

Northumbria Region u3a
The Messenger
Newsletter – Magazine for March 2023



Northumbria Region u3a Creative Writers

Words are like chameleons, which reflect,
the colour of their environment.

Learned Hand
American Judge.

Chair's Report

You might have noticed that this time 'The Messenger' is a wee bit late arriving on the Region's website. It was decided by the Regional Committee that since The Messenger is no longer a hard copy then it's not necessary for it to be printed and handed out at the Regional Quarterly Meetings. The Messenger is now to be brought out in between Regional Quarterly Meetings, so all u3a members can receive a report on the past and future meetings.

The January Regional Quarterly Meeting was held on Zoom. This was so Allan Walmsley, Vice Chair of The Third Age Trust could present an overview of the ongoing strategy called Fit for the Future. To see a YouTube presentation by Allan Walmsley go to the National website <https://www.u3a.org.uk/news/fit-for-the-future>

An introduction to VOICE and the Internet of Caring Things Programme was presented by Catherine Butcher, Community Manager for VOICE. This programme is a major UK government initiative to facilitate the commercialisation of key products and services and technologies that increase and enhance healthy life years.

The Region's 2023 AGM is to be held at The Angel View Hotel, Gateshead on Wednesday April 26th 2023. All details for this meeting are gradually being rolled out on the Region's website. A workshop on Succession Planning will be presented.

Over the past few months, the Committee have been working very hard behind the scenes. A 3 year plan for 2023-2026 has been produced and ratified. It can be found at [u3a: Northumbria Region U3A: Committee etc. \(u3asites.org.uk\)](https://u3a.org.uk/northumbria-region/u3a-committee) The plan will be on the Committee's agenda every month, giving us a framework to work to.

Regional Committee Members and Regional Support Volunteers (originally called Trust Volunteers) have joined forces and are working together to visit as many u3as and Networks as possible. The new name is the Regional Support Team. In the past nine months thirteen u3as and Networks have been visited, to say, 'Hello' either face to face or on Zoom. More visits are in the diary. If your u3a would like a visit please contact Cecilia Coulson cecu3a@gmail.com – and this can be arranged.

The first Regional Support joint meeting was held early January. Workshops, Shared Learning Projects, Study Events and much more were discussed.

It is with some sadness that a few u3as over the past months have dissolved, mainly due to lack of Committee Officers. However, some u3as have decided to merge, creating a new vibrant charity. The Regional Support Volunteers have been supporting these u3as in whatever manner is required.

If you are interested in organising events, workshops, study days, supporting all u3as in the Region, you would be made very welcome. The majority of the Regional Support Team Meetings are on Zoom. Please contact Cecilia Coulson cecu3a@gmail.com if you wish to join our merry band.

Cecilia Coulson

u3a writers group meet Lindisfarne sheep!

The Blyth based U3A creative writing group have been up close and cosy with the recently famed Lindisfarne sheep!



The group, now established for 14 months, meets on the second Monday of every month, 10-12.30 at Blyth library. The flexible agenda can vary from reviewing each others 'assignments' of short stories, poems, letters, or potential magazine/newspaper articles on agreed topics, always with the opportunity to write on a subject of individual

choice as our heart and interest stirs us! Skills and writing experience are shared with the emphasis on learning through group fellowship.

To augment the Lindisfarne Gospels exhibition at the Laing art Gallery in Newcastle, thirty illuminated sheep had been designed by Deepa Mann-Kler to create an art trail to encourage public exploration of Northumberland and its

monastic heritage. Blyth library were offered one of the sheep for temporary display. Inspired, the library opened up the opportunity for writing group members to pen odes to the sheep to compliment the display. The challenge proved irresistible, resulting in several odes which celebrated the sheep characteristics, the life of the sheep and their role in providing for the monks and present day consumers alike! To create conversation is one aspiration of art and this project certainly did just that amongst our avid scribes, with much fun into the bargain! We were both honoured and proud to contribute to such a pleasing window display for our community.

Janet Kennedy - Blyth u3a

WANTED

Public Relations Advisor

As most readers will appreciate, since I moved to Keswick last August, there has been no Public Relations Adviser in our region. This is a huge gap - all of the other regions and nations have appointed someone to the UK Team, which meets monthly - our North East England Publicity Officers Network (via the PRA) has no regular feedback from or input into 'communications and policy' plans and discussions at UK level.

Could you or one of your members be persuaded to take on the role?!

