

Northumbria Region u3a  
The Messenger  
Newsletter – Magazine for October 2022



Sedgefield and District u3a Day

All animals, except man, know that  
the principal business of life is to  
enjoy it

Samuel Butler

## Chair's Report

The Regional Quarterly Meeting in Seaham Town Hall in July 2022 was well attended. Thank you to all those that travelled from afar. There were a few hiccups, but these were overcome with the normal u3a's resilience in learning and solving problems. Some members who attended said they thoroughly enjoyed the meeting, taking part in a workshop discussing the positives that came out of the lockdowns/pandemic. Some positives were for example, learning new IT skills, such as accessing Zoom, communicating more frequently with their members by sending out a Newsletter at more regular intervals, phoning those members that didn't have any access to technology, watching Zoom speakers from around the UK and so many more.

There was also a talk about Durham Cathedral by Malcolm Wilkinson, a Regional Committee Member, but also a Durham Cathedral Guide for many years.

It is envisaged that Regional Quarterly Meetings will be dotted around our region, so enabling all 49 u3as to attend, if they want to enabling them to share their experiences with other u3as and glean information from the Regional Committee.

Paul Martinez, Chair of the Working Party that compiled the Recruitment Toolkit travelled from Nottingham at the end of September and delivered his first face to face workshop on the topic. It went down very well, with just over 40 members attending from 22 different u3as. If you want to access the PowerPoint presentation please look at [Northumbria Region U3A : Events \(u3asites.org.uk\)](https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria-region-u3a-events) and request a copy.

Your Regional Committee at the moment are working on updating the Speakers List, looking at the organisation and programme of Quarterly meetings and last, but not least developing a 3-year plan. You don't have to be on any Committee to assist us, your views and opinions will always be valued. Please look at [Northumbria Region U3A : Latest News \(u3asites.org.uk\)](https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria-region-u3a-latest-news) for more information.

Look forward to meeting you and saying Hello to everybody.

Cecilia Coulson, Chair, Northumbria Regional Committee

## Lindisfarne Gospels: back in the North East, where they belong

The penultimate u3a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event, organised by the Northumbria u3a Events Committee was at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle – to celebrate the albeit brief return of the Lindisfarne Gospels to the North East.



*Photos courtesy of Wikipedia*

The morning and afternoon sessions, attracting the maximum forty attendees from u3as across the region, started in the Function Room with tea/coffee and biscuits provided by Joanne Charlton (Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums). Event Volunteers Sandra Davison and Sheila Hull (u3a Newcastle) welcomed attendees at the u3a Desk. Durham Cathedral Guide, Northumbria u3a Trustee and u3a Seaham Harbour Chair Malcom Wilkinson gave a wonderfully illustrated informative introductory talk about the Gospels.



Attendees were able to visit the Lindisfarne Gospels Exhibition which is about its meaning in the world today and its relationship with themes of personal, regional and national identity. Created on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, the book represents the golden age of design and craftsmanship in Northumbria and has survived in almost perfect condition for over one thousand years.

The Exhibition begins with a short immersive digital experience and, in addition to the Lindisfarne Gospels, includes a stunning selection of medieval treasures brought together from across Britain, reflecting both personal and collective religious experiences in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.



The Lindisfarne Gospels Exhibition continues until 3 December 2022. Further information and purchase of tickets from [www.laingartgallery.org.uk](http://www.laingartgallery.org.uk)

Across the road from the Laing Art Gallery, on Level Six of Newcastle City Library, is a free complementary exhibition – “Sharing stories through the ages” (until 31 January 2023). The exhibition explores how we have shared stories since the time of the Lindisfarne Gospels, with items from the Newcastle City Library collection and items borrowed from the British Library in London and Seven Stories (the National Centre for Children’s Books, in Newcastle).

Photographs by Joanne Charlton

Kelvin Rushworth

Chair, Northumbria u3a Events Committee

### **Durham Cathedral**



I have been a volunteer in Durham Cathedral for about 43 years. I am a senior volunteer leading a team of other volunteers whose role is to welcome visitors and answer their many and varied questions. I am also a guide and an education guide within the cathedral’s education department.

Every time I’m on duty I feel immensely privileged to be able to volunteer in this incredible building and to be able to take visitors on tours. Volunteering has changed so much since I started, mainly because the cathedral now gets a lot more visitors both nationally and from overseas.

When we talk to visitors the vast majority are in awe of this great building and the most commonly asked question is, “How did they build it?”. Followed by, “Why did they build it so high?”.

The simple answer to the first question is, probably with great difficulty. However, they achieved their purpose of constructing an amazing church to the

glory of God. It's sad that we don't know the name of the master mason who designed it. What we do know however, is how he constructed it. Durham was the first great building since the Romans to be constructed with a stone roof. It is supported by those amazing circular and compound columns. It's such a pity we don't know his name. It was originally built to be the abbey church of a Benedictine Monastery. This was closed in 1539 during the reign of Henry VIII.

I'm often there very early. To walk in when it's so quiet and experience the peace and tranquillity actually makes me feel very humble but also in awe of this great achievement. To see the sun shining through the wonderful rose window is an experience not to be forgotten. Or to see the colours of the millennium window reflected by the sunlight on the stonework opposite is just amazing. The Ascension window dedicated to the late Archbishop Michael Ramsey, formerly Bishop of Durham, often gives visitors serious "food for thought". The cathedral's newest window is an amazing mixture of such vibrant blue and green it has to be seen to be believed. Sadly, it commemorates the death of a young lady who was a student at the university. However, my favourite has to be the Daily Bread Window. It is the artist's impression of the Last Supper and it's surprising how many visitors don't recognise it at first.

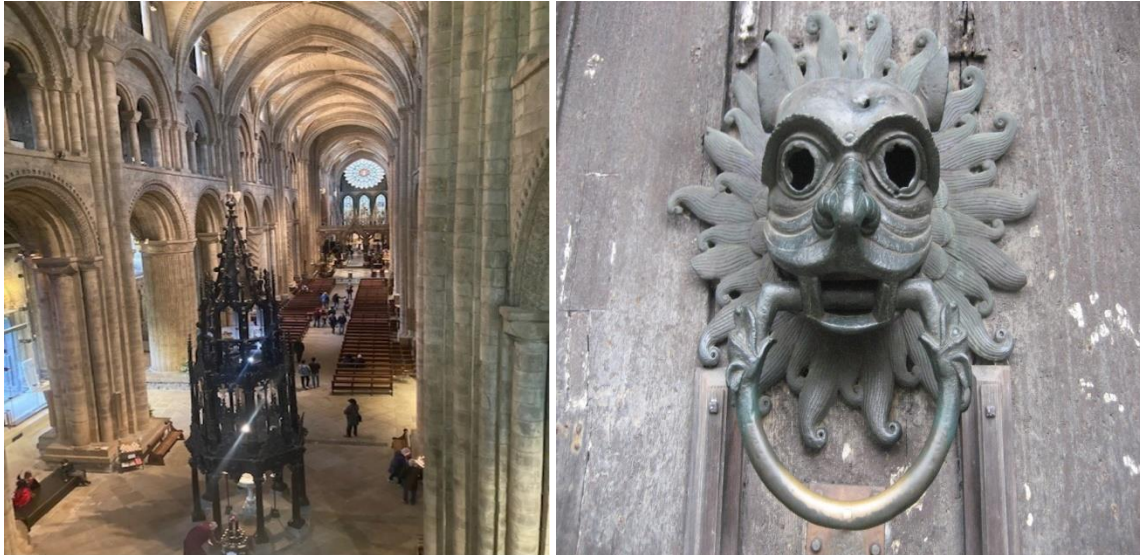


We must never forget however, that the building was originally constructed to hold the shrine of St Cuthbert, Anglo Saxon England's greatest saint. The original tomb, in the east end, was described by a mediaeval writer as "the most sumptuous in England". Sadly, destroyed at the dissolution, his body still lies there in the same place and the Shrine provides a place of peace and quiet contemplation.

At the west end, in the Galilee Chapel, can be found the tomb of the Venerable Bede. He was Anglo Saxon England's greatest scholar and without whose work we would know a lot less about the Saxon.

Two amazing saints rest at peace for eternity in this amazing building.

I was also trained to take visitors to the Triforium, first upper level, of the cathedral. Sadly, these visits had to be stopped several years ago. But I am pleased to be able to deliver PowerPoint presentations of the views from the Triforium and so many hidden things that most visitors will never see.



Malcolm Wilkinson – Seaham Harbour u3a and a Regional Committee Member

### **Cragside in August**



Wearside joined with Sunderland u3a for an outing to Cragside. The day was dry and mainly overcast although the sun did pop out to see us for a short time late in the afternoon.

On our way there we had stopped at a Garden Centre for coffee outside Morpeth. One of our members had forgotten her tablets so her son had to come tearing up the road to meet us so luckily all was well in the end.

Once we arrived at Cragside we all went our separate ways. My friend Liz and I walked up to the tea room for lunch and sat with another member of our party. Then it was time to have a good look around the shop and little garden centre.



We then ventured down and over the iron bridge and walked up to the formal gardens. The path from the bridge to the gardens has been laid with rocks and stones and by the time some of us got to the top we were gasping for breath even after a couple of stops to admire the view and to let others pass. Dogs seemed to have no problem with the climb but for their owners it was a different story.

The views from the formal gardens were spectacular and we even managed to spot the goldfish in the pond trying to hide under the lily pads. After an all too brief sit down we walked to the clock tower and decided it would be wise to wait for the minibus to take us to the house.



At the house we had a short wait to get into the house as they were restricting numbers but once inside we went from the kitchen and nearby plunge bath up to the attic missing nothing on the way not even the marble fireplace. We saw some beautiful china, the dining room, drawing room, billiard room and bedrooms. At one point we stopped to watch some conservation work being undertaken.

Lord Armstrong created a beautiful home which was illuminated by hydroelectricity one of the first in the country.

It even had a lift and life was made easy for staff with its modern gadgets that must have been the envy of many working in other stately homes at the time.



After we came out of the house we wandered around the rock garden before calling at the café on the side of the house for a refreshing drink before making our way back to the bus park which thankfully was downhill.

At the bus park we wandered over to see the Pumphouse and Archimedes Screw which provide the electricity for the house.

We were all so eagerly looking forward to a sit down that we arrived back at the bus with time to spare and we left five minutes early.



Marble fireplace

Mary Barlow – Sunderland u3a and a Regional Committee Member

### **Innocence**

Children's laughter tinkling  
Like crystal soundwaves  
On a summer sea

Small capsules of innocence  
Unbroken by  
Corrupting adult influence

Enjoying simple pleasures  
Empty vessels  
Waiting to be filled

Ethel Wilson – Sunderland u3a

## Anglo-Saxon Bones and a Hereditary Peer

After a Covid-19 gap, reliance on Zoom and YouTube, u3a Wooler History Group had two great guest speakers at recently re-launched face-to-face meetings. **Lord Joicey** spoke about the development of the Ford and Etal Estates since the end of World War II.



Baron Joicey of Chester-le-Street in the County of Durham, is a title in the Peerage of the United Kingdom. It was created in 1906 for the coal mining magnate and former Liberal Member of Parliament for Chester-le-Street, Sir James Joicey, 1st Baronet. The family seat is Etal Manor on the Ford Castle and Etal Castle Estates in Northumberland.

Ford and Etal estates have been the home of the Joicey family for over 100 years. The present Lord Joicey's father, the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Joicey, purchased Ford Estate in 1907 from the Waterford family. One year later, in 1908, he purchased the adjoining Etal Estate, uniting the two for the first time in history.

**Jessica Turner** (Project Officer, Accessing Aidan) gave a fascinating talk about 'Bamburgh Bones', the Ossuary in the Crypt at St Aidan's Church, Bamburgh (Northumberland).



Beneath the sand dunes on the North Northumberland coast, laid the remains of Anglo-Saxon people that helped shape Northumbria's Golden Age. All the individuals within the St Aidan's Church crypt ossuary came from the 'Bowl Hole' graveyard. First revealed by a violent storm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Bowl Hole graveyard is hidden within the sand dunes a few hundred metres south of Bamburgh Castle. Dozens of individuals were uncovered during excavations between 1998 to 2007. These remains have been analysed to reveal stories about these people and their lives.

