



# Newsletter

Hartlepool & District u3a  
Issue 78, December 2023



*Merry Christmas*



Comments from the Chair

Is it just me or has this year gone ever so quickly? I can scarcely believe I am sitting here writing my last 'chair's comment' of the year. Be that as it may, I look back at it with a belief that it has been a good year for our u3a. We have had some grand speakers on a variety of topics, social events, and an ever-increasing number of interest groups. There is something for everyone and we are spoilt for choice. Thanks to all of you who has made this possible.

Last month's speakers came from the North East Regional Organised Crime Unit and this drew the highest attendance of the year. You will be delighted to hear that Andy and Kelly are coming to visit us again in May next year to update us on Fraud Prevention and how to avoid scams. Not only did they give us really helpful advice but they did it in a user-friendly and entertaining manner.

We are holding a 'fuddle' at our next meeting which will take place on Friday December 1st so please bring along some finger food to share with everybody. Tea and coffee will be available as always, and you are all invited to take part in our quiz which has been organised by our very own quiz group. I am mugging up on Outer Mongolian baseball teams and lesser-known facts about the Duck-Billed Platypus so fingers crossed that these topics crop up.

I hope to see you at the fuddle and I am looking forward to another bumper year for our u3a in 2024. We have a real treat in store for our first meeting of the year as we have Steve Thompson telling us about his life as a musician and songwriter. More on him later.

Meanwhile  
Take care.  
Roger

## Reflections of Bygone Christmases

Cliff Cordiner

Many of us probably have a romantic image of what Christmas was like in days gone by. I know as a child I dreamt of a white Christmas as I waited excitedly for the arrival of the big man in the red suit. Christmas is very different these days, and I am sure many of us think it was better then. But have you ever wondered what it was really like before Coca Cola introduced Santa Claus to the world.

My Great Grandfather William Scott Lithgo kept a diary and a record of Seaton Carew in the 1870s and 1880s, both of which provide a detailed picture of the daily lives of the villagers. He started earning money at an early age, operating the blower for the church organ at an annual salary of £1 5s. The organist at the time was Miss Lawson, the vicar's daughter.

The enterprising Master Lithgo had several other jobs: delivering milk which paid a shilling a week, assisting the postman, and carrying meat orders to customers for the local butcher. As if that was not enough, he helped run the family bath house by bringing pails of sea-water for the visitors to use. He went out on fishing expeditions with his father where he helped to put bait on the lines, remove the fish and carry it home when they got back on land, receiving three pence for this. He put some of his earnings into a club for his mother at Mrs Vitty's shop; he noted in his diary that Mrs Vitty had two shops in Seaton Carew, selling groceries in one and drapery in the other.

In his diary my Great Grandfather tells us that Mr Bakewell, a grain merchant who owned warehouses at West Hartlepool docks, used to bring a big sack of mulled wheat to Seaton Carew at Christmas, and allowed the villagers to come with cans to collect portions of it. They boiled it in milk and seasoned it with cinnamon and sugar and made it into a traditional thick wheat porridge dish dating from medieval times called frumenty, which the locals referred to as "Seaton Soup", and it was eaten on Christmas Eve.

The voices of children are often missing from historical accounts, but William wrote fondly of his childhood experience of church and school in the 1880's, and particularly Christmas time:

*"The peaceful Sundays are something to remember; the gentlemen with their silk hats coming to church with their wives and families; the choir stalls were family pews and so were nearly all the pews on both sides. The organ and choir were upstairs. We only had one school for both boys and girls, and we went from Sunday School to Church with our teachers.*

*What a great event our Sunday School Christmas party was, when the Vicar, Mr John Lawson sat at the desk and our teachers and pupils had to go and stand whilst he heard our teachers give an account of our attendance and character. Then we got a book, and after our tea we got a Yule cake and an orange and apple to bring home.*

*In those days at funerals the bearers had silk hats which they got from the big houses. When there were weddings all the village was decorated with flags, and so were all the boats and cobbles on the beach. Minstrels used to go round on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve with white shirts and faces blacked with burnt cork and wearing old silk hats which they got from*

*the big houses. They had a tambourine, bones, and a tin whistle or flute.”* Clearly something that would be frowned upon today.

