

Newsletter

Hartlepool & District U3A

Issue 65, October 2022

Comments from the Chair



So that's the end of summer again: we are well into autumn now as meteorological autumn starts on the 1st of the month and astronomical autumn will be underway by the time you read this. Time seems to move a lot faster as we grow older!

It was heartening to see such a good turnout for our speakers talking about Norman Cornish at our general meeting last month, and I was disappointed to miss it. This was their first presentation and they managed to overcome nerves, technical difficulties and having to halt proceedings while we had to deal with a medical emergency. I am sure we would all like to thank those

who rallied round when the guest of one of our members fell ill and we were fortunate that a retired nurse was on hand to give sensible advice on how to proceed. You will be glad to hear that the lady who was taken ill was taken to hospital where she stayed for two nights before returning home on Sunday.

At a meeting of South Durham Chairs on the following Friday I asked other Chairs if there was a procedure in place for such an incident as occurred at our general meeting, but they all said that there was not one available. It was agreed that it was very useful if a medical practitioner or a first aider was on hand but that would not always be possible.

The Committee will be discussing advice given to me by the nurse in question, as there are some practical steps we can take if someone falls ill again. One step we can all take is to make sure our personal information is up to date and there is an emergency number to ring if the occasion demands. Group leaders should make sure they have this information when they hold group meetings.

Our next speaker will be Laura Moon who will be giving us an introduction into Teesside Archives, cataloguing the four boroughs of Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Roger Say

Historical Highlights of Newcastle

Chris McLoughlin.



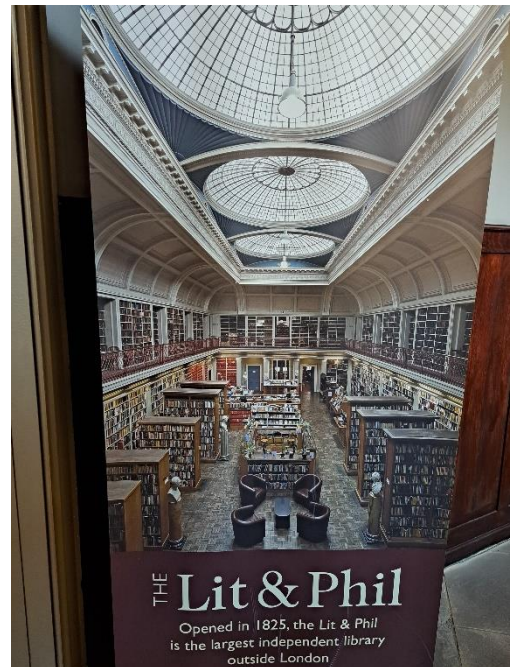
Photograph: Margaret Boddy

By chance, the September visit by the “Archaeology & History” Group to Newcastle was marked by being the day when her Majesty, the Queen passed away, September 8th.

Our Group had been taken on a brief but very History packed stroll around the Historical Highlights of the City all of which were within an easy stroll of the magnificent Central Station, our starting point, built in 1850 but not the first “Station” in the City (that was nearby).

Our route then took us down to the Mining Institute housed in the Neville Hall, a gem of High Gothic design with its Lecture Theatre (Davy and Stephenson had lectured there) and Great Hall well worth a visit. Before that our trail led

us along Westgate Road in part, built on the site of the Hadrian’s Wall, when Newcastle was called “Pons Aelius, we also took in the **Lit & Phil Building** adjacent to the Mining Institute, again the library was wonderful and still running a large Library and Lecture service throughout the year as does the Mining Institute. The internal settings of both buildings would be ideal for a “Harry Potter” film!



Photograph: Margaret Boddy

A short stroll away was the site of the Castle of Newcastle known as the Black Tower,

built by Robert “Curthose” (the son of William the Conqueror) which is actually the Keep of the “New” castle, - hence the “modern” name for the area Newcastle Upon Tyne. Prior to the Castle’s erection the area was known as Monkchester in Anglo Saxon times. **The Castle’s** turbulent History was recounted especially being adjacent to Scotland and its role in the Civil War. It was amazing that the Victorians



Photograph: Margaret Boddy

drove what is now the East Coast Main Line” through the Castle walls as the Coal Mining industry rose in prominence.

