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Message from the Chair

Your committee met via Zoom on the 25 March with two new members in attendance: John Dark as Membership Secretary and Tony Cooke as Events Secretary. A warm welcome to both. The role of Group Liaison Secretary 1 is now vacant but we aim to fill this position as soon as possible. We welcome expressions of interest from members. It is important to have a full committee as we face the challenges of coming out of lockdown.

From 29 March the easing of lockdown begins, enabling some of us to get together in person. I would like to remind you that members are expected to complete a personal assessment form, while convenors are required to complete a risk assessment and return it to their Group Liaison Secretary before they begin group activities.

We propose to provide our own pathway out of lockdown based on government guidance. You will find the information you need in our newsletter and on our website. All stages will be kept under review.

Pathway out of lockdown

29 March

Walking groups can commence without restrictions on numbers. If we had any organised outdoor sporting groups, these would also be allowed to resume.
Groups of up to six people are able to meet together outside.

17 May

Groups of under 30 will be allowed to meet outdoors.

June 21

All groups should be able to return to regular meeting places.

September

We plan to relaunch the association with as much publicity as we can muster.
We hope to return to the Abbey for our monthly meetings.

Wendy Dale

Chair's address at the AGM

In this most unusual year, opportunities to meet have been rare and many of our activities have been disrupted. Yet, when it came to reviewing the year, I found that I have quite a lot to say.

Our last AGM, held in March 2020, was the last time we met in the Abbey. Although attendance was good, the requirement that 20% of the membership be present meant that the meeting was not quorate. As a result, the motion to reduce the quorum to 10% could not be approved at this stage.

We sought advice from the Third Age Trust and learned that in the event of an inquorate AGM, the committee can constitute a quorum to ratify decisions. The committee met on 17 March and agreed that the quorum should be reduced to 10%. This decision was reported in the April newsletter and recorded in the minutes. Both can be accessed from our website.

With lockdown now firmly in place, we had to adapt quickly. Alicia Cresswell, newly appointed Newsletter Editor, recognised the need for a different approach while members were confined to their homes. She expanded the newsletter, introducing themed articles, quizzes and fun items. We are delighted that feedback has been so positive. I would like to thank Alicia for stepping up to the challenge from day one.

Another big change was the introduction of monthly meetings via Zoom. We thank David Pattinson and Barrie Mellars for enabling us to make this timely transition. They explored the integrity of the system and its potential, testing it thoroughly before going live. As Programme Secretary, Barrie took responsibility for all technical aspects as well as the running of the meetings. We do appreciate his contribution. Barrie has also shared his technical know-how with other u3as that have called on him for advice. Iain Moffat was another champion for agreeing to speak at our first Zoom meeting.

Many of our groups embraced Zoom and other media to keep going during the last year. Although this has not been possible for all groups, many are thriving despite the restrictions. The groups are the lifeblood of our organisation, and I want to thank the group convenors and all those who have worked hard to keep the fun and learning going.

Last year we split the role of Group Liaison Secretary to make it more manageable. Margaret Earl and Jane Perona-Wright have worked well together, and I thank them for their contribution.

Margaret and Jane had a strange year because there has been little opportunity to form new groups. Instead, they have been concerned with keeping up to date with changing Covid-19 guidance, ensuring that we are compliant, and keeping members safe. Last year, when it seemed possible to start meeting in public places, they assessed many meeting rooms, and will review their assessment as new guidance becomes available later in the year.

Thank you to our members. Our Membership Secretary, Barbara Herring, was amazed that they were so prompt in renewing their membership last year despite the future of many of our activities being in doubt. Barbara must take credit for having adopted a renewals system that is clear and invites an immediate response. While many u3as lost many members during the year, we only lost the proportion we would expect to lose in a normal year. However, we have been unable to recruit in the usual way and the number of new members is small compared to other years. Thank you, Barbara, for keeping the membership system going, which I know has been frustrating because unreliable internet access.

In October, a new u3a logo was launched and Kevin Stephens, our Publicity Officer and Website Manager, took the opportunity to refresh our website. Although the website has its limitations, Kevin has revived it and given it a new vitality. Thank you too to the group convenors who have supported the changes, and particularly the Photography group, who provided the photos for a small video produced by Kevin.

Kevin Stephens and David Pattinson are working with a national pathfinder project to maximise opportunities to relaunch the u3a and recruit members once lockdown is over. This project has been valuable for the committee to keep an eye on the future. We are aware of the importance of recruitment

to the organisation; in particular, the need for new people to take the organisation forward. I would like to thank Kevin for his work this year, and both Kevin and David for the work they are doing for our future.

I was disappointed that our plans for events and activities during the year were curtailed. I thought we had an interesting programme. Desert Island Discs was an idea to fill the gap, and I am grateful to Barrie Mellars and Mike Worthington, who have taken this idea forward with the castaways who stepped up. Zoom was not built with Desert Island Discs in mind and doing it has not been easy. However, Barrie persisted, always looking for ways to improve. Our Desert Island Discs has a great following, and we have enjoyed the feedback from members. After the April interview, we will take a summer break, then resume in October. We are on the lookout for a few more castaways.

I would like to say a big thank you to the officers of the committee Susan Turnbull, David Pattinson and Alistair Sinclair, who have undertaken the administrative work, keeping the organisation running smoothly. Even in this quiet period there have been plenty of tasks to carry out.

We are losing four of our committee members this year and I will start by paying tribute to Alistair Sinclair.

In July last year, Alistair wrote to us all to let us know that he had decided to stand down as Chair, which I think came as a surprise. He received a huge response from members who felt, as I did, that it was a brave step to take, and one we knew he had taken time to consider. I am pleased that he agreed to stay on the committee while allowing me to front the organisation. I was pleased to do this because in some ways it felt as payback time. Alistair had taken up the reins when Mike Worthington was Chair following his heart attack and covered the period until Mike was able to resume.

Alistair joined the u3a in 2014 and soon after found himself on the committee. He took the role of Treasurer before becoming Chair. Alistair did much of the work associated with the move from Trinity, where we had rooms and held our monthly meetings. This was a difficult time for Tynedale, but we came through it with his help. Alistair's commitment to the organisation, his openness and his integrity make him popular and approachable. He ensured he had a strong committee around him, which enabled him to step down confident in the knowledge that the organisation would continue to grow. He has been able to support me during the last year and has been a valued member of the committee. Thank you, Alistair, for all you have done for our u3a.

Barbara Herring, our Membership Secretary, had hoped to retire last year but in the absence of a replacement, she continued. Barbara joined the u3a in 1995 and has been a vital and active member of Tynedale for the last 25 years. She has in the past been on the committee in several roles, including Chair. Three years ago, she was placed on the u3a role of honour in recognition of all her work locally and regionally. We are pleased she did not give up at this point. Barbara has been a champion, and I know she will continue to support activities when she is able.

In her role as Membership Secretary, Barbara developed a system that maximised the use of the Beacon software and ensured we had accurate data about membership. She has ensured that new members have had the information they needed to participate, and in the past organised welcoming coffee mornings. During the time she has been in this role, the membership has doubled. Thank you, Barbara, for your outstanding contribution over the years.

John Sandiford is a longstanding member who joined in 2009. Although he does not go back quite as far as Barbara, he has, like Barbara, taken different roles on the committee and demonstrated a huge commitment to the organisation. He had the foresight to see the benefits that the use of the Beacon software, which holds all our member data and supports our communication systems and membership renewal, would have for us in Tynedale. We were one of the first 40 associations to go live with the system, and he has championed it ever since.

Although John is stepping down from the committee, he will still play a big support role behind the scenes. Specifically, he will be involved in plans to move to the next version of Beacon, to be implemented in 2022. Thank you, John, from all of us. David Pattinson will be the link between John and the committee.

Finally, I come to Margaret Earl, who has done a brilliant job as Group Liaison Secretary since she took up post in April 2018. We had many groups then and it was a demanding role, but Margaret carried out her responsibilities with great energy and built up more groups. Although Margaret spoke of retiring last year, we persuaded her to continue for another year, sharing the role with Jane Perona-Wright. Margaret has lots of ideas, enthusiasm and vitality and we will be sorry to see her go. Thank you, Margaret, for your hard work and commitment.

Before I conclude my address, I would like to identify some of the work the committee will be focussing on in the year ahead:

1. Developing our own pathway out of lockdown.
2. Relaunching Tynedale u3a to recruit new members and keep the organisation refreshed and alive. We will be developing our profile working alongside the national programme as well as taking up local opportunities.
3. Becoming more inclusive by holding hybrid meetings for members to attend in person or virtually.
4. Improving the induction for group convenors and committee members.

We will also be open to members' suggestions.

Wendy Dale

New membership renewal date

The **renewal date for membership subscriptions** has changed from 1 April to **1 September**. This change gives members a six-month extension to their membership free of charge. We will send you a renewal reminder nearer the time. If you pay by standing order, please change the payment date to 1 September.

Thank you

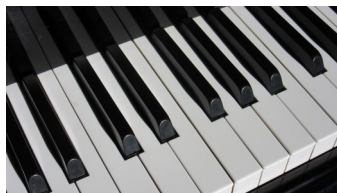
David Pattinson

Monthly meeting online, Tuesday 6 April 2021 at 2pm

Topic: Not Father O'Malley

Speaker: Roger Browne

Unlike Roger's other talks, "Not Father O'Malley" is not directly about music; nevertheless, as it traces his childhood in wartime and post-war Salford, it inevitably features the music that he heard and enjoyed in his beloved home city from a very early age. Music which led to him singing in public from the age of three, recording "Come back to Sorrento" at the age of four, and teaching himself to play the piano at the age of five.



Not Father O'Malley takes a hilarious look at what it was like to be brought up in a city blitzed in the war, ravaged by poverty and floods, and strangled by overcrowded and inadequate housing.

He talks with great warmth about how, in spite of what post-war Salfordians had to cope with, his greatest memories are of love, kindness, compassion, humanity and, above all, humour. Lots and lots of humour.

He relates the consequences of being brought up as a Roman Catholic, in Catholic Schools, attending Catholic Mass, but falling short of what his teachers and his parish priest expected of him by, horror of horror, becoming a Manchester City fan.

As with all of his talks, Roger illustrates "Not Father O'Malley" with live piano playing, singing and any number of crazy, hilarious stories.

Tynedale Desert Island Discs

March Desert Island Discs

We held our sixth Desert Island Discs Zoom on 16 March, when Mary Oswell shared her musical choices and tales from her very full life. Mary's choices were:

1. Fats Waller - Ain't Misbehavin
2. Leonard Bernstein - Glitter and be Gay from *Candide*, sung by Katie Oswell
3. Elisabeth Elektra - I am the Love
4. J S Bach - *Concerto in D Minor*, played by Víkingur Ólafsson
5. William Byrd - *Mass à 5 Voix*, Arr à 4 Haynes, Hexham Abbey Chamber Choir
6. Jacques Brel - Le Plat Pays
7. Vivaldi - *Gloria* - English Baroque Soloists and Monteverdi Choir , conducted by John Eliot Gardiner
8. Mozart - *Symphony No 41 Jupiter Movt 4*, Molto Allegro



This month's Desert Island Discs

Our next Desert Island Discs will be on 20 April at 2pm.

Mike Worthington will be our host.

Our next castaway will be Charlotte Coxon, who will treat us to insights into her life and her relationship with music.

Group news and activities

Environment group

Light pollution has been on our agenda again, particularly after the article in the Courant about the plans of the astronomer Wil Cheung to make Hexham the first dark sky town in the UK. We have also been invited to join the Prudhoe Eco Group for their next meeting, when a local Greenpeace spokesperson will be talking about local and individual ways to control climate change.

Richard Bentley

Birdwatching group

March has ended with the start of spring, the tipping point when for the next six months the length of daylight will exceed the length of darkness, so important for breeding birds. We have also been enjoying warmer weather and a wonderful arrival of birds that nest up on the moors. The air up there has been filled with the sound of skylarks, lapwing and curlew, all marking out their territories and pairing up to nest. Other birds such as linnets, redpolls and yellowhammers have also arrived in the hedgerows and thickets. The bird group has seen over 160 bird species in the 12 months since the first lockdown started, and now we are starting all over again.



Richard Bentley

Bridge groups

A farewell message from Lynn Stow and Brian Elias

Unfortunately, Brian's u3a bridge classes, which have been held three times a week for the last nine years, have come to an end. With the coming of Covid, Brian and I decided we needed the support of our family in Bath, so have now finally made the long trek south.

When we first moved to Corbridge, Brian wanted to offer something to the u3a. He had previously taught bridge successfully in Harrogate for ten years, and wondered if anyone might be interested in Tynedale. With some trepidation, we started in Hexham with a group of nine, but decided if we wanted to sustain things, it was easier to run classes from home. The number of interested people increased and since we didn't want to turn anyone away, one class rapidly became three.



Brian wanted to make bridge engaging and fun, and hopefully this was achieved. Several people who started by saying they could never enjoy playing have ended up as great enthusiasts. About thirty people have come to his classes, some just enjoy social bridge and others have now joined local bridge clubs. Over the years we have arranged several bridge holidays in Harrogate and the Lake District, and held regular mini tournaments where everyone can meet and play with one another. One of the blessings of Covid is that we can still play bridge and chat with each other online, and Brian and I can now do this from Bath too!



So our thanks to all of you who have come along in all weathers to Brian's bridge classes. Perhaps some of us will never become great bridge players. However, we have had great fun together, made enduring friendships, and hopefully have learned some new skills which will continue to give much pleasure.



Lynn Stow

A note of thanks and appreciation

Brian Elias, the long-time Bridge Group convenor for Hexham u3a, has moved to Bath with his partner Lynn, and the Bridge Group is bereft! Brian is unique, a one-off; every week, he and Lynn opened their house on Mondays and Fridays to welcome the three groups he ran, teaching the basics and more advanced aspects of bridge with infinite patience. And in between, he and Lynn drove to Brian's house in Harrogate each week so that he could play bridge at his club there...

Brian and Lynn came with Angela and me to two bridge courses on Pre-empt and Slam Bidding at Higham Hall, Bassenthwaite. He was gratified to be asked afterwards if he would run a public course there himself - he was clearly a teacher - but declined, preferring instead to book this lovely location for a three-day bridge break for 24 of his group, with afternoons free for walks, to explore the north Lake District, or to visit the nearby Lakes Distillery (extremely popular!). These few days were such a success that he and Lynn organised another the next year, then two more in the following years to his home patch in Harrogate, at The Old Swan Hotel, and I'm sure this would have continued as an annual fixture but for Covid.

In addition, Brian organised several monthly Chicago Bridge tournaments at Primlea, just across the road from their house in Corbridge. In all this, Brian's aim was to bring people to a standard where they could feel comfortable in going to any of the local bridge clubs - Corbridge, Riding Mill or Hexham - and enjoy broadening their bridge skills. Those from his groups are known as "Brian's Babes"!

Our loss is Bath's gain, and we hope that as soon as Brian and Lynn move into their new house there, they find a happy bridge home too. And maybe organise another Harrogate weekend for us....

Roger and Angela Jones

Group liaison update

Our thanks to retiring convenors

Two of our longstanding group convenors, Marshall Ward and Robert Ford, have decided to “retire” from their group leadership roles. Marshall developed and ran the French Conversation group for many, many years. Likewise, Robert developed and ran the Watercolour group, including having an annual exhibition of work produced by group members. We have greatly appreciated their immense contribution, and all that they have done for their groups and their support for Tynedale u3a. Sadly, members of the French Conversation group have decided to close their group. The Watercolour group will continue with new convenors. Group members met, via Zoom, and three members have decided to share the convenor role, each with a specific task; an excellent idea. The new convenors are John Haigh, Dru Ellis and Ian Parson. Thank you to them and we hope they enjoy their new roles.

German or Portuguese anyone?

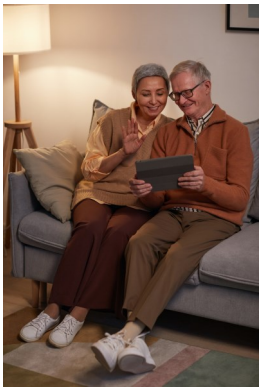
Are there any fluent German speakers wishing to join a group of like-minded people? We have two members who have patiently waited for more German speakers so that a group can be formed.

Anyone fancy learning Portuguese, from scratch?

If you are interested in these subjects or have any new ideas for groups, please do get in touch with Jane or Lynn (arts and languages), Group Liaison Secretaries.

Margaret Earl and Jane Perona-Wright

Opportunity to share local group meetings on Zoom



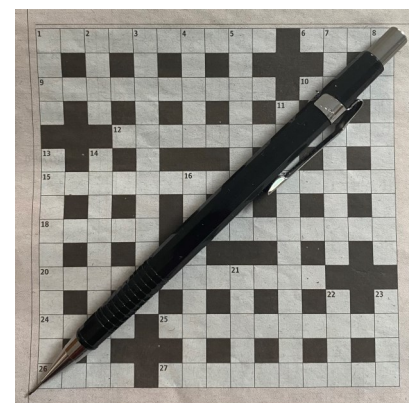
Interest groups that are using Zoom are being asked to consider opening up their meetings to members of other u3as. If your u3a group is not meeting on Zoom or similar platforms and you would like to do so, it may be possible to join an interest group in another u3a. This initiative is being coordinated by the [Northumbria Region u3a](#) and more information is available [here](#). Once you have identified a suitable group, you should contact the group convenor, who will then send you the link to access the meeting.

From our members

Cryptic crossword clues

Two devious cryptic crossword clues designed to exasperate you. Firstly a favourite from *The Guardian* GEGS (9,4). Secondly, an evil clue from *The Times* I found in a delicious detective book by *After Henry* author Simon Brett — BATS DO (5). Answers on page 10 of this newsletter.

Mike Foster



The mouse who came to tea: a true story

The west of Ireland takes all that the wide Atlantic Ocean throws at it – gales, squalls, “big” wind, rain, more rain, and then a lot more rain. We lived on a peninsula in the south-west of County Donegal so we got it all head-on; and sideways. But this was a lovely summer’s day. Farmers and their families were busy “saving” hay. Women were catching up with their laundry as it was a “great drying day”. We were not farmers. I was eleven years old, reading a book outside in the shade. The year was 1958.



My mother came out to put more washing on the line and noticed that our neighbour Con was working alone on his smallholding a few fields away. He was an elderly bachelor who lived by himself. His two sisters, who lived in the nearby village, were our landlords. My mother suggested I go and help him. I liked haymaking but did not like Con. He was a crabbit man, suspicious of boys and our capacity for trouble. He had once called me a “blackguard” because I had taken a narrow circle of bark off one of the trees on the lane – not knowing at the time that the tree would die if the sap could not rise. Where we had lived before, trees did not grow because of the prevailing winds and sea spray. My explanation and apology had not appeased him.

But my mother insisted and I went, taking my father’s wooden rake with me. Con was surprised to see me. The hay had been cut two days before and lay where it had fallen to allow the top side to dry. We “turned” the hay, shaping it into long rolls with our rakes so that the other side could be dried by the sun and wind. Con kept a keen, sideways eye on my work at first but he relaxed when he saw I was adept at the task. After a while, Con said that the whole field would be “turned” by the evening; there was satisfaction in his voice.



Around 4 o’clock, Con went into his house to make “tay”. I said I did not need any, but he insisted. Elderly bachelors were not usually renowned for their culinary or domestic skills, but I knew that to refuse his hospitality would hurt him.

A little later, Con called me in. It was my first time at his home. The thatched cottage was a couple of hundred years old and built of stone which had been lime-plastered and whitewashed. A profusion of old roses grew against it and the farm buildings. Inside, a turf fire, a well-filled dresser, a couple of shelves holding old books, an easy chair, and an oak kitchen table and chairs. The walls had the usual holy pictures and a St Bridget’s cross he had woven from rushes. Rosary beads hung on a peg alongside a copy of Old Moore’s Almanac. I sat at the kitchen table while he “wet the tay”. The table was up against the wall, underneath a window. Just above the table on my left there was a small hole in the wall where the plaster had fallen off.

Con put an earthenware pot of tea and homemade bread and butter on the table. The bread had a slight blue hue. I knew that he had used sour milk to make it. Older people were fond of old milk, a legacy from an earlier time when fermented milk was a treat for thirsty workers. We said Grace. I took the smallest slice of bread and the tiniest bit of butter. Con told me that my work was a great help and that I was a “tasty” (good and neat) worker. We both fell silent.

A slight noise caused me to look at the hole in the wall beside where Con sat at the head of the table. A small mouse was at the entrance, nervously appraising me. Con gestured to me to be quiet. The mouse scrambled down to the table and approached Con, who greeted it in a much friendlier way than he had greeted me earlier. The mouse then approached my plate and I went to shoo it away, but Con told me not to worry. He proffered crumbs of bread to the mouse, who ate them greedily. Con extended a finger and he and the mouse played for a little while. The mouse then looked steadily at him for a moment before turning slowly away. It went to the milk jug on the table, shinned up it and drank from it. When it had finished, it climbed down and went to Con again. It dawned on me that this was a regular occurrence; they were friends. The mouse looked straight at Con for a few seconds, before casting a wary eye at me. Satisfied, he scrambled up the wall and disappeared into the hole. I could hardly wait to finish the work so that I could run home and tell my family. My siblings were delighted with the story, but my mother did not believe it for years.



Quizzes

Spring quiz



1. According to the UK Met Office, on what day does spring commence?
2. What do we in the UK call the vegetable known as scallions in the USA?
3. Who wrote the music for the ballet *The Rite of Spring*?
4. Which poet wrote these first two lines? 'Oh to be in England/ Now that April's there'.
5. Who is the Roman goddess of spring?
6. 'Primavera' ('Spring') is a work by which artist?
7. Easter Island belongs to which country?
8. The song 'Younger Than Springtime' features in which Rogers and Hammerstein musical?
9. What name is given to the Sunday before Easter?
10. Which fruit cake with two layers of marzipan is traditionally eaten at Easter?
11. TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* begins 'April is the cruellest month'. Which word completes the first line?
12. What do crocuses grow from?
13. 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast; Man never Is, but always To be blest' is a quote from which English poet?
14. On the first day of spring, where on Earth would one see the sun passing directly overhead?
15. In 1885 Tsar Alexander III gave his wife a jewelled Easter egg made by which design firm?
16. Since Easter is not a fixed holiday on the calendar, it is known as what kind of feast?

Women of the North East quiz

1. Author of an eighteenth-century cookery book, *Professed Cookery*, and resident of Hexham. The third edition of her book, published in 1760, contains a vitriolic attack on the most celebrated cookery book of the time, Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery, Made Plain and Easy*.
2. Lighthouse keeper's daughter famed for rescuing survivors of the wrecked steamship Forfarshire near the Farne Islands in 1838.
3. Nineteenth-century social reformer who promoted higher education for women and campaigned for the Married Women's Property Act of 1882.
4. Suffragette who died after being hit by King George V's horse at the 1913 Derby when she stepped onto the track during the race.
5. Author of novels depicting life in early twentieth century South Tyneside. Died in 1998.
6. Former MP for Redcar, elected in 1987, and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from 1997 to 1999. Died in 2005.
7. Journalist and news correspondent for the BBC until 2003, who became well known for reporting from war zones around the world.
8. Labour MP for Newcastle Central since 2010; born in Wallsend.
9. Author, broadcaster and radio DJ born in Sunderland. Has a daily show on BBC Radio 6 Music and presents *Desert Island Discs*.
10. Durham-born England and Manchester City football captain awarded an MBE in 2016 for her achievements in the game.

Answers to this month's quizzes

You will find the answers to the quizzes on the last page of the newsletter.

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Membership

We currently have 424 members, including nine associate members.

Tynedale u3a is a registered charity (number 515733).

Answers to this month's quizzes

Spring quiz

1. March 1st; 2. Spring onions; 3. Stravinsky; 4. Robert Browning; 5. Flora; 6. Botticelli; 7. Chile; 8. South Pacific; 9. Palm Sunday; 10. Simnel cake; 11. breeding; 12. Corms; 13. Alexander Pope; 14. The equator; 15. Fabergé; 16. A movable feast.

Women of the North East quiz

1. Ann Cook; 2. Grace Darling; 3. Josephine Butler; 4. Emily Wilding Davidson; 5. Catherine Cookson; 6. Mo Mowlam; 7. Kate Adie; 8. Chi Onwurah; 9. Lauren Laverne; 10. Steph Houghton.

Answers to the crossword clues on page 7

Gegs SCRAMBLED EGGS

bats do PEELS (sleep upside down)

Monthly meetings May and June 2021

4 May at 2pm, via Zoom: Colin Argent: Coming of the Railway - Newcastle-Carlisle line

1 June at 2pm, via Zoom: Paul Robbins: Great British Eccentrics

Next issue of the newsletter

The next issue of the newsletter will be published in May.

We welcome contributions from groups and individual members.

Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor, Alicia Cresswell, at tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com by 22 April.