I would be happy to send the PRA role description (although it does make for daunting reading and PRAs are only expected to do what they can do). If you or one of your members are in the least bit interested, I could put you in touch with the PRA Team Lead, Chris Winner.

Please think about it.

As ever, our region was a pioneer - North East England appointed the first ever u3a-UK PRA.

But now, we have no-one!

Kelvin Rushworth, Former North East England Public Relations Adviser

'Off The Wall' -Festival of Learning.



On 10 May 2023, u3a members will meet together at 'The Sill' for talks from Dr Rob Collins, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at Newcastle University and Dr Andrew Birley, CEO & Director of Excavations at The Vindolanda Trust.

There will also be guided tours of Vindolanda and fringe activities all day – including charcoal landscape drawing, ecology, Roman food, creative writing and much more.

In the week leading up to 10 May, there will be a series of free online activities to take part in.

Further information and registration is found by clicking on the link 'Off The Wall - Festival of Learning' [u3a - Off the Wall](#)

The Sill – This place is close to Hadrian's Wall it holds exhibitions, has wonderful views from the rooftop walk and a cafe

Northallerton Strollers

We started this group in 2022 when Susan and I thought it would be a good idea for those not wanting to or not able to do some of the organised walks. The idea was to visit places of interest within easy travelling distance and combine it where possible with a stroll. Our first idea was to call it Trips and Stroll but thought it would not auger well for the group.



Ripon

We have had some interesting visits, to the Ripon Canal and Cathedral, Harrogate Harlow Carr Gardens, Salt Mills in Saltaire, Beamish and many other National Trust and English Heritage sites. However, as winter was approaching this year we decided to stay local and are planning to visit, the Herriot Museum in March.

For our November trip we really did stay local and planned a walk around our town. Using the green plaques to guide us, I planned a route and with four guides, 20 members joined us to learn some of the history of Northallerton. Some members were new to the area, but others like me who have lived in Northallerton for many years, learnt all about

how Northallerton developed over the years. The reason that Northallerton developed as the county town of North Yorkshire was because of its central position on the Post Road from London to Edinburgh and the junction from the Dales to Teesside. The walk took two hours and then we retired to Barker's upstairs café where tables were reserved for our lunch.

If any other u3a members are visiting Northallerton and would like to follow our walk it has now been posted on our website below:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/northallerton/groups>

Sheila Middleton – Northallerton u3a

The Lindisfarne Gospels: 20c impressions of an ancient artefact.

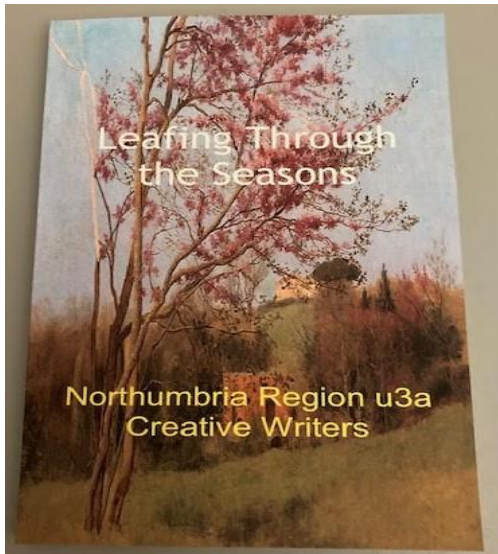
Many of you may have been to the Lindisfarne exhibition at the Laing or intend to visit. I went with a Newcastle u3a group. In this exhibition review, I wish to acknowledge the hard work and dedication that created this beautiful, intricate book.

The exhibition spanned three rooms. The first room was video animation, covering two vast walls. With commentary, it placed the gospels historically and geographically. The second room had real stone crosses from around this area that are of a similar period to the Gospels. This room also had the Gospels themselves. The borders of each page were intricate and colourful. The dyes used came from the Mediterranean, the middle east, as well as Britain. There were local flowers, plants, insects, birds, and animals depicted. These reminded me of the strong connection pagans had to nature and us today, as we appreciate and treasure our natural environment. The third room contained artwork from more recent centuries. They depicted the spiritual side of life as experienced by various artists of all world religions. Like the Gospels, the works translated the universal, invisible aspects of the spiritual dimensions of life into visual form.

The exhibition was well worth a visit. It can be appreciated as a welcome respite from the mundane, into, gentler, ethereal dimensions. If you went on a weekday morning or evening it costs no more than another great gift of life, a sticky bun and a coffee!

Juliet Breschinsky – Newcastle u3a

Northumbria Region u3a Creative Writers.



