for the next issue is 20 September 2022.

Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor