

Northumbria Region u3a  
The Messenger  
Newsletter – Magazine for April 2022



Taken at Arbeia, South Shields

I have tried too in my time to be a  
philosopher;  
But I don't know how, cheerfulness  
Was always breaking in.

Oliver Edwards  
1711 - 1792

## Chair's Report

As this is my last AGM as Chair it is my official opportunity to say thank you to the few hardworking folks on the Regional Committee. They have been a tremendously busy and dedicated group. I'm sure people do not realise how much work goes on behind the scenes unless they themselves have been on a hard-pressed u3a committee.

Thanks to the sub-committees. Peter B and Ann C on **Communications**, who set up Beacon (we were first in the country to go live with Beacon for Networks, Regions and Nations, a free facility for Networks affiliated to the Trust) and to Mary B not only working as Business Secretary but also leading the **Messenger team** with your help as contributors and backed by the trusty proof-readers Maggie H and Susan T.

Mike W. our **Treasurer**, supported the Working Groups who made recommendations about the distribution of the Jesmond u3a Legacy. Mike has provided us with monthly updates to the accounts and budget, which have allowed us to consider some funding from region to u3as, you will hear more about this soon.

And last but not least, the **Events Sub-committee** led by Cecilia C. and chaired by Kelvin R. Wooler, with help from Malcolm W. and the many temporary Working Group members who have helped out with events in the locality of their u3as, Pat M, Stockton; Alexa R, Newcastle; and Pauline P. Washington Village.

So, thank you all, and my thoughts will be with you in the years to come.

As there have only been seven of us involved, with Sandi Rickerby as our Trustee for the NE, the team on the ground (actually almost totally on-line during this panicky pandemicky time) has been extremely lucky to have had so many willing (i.e. press-ganged and frog-marched) volunteers to help out with the short term working groups. We definitely could not have achieved so much without them.

Thanks are due to you all.

Hopefully more people will be offering their help with the new Working Groups which are being set up in the coming months.

Watch out for your chance to give it a go, consider taking part in a Committee Forum - use your expertise in events to help out new committee members. If you're a walker, join in with planning the event – "u3a walks the walls ", which will be taking place in September, as part of the celebrations of 1900 years of Hadrian's Wall and 40 years of u3a. Join in with one of the regional outings or events such as the Amazing Arbeia day which in spite of the rather chilly and damp weather, was most successful.

Thanks for all the support that so many people have given me over my time on the Regional Committee, and although I won't be on the committee, I am going to continue to volunteer in the region and in particular help out with the Networks, so I hope to see you fairly soon, if not in person in a hall or a room then perhaps as a smiling face on my screen in a Zoom.

Goodbye for now.

Mo Brown, Wooler and Newcastle u3as



## **Mo Brown, retiring Northumbria u3a Chair – an appreciation**

I have not known Mo Brown for as many years as lots of other u3a members have. But I recognise a dedicated, skilled and knowledgeable volunteer when I see one!

During the last three years, as Northumbria u3a Chair, Mo has had to deal with more challenges than most ... huge changes in people at local, regional and UK levels - the requirements of amended constitutions - the emergence of more and stronger informal and formal u3a Networks - the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (with dramatic effects on membership and meetings) - and, more recently, the growing 'cost of living crisis'.

However, Mo can look back on her time as Northumbria u3a Chair with pride and satisfaction: the development and continuity of a determined, resilient and talented group of Northumbria u3a Trustees - the launch and growth of Working Groups, involving an impressive number of individual u3a members (in short-term focused task and finish initiatives) - the success in persuading whoever that Northumbria u3a should be the first formal Network in the UK to pilot Beacon - the creation of a Northumbria u3a Communications Team to streamline and improve material distributed to u3as, the continuation of Northumbria u3a Quarterly Meetings (introducing Zoom and hybrid gatherings and, in April 2022, re-introducing a face-to-face meeting at a new venue, the Sunnyside Club) - the relaunch of a Northumbria u3a Events Sub-Committee (which, in the first three events organised, has attracted almost two hundred u3a members from across the region to Newcastle, Stockton and South Shields).

Of course, Mo would insist that these and other successes have been due to the constant enthusiasm of a wide range and large number of u3a members. But, in Mo Brown, members of Northumbria u3a recognise skilled leadership, motivating management and effective delegation.

Thank you, Mo.

Kelvin Rushworth – Wooler u3a

## Festival of Minerva

### County Durham – City of Culture Bid.

County Durham has been shortlisted in the competition to decide the UK City of Culture 2025. Many of you may have visited our local Hardwick Park or Hardwick Hall Hotel, and Sedgefield and District U3A were delighted to be invited to take part in an awe-inspiring art and sound installation in the park over the weekend of 19<sup>th</sup> March which is to be included in the final bid.

Ed Carter, a north-eastern composer and interdisciplinary artist, produced a site-wide display centred around the Temple of Minerva and using the park's picturesque backdrops and dynamic history. This Festival of Minerva, named after the ancient Roman Festival which took place on 19<sup>th</sup> March each year, showcased a variety of pop-up installations of visual and sound artworks as well as live performances dotted about the park and culminated in a spectacular firework display later in the evening.

Visitors to the performance were greeted by a display in the Visitors' Centre of large scale artworks inspired by Hardwick Park and produced by members of our very own **Photography and the Scribes Interest Groups**. Although perhaps one of the smaller groups in the area we are very proud of our members' positivity, community interest and general pro-activity. Especially as this is our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year, we were delighted to be asked to take part in this important regional event and acknowledged as worthy participants.



As a sub-site to the Durham Book Festival, one of the oldest Literacy festivals in the country, Sedgefield holds our own Book Fest during October. Our **u3a Scribes (Creative Writing Group)** usually hosts a couple of workshops and members support other visitors and guest speakers, etc. We look forward to another successful event this year and to further supporting, what we hope will be, a successful bid by County Durham for City of Culture 2025.

Christine Balfour – Sedgefield and District u3a

### **My Time in Mariupol.**



I am getting more and more distressed with the situation in Mariupol. I worked in that city for 26 weeks during 1999 and 2000. Whilst it was never a “beautiful” city it did have a certain charm. The infrastructure, at that time, was poor and the accommodation was, mainly, in Soviet-style tower blocks where the lifts would only work spasmodically. One lady, who taught English at the local university, invited us to tea one day. She met us at the corner of her street and apologised saying that she lived on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor but the lift had not worked for 5 years.

There are several things that constantly spring to mind.

1. The air quality varied considerably and was dependent on the direction of the wind. Why? – because there were two steel works in the city which regularly spewed out orange coloured acid smoke. With an adverse wind breathing was not pleasant although it was compulsory!
2. Electricity and water were often in short supply. The flats we stayed in were subject to “district heating” which was a bit of an euphemism.
3. Food was not a commodity that was readily available and was often in short supply. We once ran out of milk and the local shop would not sell the only carton they had in the fridge because it was not “of a high enough quality”. Eating out was sometimes a challenge. On one occasion when our paymasters visited from Brussels they ordered soup (borscht – normally delicious) and, after an hour of waiting, they were told that they did not have any soup. On another occasion the “restaurant” called Beer Maxims had many beer pumps but no beer so our driver went out to the

local kiosk and bought a couple of dozen bottles. The stall-holder must have thought it was his/her birthday!

4. Many a time when we had been out for the evening, we would get a taxi back to our flat. On a number of occasions, we were asked to pay the fare before we got back so the driver could buy some petrol to get us there!
5. This was not a prosperous city. In the middle of winter when the temperature would be several degrees below zero you would find little old ladies on most street corners trying to sell you cigarettes singly or any quantity above that. There would be half-a-dozen sellers on each corner. If they were lucky there may be a brazier nearby.
6. In the summer it could be gloriously warm up to 30°C whereas in the winter the Azov Sea froze over at a chilly minus 20°C. It was a dry, windless cold so it did not feel too bad so long as one was wrapped up. My fur hat was a bonus!

Although the above comments are largely negative, I do have some great memories. The people were sometimes a little wary of us. After all, it was only 8 or so years after glasnost and there was at least one ex-KGB man working in the company.

The company was the local water company. The first phase of our work was to improve the operation of the supply and distribution of water. Coupled with that was the requirement to source and implement computerised accounting systems, the latter being my job. Because everyone spoke Russian, we had interpreters which, inevitably, caused long delays in getting answers to questions. The Russian language seems to take multiple words to translate from English but very few words in English to get the answers! The people were great with no apparent bias towards Russia but, then, we did not get into many lengthy discussions on politics. On nearly every occasion when we visited a restaurant someone would ask us to join their party so they could practise their English. Of course, then the vodka flowed.

I have many, many very positive and happy memories of working in Mariupol which included visiting the theatre which was recently bombed. We are still in touch with Vadim and Lisa, our interpreter and his wife who was our office manager, though, fortunately, they have managed to get out of Mariupol. I often wonder if the various buildings we occupied are still standing. I suspect not.

Mike Wallace – Newcastle u3a

## Footnote to the Falklands War 40th Anniversary of the Falklands war -1982



At the time of the war, I was working in the veterinary laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture in Newcastle. Sheep are of great importance to the Falklands economy, as is seen on their flag.

The British Government provided one veterinary surgeon, Stephen Whitley, who was responsible for the welfare of farm livestock in the Falklands. He arranged for serum samples from sheep to be collected and sent to us for analysis. The Newcastle laboratory had developed a test to analyse blood samples from cattle and sheep to assess their cobalt status. Deficiency of trace elements such as cobalt can cause disease in grazing livestock. We received occasional parcels sent by sea and often a few vials were broken. These consignments felt as exotic as moon dust. I imagined the farmers reading our results and treating their sheep if necessary.

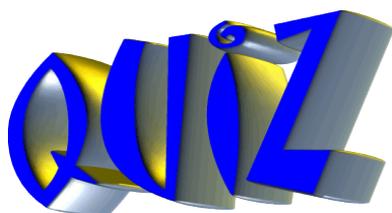
We hardly knew where the Falklands were. Was that somewhere that Charles Darwin had visited while on his way to South America? At first, the invasion seemed like a time shift to Napoleonic battles with France replaced by the Argentinians. But soon the picture darkened as we heard about casualties and the occupation of Port Stanley.

During the Argentinian invasion Steve found his instrument for castrating bulls was useful in sabotaging telephone lines. Steve was married to Sue, who was pregnant. Originally from Llandrindod Wells, she had settled in the Falklands and was a teacher. One night in June, Steve and Sue were sheltering in his house in Port Stanley along with neighbours when the building was shelled by the British frigate HMS Avenger. The intended target was probably the house next door which had been occupied by Argentinians.

The naval bombardment was in preparation for British troops landing the next day. Among the deaths from the war were three civilians, all local women. Sue Whitley was one of them. Steve was injured and was rescued by the same crew that had shot at him. Later, back in Britain, Steve was awarded a MBE for his part in the Falklands War.

Janet Devoy – Newcastle u3a

## South Durham u3a Inter-u3a General Knowledge Quiz



We are pleased to announce that our inter-u3a general knowledge quiz will return in 2022. We are holding our quiz on the afternoon of Wednesday 22 June at 1:45, arrival time from 1:15, venue Hurworth Grange, Darlington.

Our last quiz in 2019 was a huge success and I am sure that this time will be even better.

Teams will be a maximum of 6 people although of course can be fewer. Please confirm you would like to participate as first come first served.

The cost will be £2.00 per person to include tea/coffee and biscuits. Payment details to follow.

On receipt of your confirmation that you will be sending a team full information will be provided.

Please contact Debbie Hardy at [dahardy@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dahardy@hotmail.co.uk)

We look forward to hearing from you.

Debbie Hardy - Secretary, South Durham u3a

### Tolerance

The various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher, as equally false; and by the magistrate, as equally useful. And thus toleration, produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.

Edward Gibbon

1737 - 1794

**A Regional Event was held at the Roman Fort Arbeia,  
South Shields on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022.**



This event is just one of the Regional Events being held throughout the year celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of u3a. It was also in recognition of the 1900<sup>th</sup> year since Hadrian's Wall was built.

Over 50 u3a members attended from all over the Region, including 3 members from Wickham and District u3a.

a) There was a guided tour of the Roman Fort by an experienced guide.



b) Handling Roman artefacts in the reconstructed Commanding Officer's house. This blue glass vase could have held cremated ashes.

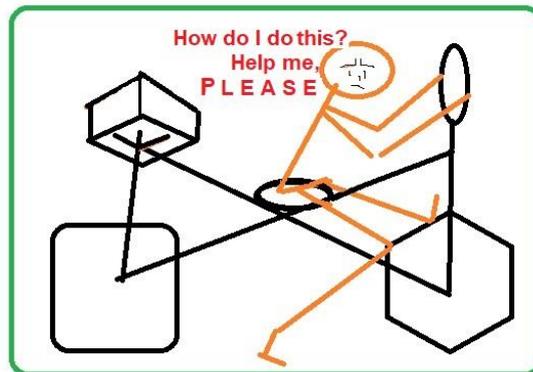
c) Hamish, one of our u3a members experimenting with a set of Roman teeth.

d) Watching a video of the history of Arbeia. Its name is thought to derive from "the place of the Arabs", after a unit of Tigris bargemen.



Cecilia Coulson - Wickham and District u3a

## Why Re-invent the Wheel?



### **New Committee Member?**

What do you want to know about? What would you like help with?

Remember you can always ask the Regional Committee in confidence, who all have lots of committee experience - go on the website - send in your query...?

Link to Committee page:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria/page/56744>

or ask a Regional Volunteer at:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria/page/77430>

### **Been on Committee for ages?**

What would you share with a new trustee that would be of most use to them while they are on Committee?

Send me a list of them if you have more than one...!  
Hilarious or otherwise.

Send to Mo at < [nru3a.events@gmail.com](mailto:nru3a.events@gmail.com) >



u3a  
40th Anniversary



### Calling all publicity enthusiasts

With around 10,000 u3a members across the region, it really is surprising that all of us still meet people who have never heard of our great organisation. Continuously, but especially in the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year of the birth of the u3a movement, each of us needs to raise the profile of u3a. Now is not the time to hide our light under a bushel!

I have been thrilled that an increasing number of u3as have appointed a dedicated Publicity Officer or, at least, asked one of the Trustees to publicise their activities.

So far, I know about dedicated Publicity Officers in u3as in Mid-Northumberland, Whitley Bay, Sedgfield, Stockton, Coquetdale, Saltburn, Berwick, Tynedale, Washington Village, Teesdale, Alnwick ... and me, in Wooler!

If there other u3a Publicity Officers out there, please let me know.  
In anticipation, many thanks.

### MPs and Peers

At UK level, I have just been appointed as u3a All-Party Parliamentary Group Champion (!). If your u3a has had any contact with either MPs or Peers, I would be grateful if you could let me know – just the name and a little detail about the contact.



For example, I know that Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson has spoken to monthly meetings at u3as in Middlesbrough and Stockton and I know that my own MP (Anne-Marie Trevelyan) receives the u3a Wooler e-bulletin every quarter. I look forward to hearing from you!

Kelvin Rushworth, Public Relations Adviser (North East England)  
kelvinregnat@outlook.com

When planning for a year, plant corn,  
When planning for a decade, plant trees,  
When planning for life, train and educate people.

Chinese Proverb

## Online Creative Writing Group

### **NEW ONLINE WRITING GROUP FOR NORTHUMBRIA**

A regional online creative writing group set up during the pandemic attracted new members in the area to u3a.

Northumbria Regional Creative Words was advertised on the regional website, attracting interest from outside the u3a. Some members who joined the group went on to join their local u3a.

The group consists of enthusiastic creative writers whose abilities range from those who have had books published to complete beginners.

