Our project now has a specific page on the Regional website, dedicated to this project.

https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria/page/85303

Over the next few weeks, Carol Burnett and I will be adding different page-links to this part of the site to reflect the range of elements to this project. There will be downloads from these pages as well as information about any workshops and places to visit. Those page-links will include:

- **Newsletters**: All newsletters – past and present.
- **Events**: Upcoming events and booking information. Plus write-ups of past events too.
- **Walks**: Ideas for walks; actual walks undertaking (and herbs identified); Plants that might be found in specific locations/specific times of year.
- **Gardens and Gardening**: Herbs gardens visited; Growing an herb garden; Using herbs for healthy plants.
- **History**: Research into Northumbria herbal (medical) history and sources.
- **Poetry, Literature, Writings**: Researches into poetry and plays which include herbs; creative writings,
- **The Science of Herbs in the 21st Century**: Investigating and reporting on modern research into plants as medicines and other uses.

In all of the above, we need your help to make this a vibrant, inclusive and informative project and we welcome all contributions and suggestions. To join in or find out more information …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contacts</th>
<th>Carol Burnett</th>
<th><a href="mailto:carol.burnett@hotmail.co.uk">carol.burnett@hotmail.co.uk</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anne Larvin</td>
<td><a href="mailto:annelarvin@gmail.com">annelarvin@gmail.com</a></td>
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</table>

Keep checking the website to see any new articles, downloads etc. For example, we will be adding to the ‘Walks’ section the herb walk that we held at Dilston on 4th July, identifying medicinal plants both modern and traditional.
Dilston Physic Garden was created by Elaine Perry who was a Professor of Neurochemical Pathology at Newcastle University for many years. Whilst establishing a new Medicinal Plant Research Centre at the University, she also set up the Dilston Physic garden, and now masterminds its plant and art collections. In a brochure called New Shoots from Ancient Roots which gives an overview of the garden she says, “Dilston physic garden is a synergy of over 800 medicinal flora, scientific and clinical research, folklore and magic stories. A smorgasbord of the latest plant-drug news, lessons in how to make home remedies that work and don’t hurt; debates about high street herbal products; and wide ranging botanical expertise. The physic garden is a safe place to both complement and bespoke your health related choices.”

The garden is a 2 acre collection of medicinal plants with a focus on those that are good for the brain enabling the discovery of why plants are essential for health, for cutting edge drugs and for effective herbal medicines worldwide. It is divided into two levels with a bamboo walk, fruit orchard and chamomile lawn and amidst it are the special collections of herbs and cultivars which are all clearly labelled with their botanical and common names and medicinal properties.

The garden is subdivided into different areas according to these properties and so there is the opium den, blues busters, memory matters and chill pills amongst others. At a lower level are ornamental and sage gardens. There is also a meadow and a pool and a wide variety of sculptures scattered around.

Herbology House which is in the middle of the grounds hosts many different workshops and events throughout the year. From one to two hour talks on diverse subjects such herbs for stress, urine infections, digestion; essential herbs in a the medicine cabinet to day courses on botanical perfumery or plant spirit medicine to a full ten day course called ‘foundation in plant medicine’.

Herbal teas are available and special areas to sit and drink are dotted around. The shop where you pay the £4 admission charge also sells wonderful herb related goods including honey from bee
hives on the site.
You enter the garden through a Japanese Torii gate which is a symbol of the transition from the everyday world to another world where spirits dwell. ‘For us,’ says Elaine Perry, ‘this represents a world where plants heal body, mind and spirit.’
Cath and I visited the gardens on a very hot day so not the best of time to do a detailed examination but more of one of finding some shade and drinking herbal tea. However we found it delightful and of great use in identifying individual plants and will probably buy the £10 yearly entrance fee so we can go again at different times of the year when different plants will be at their best. I am also sampling one of their hourly talks in July.

By Joan Sykes, Tynedale U3A

Day Visits to Dilston
Following the successful day visit on Wednesday 4th July, the next visit is on Wednesday 12th September. Details can be found on the Regional Website (https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria/page/85303) and each day includes
- A hedgerow walk and exploring the medicinal uses of the late summer/early autumn plants found on the walk.
- A tour of the Physic Garden.
- A talk on herbs as medicines and the scientific basis thereof.
- Use of the Herbology House, tea and biccys.

To learn more or book a place:
Contact Carol Burnett, preferably via email, stating your name, the U3A you represent, contact telephone number.

All queries and bookings to:
Carol Burnett, 1 Garden Terrace, Shilbottle, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 2HX
Email: carol.burnett@hotmail.co.uk  Tel: 07711 837 492

Auckland Castle
We are hoping to include information on the excavation and development of a walled garden at Auckland Castle in the next newsletter but in the meantime, here is a link provided by Felicetta Smith (Durham U3A) https://www.aucklandproject.org/parks-gardens-restaurant/
Christa Lloyd’s group of Wearside U3A members have been making considerable progress with their ‘wild patch’ planting and results are starting to show, as can be seen from these photos: From preparing the ground in October 2017, to starting work in April 2018. The final picture shows the chamomile plant growing well. Other plants include chocolate mint and wild rocket.

Carol Burnett’s physic garden is developing and its progress will be described on the next newsletter.
Elizabeth Blackwell  1707-1758

Although largely unknown today Elizabeth Blackwell made a significant contribution to medical knowledge and to the art of botanical illustration. Her multi-volume work, ‘A Curious Herbal’ published in the 1730s was an invaluable resource for doctors and apothecaries. Blackwell’s Herbal was an unprecedented enterprise for a woman of her time and she drew, engraved and coloured the illustrations herself. Most of her drawings were based on plant specimens from the Chelsea Physic Garden and the Herbal was issued in weekly parts between 1737 and 1739. She also consulted with physicians and botanists. Plants were described as well as illustrated by what they looked like in terms of size and growth habit, where they could be found, in which months of the year, and which parts of the plant could be used and for what purpose. The final work contained 500 illustrations. What is also curious is what made her produce this herbal.

At the age of 28 she married Alexander Blackwell who without any formal knowledge called himself a doctor but when challenged he and Elizabeth flew from their home in Scotland to London. He set up as a printer but incurred such high debts he was put into prison. Elizabeth was forced to rely on her own resources to keep herself and her child and to earn enough money to secure her husband’s release. Before her marriage she had received tuition in drawing and painting and she also seemed to have good business sense. She discerned that a gap existed in the book market for an up-to-date reference work for apothecaries, one that would include the many species recently discovered in North and South America.
Elizabeth’s project received the support of the Society of Apothecaries and several leading doctors. Blackwell advertised the book by word of mouth and in several journals and made advantageous deals with booksellers that ensured the financial success of the herbal.

(Sources – British Library, Scottish National Library)

Elizabeth Blackwell’s botanical drawing of the Dandelion.

Newcastle University’s Special Collections has a copy of Elizabeth Blackwell’s herbal as well as other rare herbals. Click on the following link for more information http://libguides.ncl.ac.uk/herbalmagic.

The British Library has digitised part of the book which can be viewed at http://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/?id=635a7cc0-a675-11db-a027-0050c2490048&type=book or the whole book, with text, is available at https://archive.org/stream/mobot31753002620844#page/261/mode/2up
Icones Stirpium seu Plantarum 1581

The Regional Resource Centre at Beamish Museum is a treasure trove and cornucopia of items, documents, furniture. Among its treasures is a book of woodcuts of plants published in 1581 in Antwerp. It contains over 2000 woodcuts of plant drawings, including some of the earliest woodcuts of exotic plants (or, at least, considered exotic at the time) such as the tulip which was introduced into Europe from Asia Minor. Some the woodcuts were used as illustrations in the 1633 edition of John Gerarde’s Herball.

The woodcuts have no text other than a Latin name, used to identify the plant. These are not the Latin names used now (based on the Linnaean system introduced in the 18th century). However, what sets this book apart is the writings alongside some of the woodcuts – see the photo, above.

The index shows that at least 99 of the woodcuts have some text written beside them, but there may be more.

A digitised copy of this incredible plant book can be viewed at
https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/37876#page/1/mode/1up
I must admit as a child I turned my nose up at rhubarb and because it was so prolific it was a frequent pudding in our house, seemingly every weekend almost all year round. Dished up in crumbles, pies and with rice pudding, its tart taste shrivelled my tongue. Only now am I really appreciating its versatility. A fruit that isn’t a fruit at all but a vegetable of the Polygonaceae family. It arrives in early spring to herald the end of winter when all other plants are still only just beginning to awaken.

The famous herbalist Culpeper claims that sliced and steeped overnight in white wine, it will gently purge choler of the stomach and liver, withstand dropsy and is an aid to open droppings!

It was first believed to have been found on the banks of the Volgar and its name derives from Rha and Barbarum, only its roots were used which were transported along the silk route from Samarkand. The lengthy transportation costs making it many times more valuable that cinnamon, opium, and saffron. With the decreasing price of sugar and transportation by sea in the 18th century, it became more common and used more for culinary purposes. When living in Orkney it could often be found wild on the roadside and was the only fruit along with strawberries that could withstand the gales to provide a plentiful crop year after year. The leaves contain the toxin oxalic acid and we were told not to put them in the compost heap. Another plant that grew in abundance up there was sweet Cicely (Myrrhis odorata), the leaves of which could be added to the rhubarb to help sweeten it. Our neighbours said as children they also used to eat the green seeds of Sweet Cicely and called them comfits as they tasted similar to liquorice comfits, a much healthier alternative.

To think that something I once despised, I now value for its versatility in jams puddings chutneys and wine.
A stroll up our lane to Branxton Village 20th May 2018
by Jean Eisenhauer

It being a pleasant evening my husband suggested a stroll up our lane to Branxton village, so I thought I would try to identify as many plants as I could along the way.

Across from our cottage are an abundance of wild raspberry canes although there is usually very little fruit on them, the hawthorn hedge that winds along with us is full of freckle faced May blossom interspersed with a Horse Chestnut, Elm and Elder trees. Nettles and white dead nettles push up through wild geraniums. Daisy’s smile in the shorter grass along with speedwell, and red and white Campion lean out from under the Hawthorn. We used to call red campion plum puddings as children. Cleavers clamber up and over everything, many’s the time we would sneak a length of them onto the backs of unsuspecting victims our giggles often giving us away.

Here we have the bright gold of Dandelions and the softer yellow of Lady’s Bedstraw I read somewhere this could be used to curdle milk for cheese making in place of rennet but it failed to work for me. Tufted vetch abounds and ivy covers our garden fence, Mr Culpeper says the sap of this is good for nose polyps.

Further along are the large leaves of Butterwort that flower in spikes before the leaves appear. In earlier times the leaves were used to wrap butter in. Near the church we have white and blue bluebells, periwinkles, and narcissus probably garden escapees. There are Forget-me-nots’, Cow Parsley, Shepherds Purse, and Plantain which I am informed the American Indians called White man’s’ foot as it sprang up in the wake of the early settlers.

I almost forgot the Buttercup and Dog Roses with their panicles of flowers in June and autumn hips rich in vitamin C and now believed to ease rheumatism. When I was younger I worked for Merrydown Wine company which in those days used to make hedgerow wines and paid youngsters to gather the fruits of the Elderberry and Blackberry.

Without counting grasses I managed to identify twenty six species of plants, but I have forgotten the snowdrops that are now hidden in all the new growth and I am no expert. It makes me realise what a wonderful planet we live upon.
A traditional rhyme...

'I if they eat nettles in March,
And mugwort in May,
So many fine maidens,
Wouldn't go to the clay'

(Nettles contain iron to build young girls up and Mugwort was traditionally used (in large enough doses) to procure abortions. F.S.)

The Poet to the Nettle

'I hate thee nettle
What's thy place
In earth's economy?
I care not I ne'er see thy face
Nor folk that act like thee.'

James Rigg
(The poet obviously does not like nettles or prickly people! F.S.)

Tall Nettles

TALL nettles cover up, as they have done
These many springs, the rusty harrow, the plough
Long worn out, and the roller made of stone:
Only the elm butt tops the nettles now.

This corner of the farmyard I like most:
As well as any bloom upon a flower
I like the dust on the nettles, never lost
Except to prove the sweetness of a shower.

Edward Thomas.

https://www.poemhunter.com/search/?q=nettles F.S.

King Lear

As mad as the vexed sea; singing aloud;
Crowned with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds
With hordocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow. (4.4.2–5)

Cordelia,
King Lear. Shakespeare

sparknotes.com/shakespeare/lear/section9/page/2/ describes 'fumiter 'is fumitory; 'Hordocks 'might be Burdock; 'Cuckoo-flowers' is Lady's-Smock; 'Darnel'is ryegrass
Some of the plants are or can be toxic, Lear is three pence short of a shilling! Research F.S.
One of the common names of Fumitory is ‘earth smoke’ and according to Pliny the juice dropped into the eyes brings such a flow of tears that sight is dimmed; Cordelia is talking about weeds and poisons here. Some of them are pretty — the cuckooflower and fumiter — but many are painful (nettles) and some very dangerous or poisonous (Hemlock, Darnel).

**Scarborough Fair**

On 22nd January 1253, Henry 111 gave Scarborough the charter to hold a fair. The Fair ran each year from 15th August, the Feast Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to 29th September; the Feast of St Michael. It was very popular and attracted people from Britain and Europe. The Fair closed in 1788.

Are you going to Scarborough Fair  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme  
Remember me to one who lives there  
For she was once a true love of mine

Scarborough Fair is a ballad of many verses. It is a duet between a woman and a man, each asks the other to perform impossible tasks, to show the depth of their love. The origin of the ballad may date to mediaeval times. The words, Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme are thought to have been added in the nineteenth century. Plants traditionally had meanings, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parsley</td>
<td>Love, and protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sage</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemary</td>
<td>Remembrance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thyme</td>
<td>Love and courage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The song is about a man asking the reader to tell his lover to perform impossible tasks in order to win back his love. The herbs mentioned in each stanza have been speculated to represent the pagan belief that, when combined, parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme can create a love charm. The entire song itself seems to be a riddle, with undertones of bitterness and nostalgia that can only belong to a spurned lover. Perhaps, since herbs carried both literal and metaphorical significance during this time, their repetition represents an attempt to woo the woman mentioned in the song.

While this song may have English origins, it is also heavily influenced by Celtic (Scottish and Irish) culture, especially since the tune of the song is taken from The Elfin Knight, an ancient Scottish ballad. For a long time people have been obsessed with the lyrics of “Scarborough Fair”, wondering who wrote the song and what the true meaning was behind the speaker’s playful and futile requests.

**The Cries of London**

Here’s fine rosemary, sage and thyme.  
Come buy my ground ivy.  
Here’s fetherfew, gilliflowers and rue.  
Come buy my knotted majorum, ho!  
Come buy my mint, my fine greenmint.  
Here’s fine lavender for your cloaths.  
Here’s parsley and winter savory,  
And hearts-ease, which all do choose.  
Here’s balm and hissop, and cinquefoil,  
All fine herbs, it is well known.  
Let none despise the merry, merry cries  
Of famous London-town!

Seventeenth Anon