We rounded off the trip by a visit to explore that History and its close associations with Admiral Collingwood and Trafalgar. In line with several major churches today the interior has had its Victorian pews removed to be replaced by chairs to enable a broader community use to come into play.

We return to Newcastle again in October to view the “Lindisfarne Gospels,” which will be on display at the Laing Art Gallery.



Black Gate Newcastle Castle.

Photograph: Margaret Boddy

Archaeology & History Group, Hartlepool U3A

Autumn & Winter Programme: 2022 – 2023.

Each date/day is the 2nd Thursday of the month. All talks will be held at The People Centre – Raby Road.

September 8th. Highlights of Newcastle City” a walk around the City with Keiran Ann Keilty.

October 13th. The Lindisfarne Gospels –The Gospels at the Laing art Gallery.

November 10th. “Stranton” a slide-show presentation by Roger Codner on the history of the “village & Parish” that forms the core of “West Hartlepool”

December 8th. “The History of Weddings” Part 2 – Frances Wilson takes us on the final part of her illuminating talk covering the Victorian and Edwardian periods.

January 12th. “Women of the 20th Century Durham Coalfield – Margaret Hedley from Wheatley Hill gives and illustrates a talk on her Grandmother’s life.

Additional programme for 2023 walks/talks etc., to be announced.

Chris McLoughlin.

Nature Notes: Autumn Migrants

Ken Williams

I think it is fair to say that birds' times are governed by two things only – feeding and breeding: and probably in that order for they need to feed all of the time, but only breed some of the time! Having said that, the two are connected, for they only breed where and when there is a suitable and plentiful supply of food with which to feed their young.



Photograph: Barry Liddle

So, some species e.g. blue tit, robin and blackbird, to mention but a couple, are with us all year round and are known as residents. Others, e.g. swallow, swift, cuckoo and numerous others are only to be found in our part of the world in Spring and Summer. After breeding they leave us each Autumn for warmer climes where they will continue to find the insects on which they depend, and which of course are absent hereabouts during our winter months. These birds are known as summer visitors.

There are other birds, e.g. redwings, fieldfares, sometimes the striking waxwing, and various others, which don't breed in Britain, but further north in Scandinavia and Russia for example, but which are to be found in our parks, gardens or fields throughout our winter months and so are known as winter visitors. Other winter visitors are various species of ducks, geese and waders; and they're all here for the same reason – to find food; for in winter their breeding grounds are under deep snow and ice; so no accessible food there!

Consequently, it is at this time of year that bird watchers are hopeful, expectant and quite excited by the prospect of something quite unusual turning up.

You see, birds don't like to, and so prefer not to fly over water; so the principal migration route for birds from the far north down through Europe is down the east side of the North Sea; through Denmark, the low countries, France and Spain and into Africa. So it is at this time of year that British bird watchers pray for strong south-easterly winds to blow them off-course, across the North Sea to take refuge here on our east coast, (maybe in Hartlepool!) where they can rest a while and feed up before continuing their journey south.

In varying numbers, Autumn migrants do this each year, and sometimes, something quite special and unusual turns up and stays for a day or two.

Word travels like wildfire, and sometimes, even within hours, there's more birdwatchers than birds, all arriving from far and wide, and all combing the Headland to catch a glimpse. And they usually do!

I'm happy to say I have some great memories of such very special days.

Railway Exhibition at Ushaw Historic House

Martin Green

Over the summer months Ushaw Historic House had a special exhibition of original railway posters illustrating destinations served by the East Coast main line and its branches. Some had been produced for the LNER (the 'big four' railway company that existed from 1923 to 1948) and some for the nationalised British Railways. U3A members will I am sure remember these posters such as 'COME TO BRACING BRIDLINGTON' that could be seen on almost any station right up to the 1970s. Though a multitude of artists were commissioned to produce these posters, in general they all followed the same style. Some artists such as Frank Mason will always be associated with railway posters, and he gained a certain amount of fame from them. He was born in Seaton Carew in 1875, the son of a railway clerk. He became engaged in shipbuilding and engineering in both Hartlepool and Leeds before serving as a Lieutenant in the RNVR during the first world war. He subsequently lived in Scarborough and then London, producing posters for three of the 'big four' railway companies (why not the Southern I wonder) and then British Railways. Anyway, back to the exhibition---

The posters illustrated many destinations on the line from London to Edinburgh.

(Photography at the exhibition was permitted but not easy as with one exception all were mounted behind glass which reflected the lighting etc, so please excuse the overlay of adjacent windows in some pictures.)



We start as did many journeys in **London**. This 1955 picture by Claude Buckle illustrates Trafalgar Square in the morning light bordered by St Martin's in the Fields and the National Gallery and overlooked by Lord Nelson

Bypassing both Peterborough & Lincoln (too much reflection!) we arrive at **York**. This is another Claude Buckle poster dating from 1952 and viewing the minster's towers from The Shambles/Low Petergate.



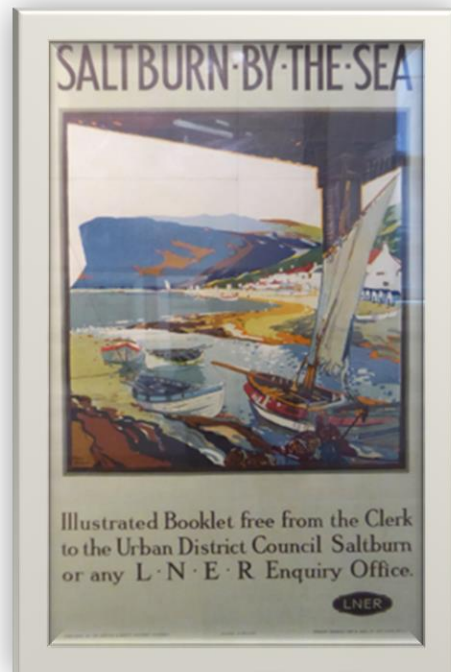


Before venturing further north we visit the **Yorkshire Coast**, firstly with at an unidentified and likely fictitious location with flavours of Staithes in this 1948 poster by Gyrrh Russell.

More identifiable is this preparatory sketch by our Frank Mason which illustrates the **coast from Whitby to Sandsend and Kettleness**.



Then two more Frank Mason pictures of **Whitby and Saltburn**



This next picture (this time the original framed painting that formed the basis of the poster) deviates from the usual tourist theme by illustrating industries served by the LNER. The

actual location of the steel plant is uncertain, but as it is another by Frank Mason probably based on **Teesside**.



Moving north we come to **Durham** with a view of the Cathedral from below the Framwellgate Bridge

Then racing north without stopping at Newcastle & Berwick, we finally reach **Edinburgh** with this Sir Henry Rushbury 1934 poster showing Princes Gardens as seen from what was then the North British (now the Balmoral) Hotel, with the castle up on the left, the Scott Monument on the right and a steam train leaving Waverley station.



Altogether a wonderful exhibition of memorable railway art

(All Photographs: Martin Green)

Music Appreciation Group – Restart Wendy Borthwick and Phil Jefferies

Following the announcement in our last Newsletter that the Music Appreciation Group could start up again if we could encourage members to make their own positive contribution with ideas and possible presentational skills. We had five members who expressed an interest. However, this is not sufficient to make the group viable. Our recent General Meeting on 2 September was probably not the best time to promote this 're-start'; the room was very busy not least because of the interest in our Speaker's topic. If you would like to see this group move forward again or if you have any questions, please get in touch by using the following email: hartlepoolu3a.memsec@gmail.com

Natural History Group Visit Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park

Irene Archer

We met in the car park at Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park on a lovely sunny September afternoon. This is a new area of woodland located on the edge of Billingham. The site was reclaimed from former brickworks, landfill and ex-agricultural land. We decided to see the visitors centre cafe for future trips. In the entrance is a large, knitted teapot, so not surprising,



the cafe is called **The Knitted Teapot**. It's run by volunteers and is open on a Tuesday and Thursday from 10 until 2. In the past, the centre was used to breed harvest mice, but the volunteer assured us there weren't any mice inside.

We then took the footpath around the lake but decided to not take the path which led uphill to a viewing point. From this point you can see in every direction including the wetland areas that have been recently created. In places on the path you could see the **bricks** that had been made there.



On the **lake** we saw 2 swans with 7 cygnets, tufted ducks, mallards, coots and a cormorant. Zipping overhead were dragonflies: common hawker, brown hawker and ruddy darter. It's easy to distinguish between dragonflies and damselflies; dragonflies have their wings open when they have landed but damselflies fold them like a butterfly. We also saw many butterflies enjoying the sunshine: speckled wood, meadow brown, red admiral and small white.

We noticed **an abundance of food** for birds; fruits such as blackberries, elderberries, rosehips, hawthorn berries, apples and sloes, and seeds on plants such as rosebay willowherb, hogweed, thistles and grasses.



After we got back to the car park we crossed a small tarmac road ,through an iron gate to the Teemouth Bird Club feeding station. We saw many birds on the feeder and a couple of rats feeding on the seeds that had dropped to the ground.

We thoroughly enjoyed the park that had an abundance and variety of wild life. Well worth another visit.

Date of our next meeting, Oct 7th, 1.30pm, Wynyard Station. Meet at the cafe.

Photography Group at the Tees Barrage

Barry Liddle

The weather this summer has been glorious, but we picked one of the very few exceptionally gloomy days to photograph the Tees Barrage.

We first visited the barrage several years ago and were fortunate to have the opportunity to photograph Fire Brigades from all over Teesside practicing their skills in rescuing passengers from a sinking car. On this occasion, we were rewarded with the opportunity to photograph a large group of young people from around the area tackling the formidable 'Air Trail' adventure course. Set over 4 levels, the course has many challenges for anyone seeking adventure, including an assortment of wobbly rope bridges, tight ropes, cargo nets and swinging stepping stones – all set high above the river Tees.



Photograph: Barry Liddle

The Photography Group Leader Ray Elliston was

keen for all of us to have a go, but we cited old war wounds that had suddenly flared-up and we persuaded him that we should all remain on terra firma.



Photograph: Barry Liddle

So we concentrated on photographing the Barrage itself, which opened in 1995 and contains 650 tonnes of steel. As many of you will know, it was built to develop the river's water sports potential by stabilising a stretch of the river which had previously been tidal. The massive flood gates are operated by hydraulic pistons and

make sure the upstream river stays at a constant level. There is also a fish ladder which allows fish to navigate the barrage.



Photograph: Ray Elliston



Photograph: Ray Elliston

Whilst on the footbridge across the Tees, we were able to photograph The Teesside Princess, which is a twin engine leisure cruiser with a carrying capacity of 120 passengers and crew. The Teesside Princess was returning from Yarm and performed a turning manoeuvre in front of us before alighting

passengers at Stockton. Behind the Teesside Princess in the photograph is the Infinity Bridge which opened in 2009.

Having explored all the barrage had to offer, our thoughts naturally turned to afternoon tea and our favourite 'scones and jam'. Unfortunately, when we arrived at our planned riverside café, we were disappointed to find that it had just closed for the day. After some searching for an alternative venue, which involved visiting the same roundabout three times, we ended up in a lovely café in the small market town of Norton. As it was near to closing time, only one scone was left and as luck would have it, it ended up with me!

An Exchange of Views

Roger Say

An exchange of views can be no bad thing although there are two points to bear in mind:

1 The subject

2 The person or people you are exchanging views with.

If you do not bear these points in mind it can actually lead to a rise in temperature: either yours or the other parties.

The following example springs to mind:

Not so long ago an acquaintance of mine was giving a talk about the merit of a vegan diet. He had given this talk on many occasions with a fair degree of success and had even persuaded some of his audience to change their eating habits. He was a jovial sort of chap and often used humour to put across what was in fact a quite serious subject. He did not need any notes so when he spoke it sounded like he was very genuine and spoke from the heart.

One evening, last February I believe it was, he was booked to give his talk to the Beaconsfield and District u3a, in a room in the local town hall. He arrived in good time and was told to go up the stairs to the third door on the left where he would meet his audience. Up he went, stood outside for a few seconds, took a few deep breathes and walked in.

He was a little surprised to find his audience was made up almost exclusively of men: rather large often red-faced men at that. Crikey! he thought, this is a rum do, but took the bull by the horns as the audience rose to applaud him. Strange lot for a u3a meeting he thought, but walked up to the rostrum as directed by a particularly rotund gentlemen.

Good afternoon he said and the audience responded with a good afternoon in return, so he began to launch into his subject. As he did not use notes he could see the audience clearly, and he could not help but notice - he was quite an observant cove – that they appeared to be getting angrier and angrier. This is very odd he thought - after all they knew what his subject matter was and if they didn't like it they could have stayed away. He carried on for a short while despite a degree of muttering and scowling from the audience but when two of them stood up and started to march towards him in a distinctly aggressive manner. He decided that discretion being, without a shadow of a doubt, the better part of valour, shouted out 'Oh is that the time?' and legged it out of the door as fast as his legs could carry him.

He bounded down the stairs two at a time and stopped at the bottom where he read the following notices:

Room 2 (2nd door on the left) Beaconsfield Butchers Convention

Room 3 (3rd door on the left) Beaconsfield and District u3a

He had gone in the wrong door!

The moral of this story is that you need a third point to bear in mind if you are exchanging points of view and that is to make sure you are in the right place!

'Back end of summer' by Roger Say

balmy late summer day
headland meander
sun on back
pleasant breeze
terns overhead
elegant in flight
vocally coarse
waves lap rhythmically
against rocks
swooping swallows
flash by
performing aerial
acrobatics
sand martins likewise
eiders at their ease
taking their leisure
as is their wont
ringed plovers
scuttle along on shore's edge
easily mistaken for turnstones
bobbing heads a giveaway
to those in the know
herring gulls at rest
carefree dog
full of joys
followed by
careworn owner
it's a dog life
for the dog
with the right human

Lignum Vitae

I was cleaning out a cupboard in my bedroom recently - a job I do every decade whether it needs doing or not - when I came across a pair of lawn bowls which belonged to my grandad. He used to play regularly in the summer at Grayfields, it being the nearest green to his home in Oakley Gardens. The bowls are now antiques being at least 70 years old. As a small boy, I remember him telling me that they were made from lignum vitae, a dense wood originating from the Caribbean. But most of all, I remember him telling me that Lignum Vitae is so dense that it sinks in water!

The bowls used in Lawn Bowls are often still referred to as 'woods', but since the 1970s they have actually been made from a manufactured composite material. However, a quick search on-line reveals that there is still a large stock of antique lignum vitae bowls in existence, many of which are for sale at a range of prices. A further search on-line comparing the performance of composite and lignum vitae bowls shows that both have their merits and weaknesses – but the overriding benefit of composite bowls is that for every size for bowl, they are heavier than traditional wood bowls, which is a key competitive advantage. That is as far as I dare go on the technical side of bowls. If there are any questions on bowls arising from this article, then please direct them to Ray Elliston our U3A Bowls Group Leader, who unlike me, actually knows what he is talking about!

Barry Liddle

Rereading Classic Novels: 'The Catcher in the Rye' by J.D. Salinger

This month I have been rereading *The Catcher in the Rye*, which I purchased in 1978 for 68p. At the time I was not aware of the book or the author. I chose it because it was in the 'Penguin Modern Classics' series (which meant it had literary merit), I was also intrigued by the book's minimalist plain silver cover which was devoid of any artwork, promotion material or information.

The lead character is Holden Caulfield a maladjusted 16-year-old from a relatively affluent New York family. The plot follows Holden over a long weekend in which he abruptly leaves Pencey boarding school just days before being expelled. But not before we learn of his fractious relationships with a range of characters in his dorm and in previous schools – all of which he left prematurely. He then spends a turbulent weekend in New York staying first in a rather risqué Edmont hotel before moving out after a disagreement with a prostitute and her pugnacious 'minder' over payment for services declined and spends the following night sleeping on the sofa at a flat owned by a former married male teacher who makes inappropriate advances. In between, he spends time at night in Central Park, contacts former girlfriends, goes ice skating at the Rockefeller centre, visits nightclubs, gets drunk in a bar and smokes packs of cigarettes. Along the way he buys and accidentally smashes a record he bought for Phoebe the only person he can talk at ease with – his 10-year-old sister. They fall out after he tells her he is leaving to start a new life out west and she is heartbroken when he refuses to take her with him. Eventually however, they make-up at a visit to the Zoo which brings back memories of better times.

The book was first published in 1951 and was unusual at the time in seeing the world of adults through the rebellious eyes of a teenager. However, the book also deals with a wide range of complex issues including the loss of a much-loved brother from leukaemia and issues of identity and alienation. In the book Holden gives his views on everything and everyone, many of the latter he regards as phonies. He also takes delight in making up stories for the hell of it if it suits him and in doing so he often regards himself as a madman.

When I first read this book I was in my early 20s, just a little older than the main character Holden Caulfield and it was fairly easy to relate to his situation and his difficulties in adjusting to adult life. Rereading the novel now over 40 years later, my admiration for the book remains, but one is struck by how much society has changed during that period. Young people reading it today would find some of the social mores we took for granted, as difficult to accept.

Whenever you read a book, some things are memorable for personal reasons. For example, Holden at one-point walks down Lexington Avenue on the East Side of Manhattan in New York. When I first read the book that action was of no consequence. But now, on second reading forty odd years later, it brings back happy memories of having walked that same street and of having stayed at the Lexington Hotel.

Lastly, one of the unintended benefits of reading any book is that it improves vocabulary. In the earlier chapters of the book there are several references to things being placed on or removed from 'Chiffoniers'. When I first read the book I would have skated over that word and ploughed on regardless. This time round I took the trouble to look it up – in Britain it means a low cupboard either used as a sideboard or with raised bookshelf on top. In America, and therefore in the novel, it means a tall chest of draws.

Photography Group at RSPB Saltholme

Barry Liddle



Earlier this week, on Tuesday 20 Sept, Ray Elliston's Photography Group visited RSPB Saltholme. A location we visit several times a year. On this occasion, I was able to take a fairly clear photograph of this bird eating seed under one of the birdfeeders (designed for smaller birds such as finches and tits.) Judging by the bird's size, feet and the creamy lateral line, I am going to guess that this is a juvenile Moorhen. But if anyone thinks differently, then please let me know.



As we approached one of the largest lakes at Saltholme, Ray spotted this white bird. The photograph on the left was taken with my 63X zoom lens on maximum, so you can see how far away it was. When I got home, I cropped the photograph several times to increase the size of the bird (see above right). This image is a little blurred, but if anyone can identify the bird then please let me know.

Directory

Committee Members

Chair –

Roger Say

Vice Chairs –

Wendy Borthwick and Jessica Scott

Secretary –

TBA

Treasurer –

TBA

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.** Barry Liddle (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



Saltholme in Winter

©Barry Liddle

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 October 2022.

Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor