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Message from the Chair

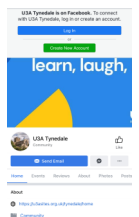
We have a new year ahead of us and it is my hope that we will be able to feel safe and spend more time together. It is also my hope that members will be able to engage with something new and take on new challenges in Tynedale u3a.

We have **new groups and many more ideas for groups**. We could have one-off events or taster days if members are prepared to come forward. The committee are keen to support new opportunities.

In the December newsletter there were two **new challenges**: one is inventive, to create a marble run; the second is to write a story in two hundred words. In the next few weeks, when families and friends are in communication, there should be opportunities for fuelling ideas on the two challenges. I think there will be lots of amusing family stories told, and it will just be a matter of writing them down and containing them in 200 words. The words in the title will not count.

At the last monthly meeting I asked members to consider joining the committee as we do need to keep it refreshed. My experience is that committee members generously give their time and energy but rarely want to do it for more than three years. This is a very healthy situation. I am delighted that two people approached me after the meeting to say they would be prepared to do a spell on the committee. We currently have a **vacancy for an events organiser**, but we will need people to take on the other roles in the future. Do let me know if you would be willing to consider something now or later.

The committee are aware that some u3as are making good use of a **Facebook page** to promote their activities. We have a Facebook page, but we do not have anyone to look after it. If we have a member who has some knowledge or would like an opportunity to learn more about social media, we would appreciate their help. The member would not have to join the committee.



Finally, in the next issue watch out for more information about **u3a Walks the Wall**. Perhaps walking groups and also groups of friends would like to take part in **Celebrating The Roman Wall**, an event organised by our regional u3a, probably in September.

Wishing you a healthy and happy 2022

Wendy Dale

Monthly meeting, Tuesday 4 January 2022 at 2pm via Zoom only

Topic: Why I'd rather wear GM cotton underpants than live next door to an organic dairy farm

Speaker: Chris Pollock

In this talk I will use two examples to consider how different kinds of farming impact on the environment and on consumers. The examples have been chosen to illustrate the very different consumer attitudes to GM crops and to organic systems, and I'll try to present, hopefully in a light-hearted and straightforward way, the evidence that might or might not justify these attitudes.



Chris Pollock spent 40 years in Aberystwyth as a researcher in various aspects of grassland agriculture. Latterly he also sat on science advisory committees for both the UK and Welsh governments, including ones dealing with GM crops.

Due to the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, the January monthly meeting will be on Zoom only. We look forward to returning to face-to-face meetings as soon as it is safe to do so.

Tynedale Desert Island Discs

My 8 choices of Christmas music for the December Desert Island Discs were:

1. Oh Holy Night by Adolphe Adam, arranged by John Rutter. The Choir of King's College Cambridge
2. Run Run Rudolph. Chuck Berry
3. Troika by Prokofiev. Performed by Sky
4. Gaudete. Steeleye Span
5. Fairy Tale of New York. The Pogues, featuring Kirsty MacColl
6. The Twelve Days of Christmas. The Spinners
7. Winter Song by Alan Hull. Lindisfarne
8. For Unto Us a Child is Born. Handel's Messiah. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir



This month's Desert Island Discs

The next Desert Island Discs will be on Tuesday 18 January, when my castaway will be Gill Mellars.

Mike Worthington

Sage Gateshead

Mike and I enjoy the classical concerts at the Sage Gateshead and recently took advantage of the coach that picks up from Humshaugh, Hexham and Corbridge. It was a real treat to find so many u3a friends on the coach and the ease of travel added to the whole experience. Unfortunately, there isn't a bus on every occasion so several people do not get to as many concerts as they would like. I wondered if we could encourage more buses to be made available during each season.



I would like to hear from you if you would be interested in getting to classical concerts at the Sage if there was transport available. It would be helpful to know what the barriers there are, for example pick up points. If you drive and would be happy to offer a seat in a car, that would also be valuable information.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Wendy Dale

Group liaison news

New groups

We published a list of active groups in the December newsletter but I expect most of you had other things on your mind at that time. Things like what to buy for the grandchildren, will Omicron mess up our Christmas plans, and how do I tell my partner about the ridiculously expensive present I bought for myself. For that reason, we are repeating the list in this newsletter with an invitation to make a New Year's resolution to go and sample the activities of another group. Something you have not tried before. Remember, you do not need to be an expert in a subject to attend one of our groups; all you need is a keen interest and existing group members will welcome you with open arms.

If you want to start the New Year as a genuine 'smarty pants', then why not propose and start up a new interest group. You may find you are not alone in your special interests. There could be someone else lurking in darker Tynedale with an overriding interest in the mating habits of the lesser spotted wildebeest weevil. OK, that may be unlikely but the popularity of Sanskrit Scrabble may surprise you. I guarantee it would surprise me!

Now I know a lot of you shrivel up in horror at the thought of being a convenor and cite charity work as the major reason you cannot take it on. I have been convenor for several groups and my therapist assures me that in spite of that, I am quite normal well as normal as can be expected in my case. My overriding impression of convenorship is what a lovely bunch of helpful people inhabit the groups. Be brave – give it a go!

P.S. Don't forget to check the new group notices as well.

New group: Putting the world right

Mike Foster has just launched this new informal discussion group which meets in the Garden Cafe on the first and third Friday of the month at 10:30. The Putting the World Right group offers a safe and stimulating space to explore how changing attitudes and global factors are reshaping our lives and influencing the news. Meetings are scheduled for about an hour and the discussion topics will be agreed by the members. The group is actively seeking new members so if you are interested, feel free to go along on the appointed day and join the discussion. Contact Mike in advance by all means, but he will be glad to welcome newcomers if you just call in.

Colin Argent, Group Fixer

Current Tynedale u3a groups

Languages
Fluent French Conversation
French -Easy Going French
French Intermediate
German Language
Italian
Italian for Beginners
Latin Learners
Latin Lovers
Spanish
Spanish For Improvers
The Scots Gaelic Group
Welsh Language

Arts and Music
Art Appreciation 1
Art Appreciation 2
Jazz Appreciation
Music Appreciation
Play Reading
Poetry
Watercolours

Science & Environment
Bird Watching
Environmental Group
Geology
Landscape
Science
Space Exploration
Wildlife

Books
Book Group 1
Book Group 3
Book Group 4
Book Group-The Detectives

History
Family History
Hadrian's Wall
History
Railway Studies

Exercise & Outdoor
Blue Remembered Hills
Garden Visits
Gentle Exercise
Out & About
Tai Chi
Walking A
Yoga

Creative
Create And Craft
Creative Crafts
Photography

Games
Mah-Jong 1
Scrabble
Bridge Play

Discussion
Topical Discussion
Wine Appreciation

Groups to be reformed
Singing For Fun
Sunday Lunch
Yoga

If you have an interest in any of these groups, look at our website and contact the convenor. If you do not have internet access, phone Colin on 01661 842284 to discuss it.



Group news and activities

Blue Remembered Hills

After a small group met in early December, we set 17 January, the third Monday in the month, for our next meeting, to be held at 7pm in the Residents Lounge (we have sole use) of the County Hotel. There will be a general discussion about future topics and one presentation on 'Walking in the Mountains of Corsica'.



This arrangement was made in a pre-Omicron era, and must therefore remain tentative. I have the email contacts for the core group, but if you are interested in coming, please send your contact details to John Dark, at tyneu3amemsec1@gmail.com so I can keep you up to date with plans.

We do hope we can expand this very enjoyable group, interested in talking about hill-walking and climbing, to the many who must have enjoyed these activities, if not now, then in the past.

John Dark

Putting the World Right



Despite the wicked fairy making life difficult, we have a new Putting the World Right group starting on 7 January and meeting at 10.30am on the first and third Fridays of the month at the Garden Café. The Group offers a safe and stimulating space to explore how changing attitudes and global factors are reshaping our lives and influencing the news. We treat each other with dignity and respect. Topics could include 'Do we need so many holidays?', 'Alienation', 'Demographics', and other subjects suggested by members.

Flash fiction challenge

Please have a go at writing a short story in 200 words. You might find you can write more than one. Please send me your completed stories by email to tyneu3achair1@btinternet.com, or hard copy to 21 Hencotes Hexham NE46 2EQ by the 4 February 2022. The stories we receive will be anonymised and sent to a judging panel at Prudhoe u3a. You are not restricted to one entry. The best will be read out at the AGM and will feature in future newsletters.

If enough people find it fun, there might be interest in forming a creative writing group. I think we have had one in the past.

Wendy Dale

Have you thought of becoming a committee member?

There are lots of potential benefits to being a committee member, including:

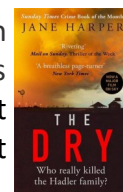
- ◆ Working with others in a rewarding and shared endeavour. Growing your u3a as part of a team effort - what could be more satisfying?
- ◆ Developing new skills, including technical skills such as chairing meetings, public speaking, mentoring, marketing, social media, online meetings. Better still, developing your skills further if you already have them
- ◆ Making and deepening friendships
- ◆ A sense of achievement from helping your u3a go to the next stage
- ◆ Fun and enjoyment - It might seem odd to suggest that being on the committee can be fun, but well-run meetings can be enjoyable as well as effective.

Adapted from *u3a Guide*, How to guide: Bigger and better committees

Reading recommendations

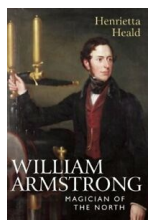
Once the festivities are over, what better way to spend a winter evening than reading? We asked our readers to recommend a book they have enjoyed in the past year, and here are their choices:

The Dry: The debut novel by Australian author Jane Harper, *The Dry* is set in a small Australian outback town during a disastrous drought. It tells the story of the investigation into a mass murder and how it affects the local community. It is a murder mystery novel with a difference. It won the British Book Award for Crime and Thriller Book of the Year 2018. I found it an excellent read, well written and plotted, with rounded characters. A real page turner.



Barrie Mellars

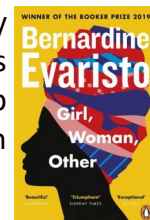
William Armstrong, Magician of the North by Henrietta Heald: I stumbled on this book without having heard anything about it but, as an admirer of Lord Armstrong, and someone whose grandfather and aunt worked for his armaments company in Elswick during the Second World War, I was immediately drawn to it. Like the author, I'm always surprised that Armstrong isn't better known outside, and indeed more surprisingly, inside the region given the enormous impact he had on his own times and the legacy (Jesmond Dene, The Swing Bridge, the Hancock Museum and the RVI, to name but a few) he has left to us today. So this book was a delightful and detailed delve into the life of a man who shaped the development of north east England for a century.



Repetitions and retellings at times disrupt the smooth flow of the narrative, but the book is nevertheless entertainingly written (the opening story of the royal visit to Craggside in August 1884 being a fine example). Some may find the detail of his work life too technical, others that it doesn't dive deep enough into his inventions. But for someone interested in how our region and its major city became what it is today, the book is filled with detailed insight, often provided by friends and colleagues of Armstrong, as well as the writings of Armstrong himself. Overall, I found it a really good read.

David Pattinson

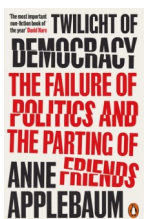
Girl, Woman, Other by Bernadine Evaristo: This Booker-prize-winning novel is peculiar in many respects. The author doesn't use capital letters at the start of sentences and many sentences are separated out into new paragraphs. This seems counter-intuitive to those of us brought up on traditional grammar, but it's easy to get used to, and I ended up thinking how much simpler it would make writing.



There is no plot as such and each chapter tells the story of a black woman's life in Britain, twelve in all. The characters are loosely linked, either relatives, friends or colleagues, and their stories reflect a wide disparity of experiences. It's a tour-de-force of experimental writing and deserves every plaudit it has received. If you find it unsettling, stick with it and you will be rewarded.

Kevin Stephens

Twilight of Democracy - The Failure of Politics and the Parting of Friends by Anne Applebaum: An American educated journalist and historian, Anne Applebaum, married to someone who was in the past both Finance and Defence minister of Poland, has a unique perspective on Eastern Europe. A previous and very readable book was *Iron Curtain*, my first contact with her beautiful writing.



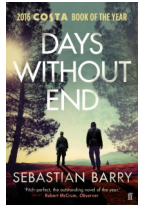
In this new, quite slim volume, she covers the dismantling of democratic politics by populist right-wing governments in both Hungary and Poland. It is all described very clearly, demanding no expert knowledge or background. But she extends the analysis with a chilling comparison with Trump's America and post-Brexit Britain. She describes the polarisation and separation of old friendships, now on opposite 'sides' in Poland. We can recognise the identical phenomenon in the complete split we see between leavers and remainers.

Described by David Hare as 'the most important non-fiction book of the year' when it was published in 2020, it perhaps marked a nadir. Trump is now gone and as we have seen this week, there is a revulsion against a populist, right-wing approach in our own country. But this book puts the reader in a more knowledgeable position for what is still a disquieting world.

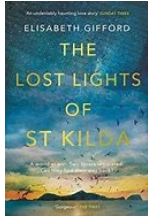
John Dark

Days Without End by Sebastian Barry: It was my introduction to Sebastian Barry and I found his writing delightfully expressive. The story, set in America in the 1850s, reveals the savagery of the Indian wars and the civil war. As a balance, but just as emotionally demanding of the reader, it engages with the tensions of sexual identity and sensitive relationships. I will be reading more of his books.

Wendy Dale

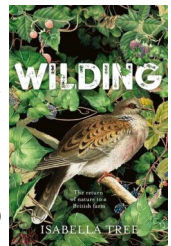


The Lost Lights of St Kilda by Elisabeth Gifford: Classified as a historical romance, this moving story, set in two main time periods, 1927 and the 1940s, describes the last years on St Kilda and the WW2 experiences of one of its visitors, a young geology student, Fred. The story's strength lies in the beautiful descriptions of the way of life, landscape, history, resilience and isolation of the islanders, and their poignant exodus to the Scottish mainland. Elizabeth Gifford has researched the story very carefully and seamlessly blends fact and fiction. If you love wild places, birds, social history, plus adventure and romance, then you'll enjoy this bittersweet novel and be left with admiration for the determination of the human spirit to survive.



Sue

Wilding by Isabella Tree: A book that explores a world so completely different from my own, even today when I live in a more rural Northumberland rather than in the city of my birth, and explores it in a way to make me think differently about nature and food and crops and livestock and birds, and even scrub. And, although I would have liked a more rigorous approach to the science, the general message and the passion for it slowly started to win me over to the point where I left my urban prejudices behind and started to embrace the longhorn cattle, the purple emperors, the nightingales, the turtle doves and even the earthworms (although I did struggle with the thought of a pony pie!). I would have enjoyed it even more if the passion hadn't verged into polemic. I guess I just don't like being preached at in my reading.



David Pattinson

Any by Louise Penny, a Canadian author, and Ellie Griffiths and Peter May. All are thoughtful crime novels. Very believable characters all of them.

Miranda Barker

From the Membership Secretary

It's now coming up to four months after the renewal date of 1 September, and there are still a rump of members who have not renewed. We appreciate you may have moved on to other activities.

You may have already received a letter or email about renewal.

We decided that those who have not renewed by the end of the year will be marked as lapsed, and no longer receive any more communications from us, including the newsletter. However, if you miss the deadline, it is very easy to reactivate your membership after that date.

Membership can easily be renewed by sending me the paper renewal form, which can be downloaded from the website [here](#). Alternatively, there is an entirely online form which gives us the information we need, and can be completed without recourse to paper. You can access the online form [here](#).

If you would like me to post you a paper renewal form, please let me know and I'll send one straight over. My address is on the form and it can be simply posted back.

The standard subscription is £14.00, or £17.10 if you wish to receive the thrice-yearly Third Age Matters magazine. Payment can be made by posting cheque with the form, and can also be made online.

Cheque should be made payable to Tynedale u3a. For bank transfer, pay to Tynedale u3a: sort code 20-40-09: Account 60601209. Reference is your membership number and surname. It is useful but not essential to have the number.

John Dark

Your committee

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Newsletter Editor

Alicia Cresswell - 608170

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Membership

We currently have 439 members, including nine associate members.



Tynedale u3a is a registered charity (number 515733).



A very warm welcome to Barrie Coggins, Heather Edwards and Rebecca Hodgkinson, who have recently joined our u3a.

Dates for your diary

Desert Island Discs Tuesday 18 January at 2pm

Monthly meetings - February to July 2022

1 February at 2pm: John Richards, Flora of Northumberland

1 March at 2pm: AGM

5 April at 2pm: Frances Smiles, Northumberland Wildlife Trust

3 May at 2pm: Chris Tipple, Tales out of school life in rural Northumberland schools in the 19th century

7 June at 2pm: Jenny Elliott, Tyne Rivers Trust

5 July at 2pm: Professor Mike Bentley, Living, working and doing scientific research in Antarctica

Next issue of the newsletter

The next issue of the newsletter will be published in February 2022.

We welcome contributions from groups and individual members.

Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor, Alicia Cresswell, by 20 January. Email address: tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com.