Placed in modern ossuary boxes, the skeletons excavated from the Bowl Hole were laid to rest in 2016. Visitors can view the room containing the rows of ossuary boxes through a small gate from the main crypt. To find out more about these people, where they came from, something of their lives and the ailments they suffered with, visitors can visit the digital ossuary and filter the ninety-nine ossuary entries. Each entry includes what is known about the individual along with a photo, drawing and map.

Kelvin Rushworth  
(former) History Group Organiser, u3a Wooler

### **Art and Architecture Group at Bishop Auckland u3a**

Did you see the letter on page 75 of the autumn TAM regarding the above groups visit to Bradford-on-Avon and District u3a where they had a fantastic time on a study trip.

## u3a Walking Hadrian's Wall

Having seen the piece in the last Messenger about u3as in Northumbria each walking a section of Hadrian's Wall during u3a Week we decided we would give it a try.



Walking with the centurion

Anyway, the Strollers and Walking groups of Prudhoe & District u3a went ahead with their respective walks – not actually during u3a Week, but on their normal meeting days. The Walking group undertook a very local walk which included a visit to our nearest existing remains of the Wall near the village of Heddon-on-the-Wall, where they assure me, they were photographed by a centurion!

The Strollers, whose walks are rather shorter and less energetic, found a part of the Hadrian's Wall Path that's entirely downhill but follows an interesting



Walking at Heddon

section of the Wall, starting from Heavenfield (east of Wall village), beside a section of vallum and ditch; then at Planetrees we saw a section of standing wall where it seems the builders were ordered to speed up, so they reduced the width they were building! Then there was Brunton Turret, and the end and highlight of the whole walk was Chesters

Bridge, where there are very extensive remains of two successive Roman bridge abutments, along with a view across the North Tyne River to the bath house at Chesters fort.

Kathy Clegg – Prudhoe and District u3a

## The u3a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event

This was held at the Oriental Club in London.

The meeting with faces from the past was personally very enjoyable and nostalgic. The original event had to be hastily rearranged as Eric Midwinter had a Covid infection which also necessitated a review of attendees.

John Lloyd with Sharon



John Lloyd with Lynn



John Lloyd with Eric Midwinter



## u3a Day



On Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> September, Sedgefield and District held a Coffee Morning in our local Parish Hall to celebrate and promote both the 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the U3A and our own 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Various Interest Groups mounted displays of their work which attracted much attention from visitors and members alike.

Who knew that we had so much fascinating and inviting talent amongst our members? Several visitors were certainly intrigued enough to complete membership forms to join us.

Together with good tea and coffee, a spectacular array of beautiful cakes and cream scones tempted everyone to stay and chat and meet with our Mayor who had found time in his busy schedule to call in and support us too.

Hopefully, by this time next year, we will all have left Covid far behind us and will finally be up-and-running to full effect. We'll certainly give it our best shot!





Christine Balfour – Sedgefield and District u3a

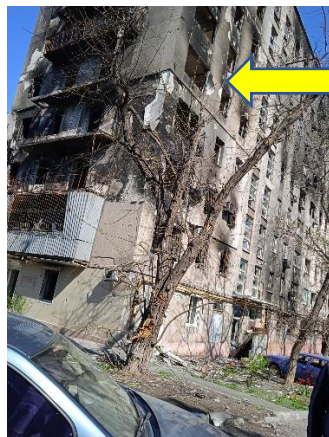
### Good News from Ukraine

Is there any good news from Ukraine?

In April I wrote about my experiences when working in the city of Mariupol. Although my time there was over 20 years ago my memory is reasonably good at remembering the many good times, often vodka-fuelled, that I had there.

That city has suffered so much this year. Actually, it started many years ago but, this year . . .

This photo is the block of flats where I stayed for much of the time I was in Mariupol. As it is now!



This was my bedroom window

My good friend, Mick, and I worked together in both Mariupol and Eswatini (known in those days as Swaziland) and we are still in touch with Vadim, our senior interpreter, and his wife Lisa, who was our office manager. Here is a photo of Vadim standing outside the building in which we worked. The architecture and quality of the building left something to be desired! Actually – quite a lot!



Vadim and Lisa managed to get out of Mariupol a while ago and are now living in Odesa. Lisa's parents have recently managed to join them there. In an email he wrote:

**“Lisa and I went thru hell, lost all we had and now need to start from scratch. Fortunately, we were not wounded external just broken inside and Lisa's mom and dad luckily were saved and now are with us in Odesa.”**

The good news from Ukraine? Vadim has obtained work with Mercy Corps (Google them) and started on 11<sup>th</sup> August. Mick and I were asked and pleased to provide references for Vadim. Lisa has had an interview with UNESCO – fingers crossed. We wish them the best of luck with their jobs and life in general. I cannot imagine what it must have been like – the anxiety, the fear, the uncertainty . . .

Mike Wallace - Newcastle u3a and a Regional Committee Member



### **SE Northumberland and Coast Chairs' and Business Secretaries' Network**

The list of members of this network is increasing so we are learning and sharing good practice from across the region.

Meetings are open to any Chair and Business Secretary or members considering taking on these roles.

Latest meeting conversations have included recruitment strategies and ways we may improve on u3a Day. Maybe you have a query which we would try to answer or information you'd like to share.

Come along and find out what is happening. You will be very welcome.

Contact Catherine Stevenson, Newcastle u3a: email [newcastleu3a@gmail.com](mailto:newcastleu3a@gmail.com)

### **Northumbria Region u3a Treasurers' Network**

This network or peer support group is open to any member, Treasurer, assistant Treasurer or members considering taking up this role.

There is always some valuable information to be shared and questions answered. If you are not feeling confident about becoming a Treasurer, come to a meeting and find out more with great tips from our existing members who are very supportive.

You will be very welcome to come to a meeting.

Contact Catherine Stevenson, Newcastle u3a: email [newcastleu3a@gmail.com](mailto:newcastleu3a@gmail.com)



**The most recent Northumbria u3a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event was to the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle to visit the Lindisfarne Gospels Exhibition.** As it was some years since the Gospels visited Durham Cathedral, all forty places at the event were filled by enthusiastic u3a members from across the region.

**'Sharing stories through the ages', on Level Six of Newcastle City Library, across the road from the Laing Art Gallery,** is well worth a visit. This complementary exhibition explores how we have shared stories since the time of the Lindisfarne Gospels, with items from Newcastle City Library collection and items borrowed from the British Library and Seven Stories.

**The next and final Northumbria u3a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event is 'Grace Darling Remembered' on Tuesday 8 November 2022 at the Grace Darling Museum in Bamburgh (Northumberland)** There are only forty places available – the maximum allowed in the Lantern Room).

**The Northumbria u3a Events Committee has welcomed a new member, Sandra Davison from u3a Newcastle.** Now, the 'small but perfectly formed' committee has members from u3as in Wooler (Northumberland), Newcastle, Seaham (County Durham) and Stockton (Tees Valley) – a good spread across the North East.

**Plans for a number of exciting events in 2023 have already been discussed by the Events Committee.** Watch this space for further news!

**Kelvin Rushworth**

**Chair, Northumbria u3a Events Committee ([kelvinregnat@outlook.com](mailto:kelvinregnat@outlook.com))**

<b>A Regional Committee April 2022 - 2023</b>	
Chair	Cecilia COULSON, Whickham and District
Vice Chairman	Vacant
Business and Minute Secretary	Mary BARLOW, Sunderland
Treasurer	Mike WALLACE, Newcastle
Member	Ann CARR, Bishop Auckland
Member	Malcom WILKINSON, Seaham Harbour
Member	Peter BARNETT, Wessington
Co-opted Member	Mary DUNNING, Whitley Bay
Co-opted Member	Ted WATT, Seaham
Trustee for the North East	Sandi RICKERBY, Morpeth

Members of the committee can be contacted by email through the website:  
<https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria>

### **Distribution**

Messenger is distributed electronically. Chairs and Business Secretaries of u3as receive a copy as an email attachment. They are asked to distribute this to their members. Messenger can also be found on the Messenger page of the website: <https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria>

If you would like to receive a copy directly from the region, please contact us through the website Messenger page.

### **From the Editor**

May I thank everyone who has taken the time to provided articles and assistance for this edition of The Messenger. I do hope that you have enjoyed reading this issue and that it has given you inspiration for the future. Please forward your articles to [regnewseditor@gmail.com](mailto:regnewseditor@gmail.com) May I please have all contributions for the next edition in by Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Thank you.