The practice of firms distributing Christmas gifts to business associates has long been known but there can be few who looked forward to receiving their presents as those with whom Julius Ernst Guthe had connections. Julius was born in 1856 in Leipzig. The Guthe family were a well-respected Ship building family who came to West Hartlepool in 1875. They lived at Dinsdale House in Seaton Carew (now Dinsdale Lodge care Home). Every year the gardens at Dinsdale House contained a gaggle of geese of about fifty. They were destined to have their throats cut by the head gardener, be bled by his son, and hand plucked by a lady called Mrs Walker who lived across the road in Berwick Street, a considerable feat for someone who was blind. They then ended up as the centre piece in the Christmas hampers distributed by the Guthe family.

In 1976 a new vicar arrived in Seaton Carew called Revd. William Worley. He introduced the Christingle service to our church, an idea he brought from Consett but reinvigorated it by holding it on Christmas Eve. This is still a hugely popular tradition, which over the years has raised a substantial amount for the Children’s Society. For many families, Christmas would not be the same if they did not attend the Christingle service. For me this signals Christmas has finally arrived. I always enjoyed going with my children, and now look forward to it with my grandchildren as the excitement builds.

Happy Christmas everyone.

## 5 Things About Christmas Trees. (Compiled by Barry Liddle)

1. The modern Christmas tree originated in Germany, where families set up a tree in their homes on December 24.
2. Most people would say Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's consort, was the first person to introduce the Christmas tree into England in 1840. However, various sources say it was actually 'Queen Charlotte', the German wife of George III, who set up the first known tree at Queen's Lodge, Windsor, in December 1800. *(Sources: Wikipedia, English Heritage).*
3. An iconic symbol of Christmas in Hartlepool used to be the large Christmas tree located in front of Wesley Church in the centre of town.
4. When to put up the Christmas tree is largely a matter of personal choice. As a youngster I remember it was common practise to set up the Christmas tree 12 days before Christmas and then take it down 12 days after. Today, everything about Christmas seems to be happening earlier and it is not uncommon to see Christmas trees in private households in mid -November. However, according to tradition, Christmas trees and decorations should go up on the first day of Advent, which is the fourth Sunday before Christmas.
5. The most famous Christmas tree in England is the one in Trafalgar Square given to the people of London by the city of Oslo each year since 1947. The tree is prominently displayed from the beginning of December until 6 January. *(Source: Wikipedia).*

# Christmas Quiz

Compiled by Barry Liddle

1 The Royal Family traditionally spend Christmas Day at their country estate in:

- a) Balmoral
- b) Sandringham
- c) Highgrove

2 Santa's sleigh is pulled by nine reindeer, can you name them?

- a) Basher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen and Rudolph.
- b) Dasher, Flasher, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen and Rudolph.
- c) Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen and Rudolph.

3 The first Christmas Broadcast was delivered by:

- a) George IV
- b) George V
- c) Elizabeth II

4 What are Pantomimes?

- a) Theatrical entertainment for children at Christmas provided by a cast of drunken actors, fallen pop stars, drag artists, retired boxers and third-rate 'celebrities.
- b) Theatrical entertainment for children at Christmas based on the fairy tales of Hans Christian Anderson.
- c) Theatrical entertainment for children at Christmas involving music, topical jokes, and slapstick comedy, and based on a fairy tale or nursery story.

5 Often consumed at Christmas, Manzanilla, Fino and Amontillado are all types of:

- a) Port
- b) Sherry
- c) Liqueur

6 The song 'White Christmas' first featured in which 1942 Musical?

- a) Holiday Inn
- b) White Christmas
- c) Met Me in St. Louis

7 In the book 'A Christmas Carol,' what was the name of Scrooge's overworked and underpaid clerk?

- a) Rob Cratchit
- b) Bob Cratchit
- c) Will Cratchit

8 In the traditional Christmas Carol, 'Twelve Days of Christmas', what happened on the 8<sup>th</sup> day?

- a) Eight Geese a-laying
- b) Eight swans a-swimming
- c) Eight maids a-milking

9 Can you name the author/artist of the picture book 'The Snowman' which became an animated television film frequently shown at Christmas?