In January 2023 NRCW published their first ever book. It is called 'Leafing Through the Seasons'

All money raised from this adventure will be ploughed back into the continued learning of u3a. A full day Creative Writing workshop will be organised in 2023 for all u3a members throughout the Region.

To see more about the book and purchase a copy please click on [Northumbria Region u3a Creative Writing Group Publish for First](#)

[Time - u3a Sources](#) This article was in the January National Newsletter

Members of Northumbria Region u3a Creative Writers and guests from Newcastle u3a Creative Writers visited the Lit n Phil in Newcastle in January 2023. A guided tour was arranged, given by Margaret Bozic a Lit n Phil tour guide, but also a member of Cestria u3a. After an excellent tour all those attending went for a meal at Portofino's in Newcastle. Portofino's building is grade II listed and was built in 1891. It was one of 27 branches of the Prudential Assurance Company, all of which were designed by prolific 19th century architect Alfred Waterhouse. Alfred Waterhouse also designed the Natural History Museum in London and many other government, educational and commercial buildings, across the UK.



The NRCW meet monthly on Zoom, with the occasional social and learning event. If anybody would like any further information, please contact Cecilia on cecu3a@gmail.com

Painting with Light

It is said that early photographers were no more than failed artists. This fact I am not entirely sure about but one thing I am positive about is that the most important and fundamental element in both art forms is light.



Even the word photography tells us this as it is formed by joining the two Greek words for light and drawing. Just as painters brush paint onto canvas photographers paint an image by capturing light particles (photons) on to a light sensitive medium (film or digital sensor). Without light not a single picture could ever be taken.



An eye for light and perfectly handled work with natural and artificial light sources are the key prerequisites for a good photograph. The correct lighting will lift a dull photograph up out of the average, while a badly lit photograph no matter how beautiful will never impress.



A landscape photographer will visit a site on multiple occasions until the light he requires is correct at the scene. The best light is said to be during the “Golden Hours” which are 1 hour before sunrise and 1 hour before sunset, but even these times are not definitive as bad weather can prove. However, if the weather is good and cloud conditions right, the light is usually exceptionally good. I do hope I have not given the impression that glowing sunsets and sunrises are the norm as they are certainly not. Monochrome (black and white) photographs with the correct lighting can create fiercely evocative images especially with portraiture. A photograph is two dimensional but with the correct lighting can give a three-dimensional appearance. You must learn to see and control the light both natural and artificial as this is the only way to create truly beautiful photographic images that are not merely dull records of reality. I love painting with light

If any of the readers are interested in learning photographic skills, I would suggest taking a trip to your local photographic group where I am sure you will be given all kinds of helpful advice and perhaps a little that is not so helpful, but remember, your thoughts on your images are the only ones that really count.

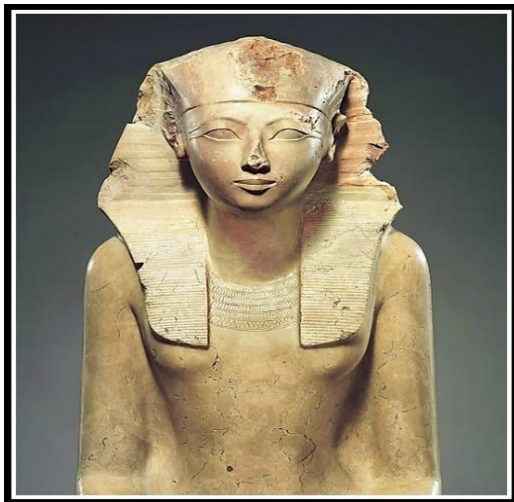
Harry Brenkley – Seaham and District u3a

Visions of Ancient Egypt

The arts group from Sunderland u3a arranged to meet in the café of the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. Yes, some of us even had a bite to eat; well, it was cold and it had been raining but we thought it wise not count the calories.

We paid the concessionary price for our tickets and a few of us went up in the lift to the first floor and thought the lift had malfunctioned as the doors we entered the lift by did not open until it was pointed out to us by a lady waiting to go down that there were two sets of doors to the lift. We will remember for next time.

Our tickets were checked as we went in and the gentleman realised the staff issuing the tickets had stamped them 1st February instead of 1st March although that did not stop us being allowed into the exhibition.



Once inside it was a question of which way should we go, and we all chose our own route.

One room contained several busts and objects including copies of a stool and chair. There was even an Egyptian rattle. A large painting showed how the sand had almost covered the whole of a temple by the time the explorers arrived which partially explains why the buildings and hieroglyphs are so well preserved. Did you realise that Jean-François Champollion deciphered

the hieroglyphs in 1822?



We could see from the photographs, paintings and writings how ancient Egypt has been portrayed through the ages. Once wealthy gentlemen began taking the Grand Tour and saw these places the paintings become more realistic.

There were some exquisite jewellery and costumes. One modern dress fabric used Egyptian designs. I for one did not

realise that Howard Carter was an accomplished painter his brush strokes and use of colour brought the paintings to life.

At one point we could see a stylised ancient bust of a pharaoh in neon lighting and the depiction of ancient Egypt in modern art was not to everyone's taste.

We all left wiser and more fascinated than ever by the Egyptians.

Mary Barlow – Sunderland u3a



Northumbria Regional Committee

- 1. A 3 year plan** (2023-2026) has recently been ratified. At every meeting the 3 year plan will be included as an item on the agenda. If you would like to see the plan please click on this link taking you to the Regional website. [regional3yearplan.pdf](https://www.regional3yearplan.pdf) (u3asites.org.uk)
- 2. Kelvin Rushworth** a member of Wooler u3a has offered his resignation as the Chair of the Sub Events Committee. Would anyone consider taking on this role? It's not onerous or time consuming and you'll meet u3a members from around the Region. If you would like further information please contact Kelvin nriaevents@outlook.com or Cecilia cecu3a@gmail.com
- 3.** The Committee are hoping to ascertain if any **equipment is 'on loan'** to individual u3as. If you possess any equipment could you please contact Mary Barlow, Secretary mary.brienz@btinternet.com
- 4. North of the Region Quiz.** There's a plan to organise a quiz with some entertainment for the u3as that are in the northern half of the Region. Details of the event have not been decided, but at the moment it is thought that each u3a would send a quiz team and the event might also include food, music and magic! If you think some of your members would be interested in making a quiz team and attending the event, please email me at robertgpullen@gmail.com

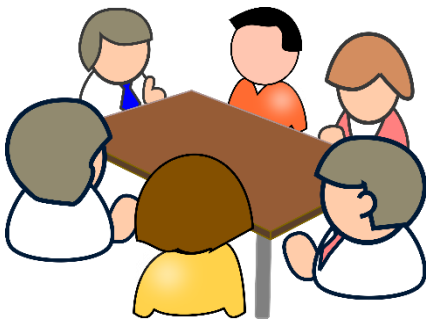


The Regional Support Team

Several months ago, a decision was made by the Regional Trustee, Sandi Rickerby and Northumbria Regional Chair, Cecilia Coulson that all Trust Volunteers, now called Regional Support Volunteers and the members of Northumbria Regional Committee join forces. The roles of both of these groups are very similar i.e. supporting u3as in the Region in many ways, such as trouble shooting when there's a discrepancy between Committee and members, organising social and learning events, Regional Quarterly Meetings, workshops, providing advice in the running of their u3a, including National advice. This team is now called the Regional Support Team. There are 14 members in the team. If the team are to implement, in its entirety the 2023 -2026 3 year plan, please click on link [u3a: Northumbria Region U3A: Committee etc. \(u3asites.org.uk\)](https://u3asites.org.uk) more members will be required and be made very welcome to assist in any way. YOUR SKILLS ARE VALUED.

You don't have to become a Trustee of the Northumbria Region u3a Committee. Your expertise and advice in any form would be appreciated. If you would like to have a chat about this new adventure, please contact Cecilia cecu3a@gmail.com

Groups Coordinators' Network



The next meeting of the Northumbria Groups Coordinators' Network will be on Thursday 30th March at 1.45 for 2pm, on Zoom.

If you're a Groups Coordinator and haven't been before, why not give it a try? Everyone finds them very useful. Email Kathy on u3a.prudhoe@gmail.com to receive the Zoom link for the meeting. Or if you can't make the meeting itself, I'm happy to include you on the mailing list to receive the notes from the meeting.

Kathy Clegg – Chair

Recruiting u3a Trustees is not a panic measure weeks before the AGM!

When I was at Northumbria University Business School majoring in 'Human Resources' on my NHS Middle Management training course, I was told that "induction is not something that happens on your first day, induction is continuous throughout your role, all organisations change and develop - you need to know how to change and develop within them".

Throughout my adventures as an employee and volunteer in small and large voluntary organisations, I have come to realise that the recruitment of Trustees is somewhat similar.

Recruitment of u3a Trustees should be a planned and continuous process and neither something mentioned straight away to a new member nor something that becomes an annual ritual just weeks or days before an AGM!

Two ideas mentioned at the recent Recruitment and Retention Pilot Workshop, organised by the Regional Support Team with u3a Whickham and Prudhoe are ...

A u3a Elder Tree

I subscribe to the e-bulletin from The Elders ([The Elders | Independent global leaders | Ethical Leadership](#)) as I find the whole concept really inspiring.

The Elders were founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007. They are an independent group of global leaders working for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet. At Rotary International Conventions. I was lucky enough to hear Nelson Mandela but, more importantly, meet and talk with former UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon and former President of Ireland Mary Robinson.

In every u3a we have members who have been talented part Trustees and members who have Trustee-transferable skills (even though they might not use them now. We need to capitalise on their skills and talents, not let them go just because they feel that they want a rest, having been there and got the T-shirt.

Get one of your artistic members to draw a large bare tree (winter-like, with no leaves!) – as big as possible, A1 would do. Display the finished tree at one of your Monthly Meetings.

Google "leaf-shaped post-it notes" and buy plenty to use at one of your Monthly Meetings.

Distribute the leaf-shaped post-it notes and ask all of the members present to write down any useful skills and talents, relevant to Trusteeship, that they would be prepared to share with potential or new Trustees. Subsequently, try and ensure that a few leaves are completed by those key individuals who were not at that meeting.

Stick the completed leaves onto the bare tree, stand back and admire the wealth of talent in your u3a!

Over coffee, let everyone have a look at the tree, now that it is covered in leaves - Spring has sprung!

A u3a Galaxy

I know nothing about planets, asteroids, moons, the universe etc but I do know that a galaxy is a collection of stars!

From my activities as a Regional Support Team member and the former North East England Public Relations Adviser. I know also that every u3a is a collection of stars.

Find a large notice board to use at one of your Monthly Meetings.
Google "star-shaped post-it notes" and buy plenty to use at one of your Monthly Meetings.

(Just so you know, I am not a "Post-it notes representative" nor am I on commission to "Post-it", dependant on increased sales).

Distribute the star-shaped post-it notes and ask all of the members present to write down anything that they excel at, any kind of talent or skill that they are well-known for, anything about them that their relatives admire.


Subsequently, try and ensure that a few stars are completed by those key individuals who were not at that meeting.

Stick the completed stars onto the notice board, stand back and admire your very own u3a Galaxy!

Over coffee, let everyone have a look at the Galaxy, now that it has such a huge collection of stars - u3a members are shining lights!

Kelvin Rushworth, u3a Wooler
Regional Support Team member

South East Northumberland Chairs' and Business Secretaries' Network

Looking for new ideas?  Need to recruit? Worried about a situation?



Then come along to a South East Northumberland Chairs' and Business Secretaries' Network (peer support group) meeting when members share good practice and help solve problems.

Not in these parts of the region? No problem. Like all u3a groups we welcome members from any part of the region and other regions

Come along and ask your question/s or tell us how you achieved successes with initiatives, recruitment and retention, social media, or other strategies you have used.

Then come to a meeting.

We are always ready to listen to you.



The next meeting is May 2023. Date tba

Contact Catherine Stevenson newcastleu3a@hotmail.com

Northumbria Region u3a Treasurers' Network

This informal network (peer support group) is a great support to treasurers and in their role as trustees. It's open to members considering becoming treasurers from any part of the region or other regions.

There is always lots of information to share and queries to answer by treasurers who have a great deal of knowledge and expertise and from those who don't have quite so much!

Whether you are new to the role, thinking about being a treasurer or have been in the role for some time, come along to a meeting. You'll be made very welcome.

Next meeting is in May 2023, Date tba

Contact Catherine Stevenson newcastleu3a@hotmail.com



Feedback from the Regional Support Team

Following the lively session at the Northumbria u3a Quarterly Meeting in October 2022 in Bowburn

Those u3a members, at the October 2022 Quarterly Meeting of Northumbria u3a in Bowburn, will recall the lively session trying to answer the six searching questions posed by Ann Carr and Mary Barlow.

The North East England Regional Support Team, an amalgamation of u3a Trustee Volunteers and Northumbria u3a Trustees, have been analysing responses to those questions and formulating action plans.

In each edition of The Messenger, progress will be reported which will appear on the Northumbria u3a website as well. Watch this space!

Kelvin Rushworth, North East England Regional Support Team

Regional Committee April 2022 - 2023	
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.

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

<https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria/page/107889>

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 May I please have all contributions for the next edition in Sunday 25th June thank you.