### **BARNSELEY u3a TEAMS UP**

**Words** has found fame in the latest edition of TAM - February 2022.

The Group meet on Zoom and have done so since February 2021. We will continue to meet on Zoom because members are from Alnwick u3a to Saltburn u3a and in between.

However, for a change it's been decided to have a face to face meeting.

The Group are inviting any creative writers and anybody interested within u3a Northumbria Region to join us on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

Meet at the **River View Bar and Kitchen, 3 Mill Dam, South Shields 12.30 for a meal.**

**A 3 minute walk from the River View takes us to 'THE WORD' for 2.30pm.** 'The Word' is the National Centre for the Written Word. An exhibition called 'Our Words' is being held. It explores what it means to be northern, through conversations and words/ dialect. Katy Milne, Cultural Programme Officer at 'The Word' is adding that personal touch, showing us around the exhibition.

For further information contact Group Leader Cecilia Coulson [cecu3a@gmail.com](mailto:cecu3a@gmail.com) or 0191 4148535 / 07881768301

Some books are to be tasted,  
others to be swallowed  
and some few to be chewed and digested.

Old saying

## Northumbria u3a Events

The Northumbria u3a Events Sub-Committee is thrilled that almost two hundred u3a members have supported and enjoyed their first three events.



**u3a Takeover Day** at the Great North Museum in Newcastle has been mentioned in a previous edition of The Messenger. There is enthusiasm for repeating the event, maybe in 2023 or 2024, with a choice of slightly different activities.

Behind the Seams at **Preston Park Museum** in Stockton was incredible. Over eighty-five u3a members almost filled the venue! Although the exhibition of costumes from major films and TV programmes was small, it was spectacular. For many, it brought back happy and poignant memories.



**Amazing Arbeia** lived up to the title, despite the challenging weather at the exposed South Shields site of the Roman Fort. At least, u3a members could sympathise with the Roman soldiers recruited from Mediterranean countries who must have been shocked by the cold winds from the North Sea in Britannia.

Currently, I hope that enthusiastic u3a photographers are capturing images of their u3a members laughing and learning together. The closing date for submissions to the **Creativity and Wellbeing Week** competition is 22 May 2022.

A newly confirmed event is a Talk and Tour by Head Gardener Yvonne Hartnett at the restored and recently reopened **Kirkleatham Walled Garden** (near Redcar) on Thursday 30 June 2022. Watch out for further details!

Also, plans are well advanced for a **Creativity Taster Day** on Thursday 21 July 2022 at the wonderful Bensham Grove Community Learning Centre in Gateshead with opportunities for six different activity sessions and a further three drop-in sessions. Again, more information coming soon.



Later in the year, there will be an event in **Bamburgh** celebrating the life and commemorating the death of Grace Darling (the latter, 180 years ago in 2022) and at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle to join in the excitement of the return of the **Lindisfarne Gospels**.

Kelvin Rushworth – Wooler u3a  
Northumbria u3a Events Sub-Committee Chair

### **Groups coordinators network**

The Northumbria Region network of groups coordinators (or their representative) meets every few weeks via Zoom. It's for discussion of anything groups-related, and we cover all kinds of issues, large and small, raised by those who attend the meeting, with other participants exchanging suggestions or reporting on things they've tried, and with words of advice or caution contributed by the Trust Volunteer and/or Regional Trustee to keep us on the rails.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 11th May at 9.45 for 10am. If you're not already on the mailing list, please contact Kathy at [u3a.prudhoe@gmail.com](mailto:u3a.prudhoe@gmail.com) to receive the necessary Zoom invitation. You'd be very welcome. Or if you're not your u3a's Groups Coordinator and you think they may not know about this, please tell them!

Kathy Clegg – Prudhoe u3a

## Working Groups

Working Groups have become popular with many u3as because

- Need only a SHORT TERM commitment from those who join in
- no spending power and no decision-making responsibility
- no requirement to become a trustee
- they save time for the main committee



**To be held over Zoom, live or hybrid – The point of the Working Group is to discuss what, where, when, why, how and who and then recommend to Committee their best thoughts. Further actions would take place based on the committee's decisions after looking at these recommendations.**

### Current opportunities about to take place:

Be involved in areas regarding:

1. Setting up Facebook (e.g. adverts, is that the best way?) to announce Events and meetings to be held by Region
2. Beacon Finance help, Zooming with Treasurers for non-ex-accountant Treasurers
3. Set up a Forum on Committee Work-  
e.g. this could involve setting up a workshop to invite all ex-chairs of every u3a, to discuss what might come out of it.

It is so important to benefit from the knowledge that chairs and other officers have accumulated over their time on committees, and see how it can be used to help new chairs.

See Your starter for 10 in - Why re-invent the wheel...?

4. Regional Policies, Procedures and Three Year Plan to update
5. Funding from Region – how and who to?
6. Cross-border links with N Yorks & Humber and Scotland
7. u3a Walks the Walls - **Helping out with the planning and organisation of the event:**

If you have already been involved in one working group and would like to take part in any of these, or if you would like to take a turn to see how it goes, let me know, and I'll tell you more.

Contact me on [u3a.mo@btinternet.com](mailto:u3a.mo@btinternet.com)

Mrs. Mo Brown, Retiring Chair Northumbria Region

### **S.E. Northumberland and the Coast Chairs' and Business Secretaries' Network**

Want help solving that problem? Would you like to learn about the latest workshops and events for chairs and business secretaries? Want to gain more knowledge about running your u3a? Then, come along to a meeting. Learn from other members as well as share your own good practice. You will be very welcome. Vice chairs and members considering a chair's or business secretary's role are also welcome.

At the moment and during the pandemic meetings have been held using Zoom.

If you want to learn more or have a chat about the group, please contact Catherine Stevenson, [newcastleu3a@hotmail.com](mailto:newcastleu3a@hotmail.com)

### **The Treasurers' Network**

The treasurers have been extremely supportive of each other and new members to the group. There is a wide range of discussions about all things concerning u3a finances and several members provided their top 5 tips for new treasurers. Meetings are informative and offer practical solutions to problems. Come along to a meeting to learn about the latest information for treasurers and share good practice. Assistant treasurers and members thinking about being treasurers are also welcome

Meetings are usually held using Zoom

If you want to learn more or have a chat, please contact Catherine Stevenson, [newcastleu3a@hotmail.com](mailto:newcastleu3a@hotmail.com)



# Northumbria Healthcare

## NHS Foundation Trust

### Become the heartbeat of your local NHS

As a u3a member you may be interested in also joining Northumbria Healthcare as a member. Being a member will give you the opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas about the way the trust deliver care to over half a million people across Northumberland and North Tyneside whilst learning a bit more about what the trust does. Northumbria Healthcare are a very forward thinking organisation, twice rated outstanding by the CQC and at the forefront of pioneering changes in the NHS. Looking forward, we are really keen to impact on the lives of everyone who lives and works in the area and tackle health inequalities. Our Community Promise, launched in 2021, is based on six key pillars which relate to the wider factors that fuel health inequalities – poverty, employment, education, economy, environment, wellbeing. You can read more about our promise and what we are doing to help the population live well for longer [here](#).

Membership is open to anybody aged 12 and over and you can be involved as much or as little as you like. As a member you will be informed about trust work, invited to events to learn about the NHS, vote for and be able to stand as a governor as well as benefit from NHS discounts in shops and online at [www.healthservicediscounts.com](http://www.healthservicediscounts.com) . It is free to become a member and you can opt out at any time. If you would like to join you can sign up online at <https://www.northumbria.nhs.uk/get-involved/join-our-our-foundation-trust/become-a-member/> or scan the QR code below.



<b>Regional Committee April 2021 - 2022</b>	
Chair	Mo BROWN, Wooler (Retiring AGM 2022)
Vice Chairman	Cecilia COULSON, Whickham and District (Chair designate)
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
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>

To receive this magazine by email you need to be on the regional distribution list – send your request to receive all regional communications directly by email to:

[northumbriau3a@gmail.com](mailto:northumbriau3a@gmail.com)

If you want to stop getting the regional emails, please send a request to the same email address.

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 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Thank you.