- a) Asa Briggs
- b) Ronnie Briggs
- c) Raymond Briggs

10 Which 1970s children's TV programme famously made an Advent Crown with coat hangers, tinsel and candles?

- a) Magpie
- b) Blue Peter
- c) Tiswas

11 These lyrics are from a 16th Century Carol; can you name the carol?

'Lullay, thou little tiny child  
Sleep well, lully, lullay  
And smile in dreaming, little one  
Sleep well, lully, lullay...'

- a) Birmingham Carol
- b) Coventry Carol
- c) Leicester Carol

12 'A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols' is the Christmas Eve service broadcast by the BBC from which location?

- a) King's College, Cambridge
- b) Christ Church, Oxford
- c) Royal Albert Hall

13 The last professional football match played in England on Christmas Day was in:

- a) 1953
- b) 1965
- c) 1991

14 What 'theme' was adopted for the design of Christmas stamps last year (2022)?

- a) Nativity
- b) Robins
- c) Santa Claus

15 Which recording artist had a Christmas No1 hit record with 'Saviour's Day'?

- a) Aled Jones
- b) Cliff Richard
- c) Chris de Burgh

16 What was the name of the guardian angel in Frank Capra's classic Christmas Film – 'It's a Wonderful Life'?

- a) Theadore
- b) Clarence
- c) Wilbur

17 The Christmas carol 'In the Bleak Midwinter,' is based on an English poem set to music by the composer Gustav Holst. Who wrote the poem?

- a) Christina Rossetti
- b) Emily Bronte
- c) Elizabeth Barrett

18 What was the first alcoholic product to be advertised on British commercial television in 1957, it was a popular drink for women and heavily advertised in the run-up to Christmas.

- a) Lambrini
- b) Babycham
- c) Cinzano Bianco

19 A tin of 'Quality Street' is often shared with family and friends on Christmas day. Which company manufactures them?

- a) Cadbury
- b) Nestle
- c) Mars

20 No Christmas Cake is complete without a topping of Marzipan. What is the main ingredient?

- a) Ground Almonds
- b) Almond Oil
- c) Almond Essence

## Answers on Page 16

## A Winter's Tale in Hartlepool

Brenda Regan

January 1947. I was four and had just started school the previous September aged 4 1/2 years. At the time parents did not pick up children from school, except for a week or so after they first started. So I walked home from school by myself and had to cross a main road to reach our street.

Then it began. The icy winter weather I had not experienced before. From January 22<sup>nd</sup> to March 17<sup>th</sup> the snow fell every day, somewhere in the UK. The snow accumulated quickly, causing real problems. The temperature rarely rose above zero. There was disruption of energy supplies for homes and businesses.

In my street the snow fell day after day. People used brooms and shovels to clear the snow from the pavement and pile it high by the kerb. Each day I trudged home from school, walking on the treacherously slippery pavements which were covered in icy patches and some snow. There were few cars around so none had to drive along our street. Children were delighted to see the snow, and played snowball fights and made slides, and a snowman. The snow continued on and off for the next two months.

The children built an igloo in the street. We all helped to compact the snow into large bricks and gradually built up the walls and roof. We would crawl inside the entrance door and sit on a piece of old canvas, until it became too cold to stay.

In March the temperature rose and the snow began to slowly melt. Now we walked home from school through puddles of slush until they finally disappeared down the drains, and we recommenced our street games with marbles and balls and hoops and tops and whips! I don't remember another harsh winter like that until 1963. But that's another Winter's tale!

### 5 Things About Christmas Food. (Compiled by Barry Liddle)

1. Cranberry sauce originates from North America and was introduced to the UK in the 1950s. It is served as a condiment with roast turkey at Christmas. You might also find it in 'festive' sandwiches and baguettes. Cranberry sauce consists of cranberries boiled with sugar although some recipes call for the addition of ingredients such as orange juice or orange zest. (Source: Wikipedia)
2. 'Pigs in blankets' are so called because they are made from pigs (sausages) and wrapped up in a bacon 'blanket'. Pigs in blankets are thought to have originated from Czechoslovakia or Germany but first appeared in print in the Cooking for Kids cookbook, published by U.S food firm Betty Crocker in 1957. (Source: Wikipedia)
3. 'Bread Sauce' is an English classic. Traditionally served alongside the Christmas turkey. Its origins can be traced back to the middle- ages when cooks needed ways to use up leftover bread and found it could be used to thicken all manner of stews, soups and sauces. (Source: Wikipedia).
4. 'Stuffing' is traditionally a mixture of herbs, and bread. Sage & Onion is the classic stuffing of choice but there are a wide range of recipes incorporating sausage meat, chestnuts and fruits.
5. 'Turkey,' although still expensive for most people, became more popular in the Victorian era as it served more people than the traditional Christmas goose.

# Winter Wonderland in Hartlepool & District



(c) Martin Green



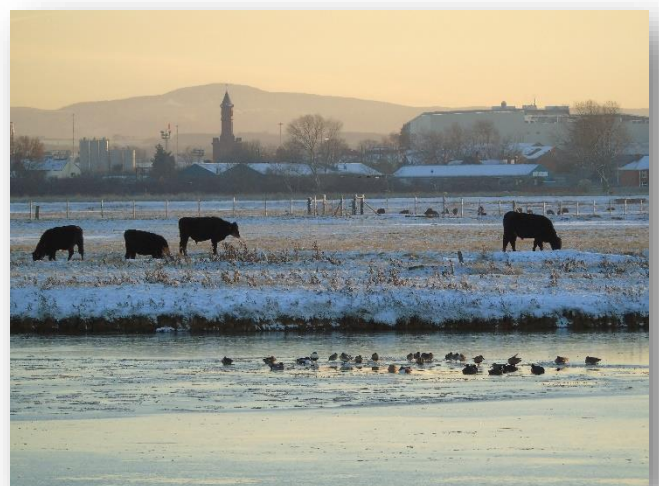
(c) Martin Green



(c) Martin Green



(c) Barry Liddle



(c) Barry Liddle

# Christmas Notice Board



**Mary Windram** has sent in this lovely festive photograph of a Holly Tree in her front garden. She said the tree looked even better before the birds started to eat the berries!

You may be interested to know that traditionally, the Holly Tree symbolises 'peace and goodwill'.

## Fun with Fabrics Group.

There will be no meeting in December but we will be restarting on 25th January when Wendy Costello will be demonstrating and helping us crochet leaves and flowers. It should be very interesting and members will be very welcome, especially if you need or want to brush up your crocheting skills or even try your hand at this delicate art.

Pauline Williamson

## CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Here are the final details for our Christmas Lunch at The Marine Hotel on Monday 18th December at 12 noon. Don't be late!

1. Car drivers please remember to enter your car registration number into the computer on reception for free parking.
2. Please order and pay for your own drinks. Water will be available on the table.
3. We will be sitting together at tables reserved for us by the Hotel. Please sit at these tables only, even near someone you don't know for a change. Don't forget there's a quiz (with fabulous prizes) so it might be prudent to sit near someone you think looks intelligent!
4. Pauline will give you a card with details of what you have ordered and how much you need to pay. There will be a £1 addition for a tip and the cost of the fabulous prizes. CASH ONLY PLEASE. We will have to pay on one bill and Pauline doesn't take cards!
5. Don't forget to wear your festive jumper.
6. Don't forget to HAVE FUN.

**Jacky Armstrong**



## Quiz Group Calendar for 2024

Sad to relate folks that, despite a sterling attendance and effort by teams from Hartlepool U3A, we were once again pipped by a Stockton team by 1 point.

There is no quiz in December, but please don't let your brains idle, we will meet again, even more determined, in January.

John has booked the dates for the first six months of the new year:

Tuesday 16th January  
Tuesday 20th February  
Tuesday 19th March  
Tuesday 16th April  
Tuesday 21st May  
Tuesday 18th June

in the Community Room at The Hub (former Central Library), 2 pm £1, which includes refreshments.

Please reserve these dates, come along, be brave and with YOUR help, WE WILL BEAT STOCKTON.

**Jacky Armstrong**

## Photography Group in Sedgfield



In late November, Ray Elliston's Photography Group came across this lovely vintage bus in the centre of Sedgfield. © Barry Liddle

## Hartlepool and Lord Byron

I have recently been reading a book in which Lord Byron was mentioned and I decided to find out more about his life. He sailed to Greece in 1823 in a ship called Hercules which he had chartered. The ship then returned to England.

In September 1852 she went aground near Hartlepool, 25 miles south of Sunderland where she had been built in 1815.

Not many people would know that Hartlepool has a connection with Lord Byron.

**Irene Williams**

## Coffee and Chat Group

Our next get together at the Golden Lion, will be on Monday 4th December at 10.30 am. Why not pop in and join us. It is easy! Into the Golden Lion (plenty of parking outside) and turn left and we will be there. You can order coffee, tea, hot chocolate, bacon sandwich..... and then we have a chat about anything and everything.

Our January get together would be on New Years Day, so we will skip that one and meet on Monday 5th February 2024.

**Jacky Armstrong**

## 'Word' of the Month

Three weeks ago I foolishly tripped over some clutter on the floor of my office and banged my knee against the door frame. Nothing broken, but there is some soft tissue damage and I'm told it will take at least six weeks to recover. In the meantime, I've been hobbling about with the help of a good walking stick. I was relaying this story to my old Leicester friends Andy and Margaret and we got talking about the usefulness of walking sticks. Andy instantly informed me that the rubber bung at the foot of the walking stick is actually called a 'Ferrule'. How he knew this is beyond me, however he is a serious quiz enthusiast and perhaps it was the answer to a question he remembered from many years ago. Anyway, thanks to Andy, my word of the month for December is, you guessed it, '**Ferrule.**'

**Barry Liddle**

## Delves

The Ordnance Survey gazetteer lists 4 places by the name of Delves, the closest being some 24 miles away near Egton Bridge in the Esk valley, which reminds me...

Some u3a members from Delves  
Spiked drinks for to trick Santa's elves  
But jape turned to jinx  
When they drank their own drinks  
And thus ended up plastered themselves.

**Phil Jefferies**

## Skull & Crossbones.



Whilst visiting Sedgefield in late November with the Photography Group, I came across this gravestone on the floor of the local churchyard. Unusually, it features a 'skull and crossbones'. My first thought was its the burial place of a famous local pirate! But a local man walking his dog thought it was more likely to be a victim of the plague. Does anyone know the true story?

**Barry Liddle**

## 'Old Santeclaus with Much Delight'

**Phil Jefferies** has chosen this children's poem, which Wikipedia believes is the first publication to mention Santa Claus's reindeer & sleigh as well as the first to describe his arrival on Christmas day. Phil points out that the poem is so old (published 1821) it is not covered by copyright. (*This poem reflects the social mores of the time*).

Old SANTECLAUS with much delight  
His reindeer drives this frosty night,  
O'r chimney tops, and tracts of snow,  
To bring his yearly gifts to you.

The steady friend of virtuous youth,  
The friend of duty, and of truth,  
Each Christmas eve he joys to come  
Where peace and love have made their  
home.

Through many houses he has been,  
And various beds and stockings seen;  
Some, white as snow, and neatly mended,  
Others, that seemed for pigs intended.

To some I gave a pretty doll,  
To some a peg-top, or a ball;  
No crackers, cannons, squibs or rockets,  
To blow their eyes up, or their pockets.

Where e're I found good girls or boys,  
That hated quarrels, strife and noise,  
I left an apple, or a tart,  
Or wooden gun, or painted cart;

No drums to stun their Mother's ear,  
Nor swords to make their sisters fear;  
But pretty books to store their mind  
With knowledge of each various kind.

But where I found the children naughty,  
In manners crude, in temper haughty,  
Thankless to parents, liars, swearers,  
Boxers, or cheats, or base tale-bearers,

I left a long, black, birchen rod,  
Such as the dread command of GOD  
Directs a Parent's hand to use  
When virtue's path his sons refuse.

*Source: Wikipedia*

## Christmas Cracker Anatomy Quiz

Phil Jefferies

1. What has hands that cannot grasp?
2. What has legs but cannot walk?
3. What has a nose that cannot smell?
4. What has a tongue that's not in a mouth?
5. What has eyes but cannot see?
6. What has ears that hear no sound?
7. What has fingers that cannot feel?
8. What has a mouth but eats no food?
9. What has a throat that swallows no food?
10. What has a neck that supports no head?
11. What has teeth that chew no food?
12. What has veins that carry no blood?

Answers on page 16 (there are other legitimate answers, award yourself a sherry as appropriate).



### **My favourite home cooked meal.**

In my time I have been a meat-eater, vegetarian and a flexitarian. I was also a vegan for a short period but my house mate at the time was a vegetarian and every time I opened the fridge, I was confronted by a large chunk of cheese. Like a mouse I couldn't resist it for very long!

My favourite home-cooked meal is probably Spaghetti Bolognese, although instead of mince I use Quorn. This is a simple dish augmented with basil and black pepper, and if you give it to a meat-eater they probably won't notice the difference.

### **My fantasy restaurant meal.**

I don't really have one. As the chief cook and bottle washer at home I am always glad when someone else cooks a meal! I really enjoy a good curry and I was lucky enough to live in Bradford where the curry houses were plentiful and incredibly cheap. This was back in the 1980s when you could get a vegetable curry and 3 chapatis for less than £1.

### **My fantasy dinner party.**

This one is difficult as I prefer to concentrate on what I am eating rather than whom I am eating with. Apart from 'Can you pass the salt, please?' and other pertinent requests any guests at my dinner party would have to be of a taciturn disposition. Maybe Marcel Marceau, the famous mime artist.

### **My favourite Album**

Goodness me! I have quite catholic tastes in music so this one is quite tricky. 'Sergeant Pepper' is a possibility along with anything from the Incredible String band. Oh, but what about Velvet Underground or Captain Beefheart? Then there's Bach's 'Tocatta and Fugue in G minor'. Puccini's Madam Butterfly? The list is endless!

### **My favourite memory of watching live music.**

Crikey! I think I will have to go for the local folk club which meets regularly on a weekly basis. The atmosphere is very relaxed and we all enjoy performing and listening to each other. We are not confined to a narrow interpretation of what is 'folk music' and so basically, we can sing and play what we like. Singing is good for the soul and every week brings new joy.

### **My favourite film.**

I really love old comedy films so my favourite film would have to include Laurel and Hardy. These two make me cry with laughter every time I watch them, and their comedy is timeless. I am hopeless at remembering the actual names of films and most of the actors' names. Another fine mess I seem to have got myself into.

### **My favourite songwriter or composer**

This varies from day to day and even hour by hour! At the time of typing this I am going to go for Bob Dylan as he had a major influence on my musical tastes in the early to mid-sixties. Other strong contenders would be Lou Reed and John Lennon.

### **My favourite TV comedy series.**

I would have to choose from one of the following: MASH; Monty Python; It's a square world and Dad's Army. Oh, and countless others lost from my memory!

### **My favourite TV drama series**

Probably Downton Abbey although this could have gone down under 'My guilty Secret'!

### **My favourite radio programme.**

If I had to choose between having a TV or radio it would have to be the latter. If I had to choose a radio channel it would be Radio 3 although Radio 4 would come a close second, along with Radio 4X. I used to listen to radio 4 first thing in the morning but I have turned to Radio 3 as of late as I find it quite relaxing. I am also a great fan of the one and only Shipping Forecast and try to tune into it whenever I remember. One of these days I might even try to discover where the places mentioned actually are!

### **My favourite book**

I have been an avid reader as long as I can remember and must have read thousands of books by now.

Favourite authors include Terry Pratchett, Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood, Kazuo Ishiguro and Hilary Mantel. I also love books on bees and wasps, wasps in particular. Do you know who invented paper? Actually, it's the wrong question as it should be 'What?' The answer is wasps! (Check it out: it's true)

### **My guilty pleasure**

Now that would be telling.

## Why is it Called Boxing Day?

Barry Liddle

On Boxing Day the Christmas rush is over, the festive lunch has been consumed and the festivities have peaked. Boxing day is about rest, recovery and enjoyment. But why do we call it Boxing Day? In medieval times, did we all go to boxing matches? Probably not. How the name came about is still being debated. The only consensus is that Boxing Day is on 26 December, the second day of Christmas and that the name originated from this country.

Having read several articles on the origins of 'Boxing Day', I found an article by Erin Blakemore on a web site from National Geographic to be the most helpful in pulling together the various competing theories.

According to National Geographic *"Though historians disagree on the exact origin of Boxing Day, it is thought to have grown out of longstanding British traditions of charitable giving and goodwill—practices especially associated with the Christian festival of Saint Stephen's Day, which is celebrated on December 26."*

National Geographic goes on to say, *"There are several theories as to how that charitable tradition became known as "boxing." Some historians tie the use of the term to boxes of donations that were installed in churches during the pre-Christmas season of Advent in the early days of Christianity during the second and third centuries A.D. The day after Christmas, the boxes were opened and the money distributed to the poor."*

Another theory according to National Geographic is tied to a practice that arose around the 16th century, when *"Working-class people would spend December 26 seeking out Christmas "boxes," or tips, from the people they had served throughout the year."* This tradition continues today although payment now is likely to be made over the Christmas period and not specifically on 26<sup>th</sup> December.

Another possible origin story for Boxing Day according to National Geographic *"has to do with a tradition that evolved in socially stratified 19th century Victorian England, where servants sacrificed time with their own families to cater to their aristocratic employers on Christmas. On the day after Christmas, employers would give the servants a rare day off and send them home with leftovers from the family's Christmas feast, plus gifts and tips."* Perhaps these gifts and leftovers may have been boxed, hence the name Boxing Day.

To sum up, there are several suggestions as to how the 26<sup>th</sup> was named Boxing Day, but there is no consensus on which one is correct. It should also be remembered that while Boxing Day follows Christmas Day in Britain and in many Commonwealth countries, in other parts of the world, the 26<sup>th</sup> of December is given a different name. As Wikipedia points out, *"In parts of Europe, such as several regions of Spain, the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, Norway, and Ireland, 26 December is called Saint Stephen's Day"*.

We may not know why it is called Boxing Day, but many people enjoy it as much if not more than Christmas Day. This is reflected in boxing day activities which include plenty of eating and drinking, playing with Christmas presents (mainly but not exclusively by children), visiting friends and family, shopping at the Boxing Day Sales, jumping in the sea and watching or participating in sports.

When I was younger, the first item on the television news on Boxing Day was the Boxing Day Sales. We would be shown footage of large queues formed early in the morning outside London Department Stores and this would be followed by the rush and chaos as the doors opened and shoppers competed to claim a limited number of heavily discounted big- ticket items – particularly electronic goods, as well as other sale items – dinner sets and ‘crockery’ seemed to feature a lot in those black and white TV reports. In recent years we have seen the demise of Boxing Day Sales due to the growth in internet shopping generally, the popularity of Black Friday (in November) which is a marketing concept imported from America and because high street retailers increasingly run sales throughout the year.

Professional Football is no longer played on Christmas Day, but Boxing Day has a full programme of fixtures alongside many other sports. Growing-up the highlight of Boxing Day for me, was to go and watch Hartlepool United play (ideally against Darlington) and then return home for a repeat of the Christmas Day meal. Other sports also have full programmes and when the England Cricket team are in Australia, the Boxing Day Test is often the highlight of the tour. In rural England, Boxing Day is closely associated with Fox Hunting or its modern equivalent.

Whilst Charity giving on Boxing Day has to a large extent faded out, remnants of that tradition can be found in ‘The Boxing Day Dip’ – a charity event where many of the swimmers dressed in ‘fancy dress’ swim in the sea on Boxing Day. According to Wikipedia *“There are several such dips held around Europe, but the largest is organised by the Lions Club of Sunderland.”* If you don’t want to travel to Sunderland then go no further than the annual event at Seaton Carew.

Sources :

(1) *‘Why historians disagree about the origins of Boxing Day, the post-Christmas British holiday’ by Erin Blakemore, published by National Geographic, 22 Dec 2020.*

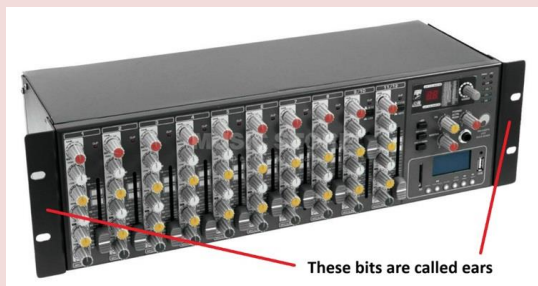
(2) *Wikipedia.*

## Answers to Christmas Quiz on Pages 4 & 5

1 b; 2 c; 3 b; 4 c; 5 b; 6 a; 7 b; 8 c; 9 c; 10 b;  
11 b; 12 a; 13 b; 14 a; 15 b; 16 b; 17 a;  
18 b; 19 b; 20 a.

## Answers to Phil Jefferies' Christmas Cracker Anatomy Quiz, Page 11

1. Clock
2. Table, chair, certain sporting fixtures
3. Aircraft
4. Shoe, boot, North Yorkshire (according to Ordnance Survey)
5. Potato, various animals (but not bats, which have good eyesight); half a point for needle or storm, which have a single eye
6. Rack-mounted electronic equipment (see photo at bottom of page)
7. Chocolate biscuit assortment
8. River, vampire bat (which drinks its food)
9. Organ pipe
10. Bottle, various string instruments
11. Comb, gear wheel
12. Leaf



## Down Memory Lane U3a Christmas Events



Merry Christmas  
Everyone!



# Directory

## List of Committee Members for 2023 -2024

### **Chair, Speaker Finder & Web Admin.**

Roger Say

### **Vice Chair–**

Vacant

### **President & Minutes Secretary –**

Linda Sargent

### **Business Secretary –**

Wendy Borthwick

### **Treasurer –**

Cliff Cordiner

### **Membership Secretary –**

Andrea Reid

### **Group Co-ordinator & Beacon Admin.**

Pauline Williamson

**Committee –** Keith Alder; Irene Archer

## Interest Group Leaders

**Archaeology/History Group:** Chris McLoughlin.

**Art Appreciation:** Co-Leaders: Irene Archer, Andrea Reid.

**Board Games:** Irene Williams.

**Bridge:** Phil Jefferies.

**Chess Group:** Roger Say.

**Coffee & Chat** Jacky Armstrong

**Creative Writing Group:** Roger Say.

**Family History:** Co- Leaders: Jacky Armstrong, Pat Rutter.

**Film Group:** Contact Phil Jefferies.

**Fun with Fabrics:** Ann Say

**Gardens and Gardening:** Co-Leaders: Liz Milbourn and Helen Eustace

**Lawn Bowls:** Ray Elliston.

**Music:** Steve Cole

**Natural History Group:** Co- Leaders: Irene Archer, Margaret Andrews and Beryl Turnbull.

**Photography for Fun Group:** Ray Elliston.

**Quiz Team:** John Campbell.

**Reading Group:** Andrea Reid

**Shibashi Exercise Group:** Marjorie Reynolds.

**Tuesday Book Club:** Mary Waldmeyer

**'View to Vue':** Roger Say.

**Walking Group:** Keith Alder

## Roles of Non- Committee Members

### **Newsletter Editor-**

Barry Liddle

## Copy Wanted for This Newsletter

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

Items for the Newsletter's 'Notice Board' are also welcomed.

All contributions to the next Newsletter are most welcome.

Copy deadline for the next issue is 20 December 2023.

**Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor**