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## Monthly Meeting, Tuesday 3 January 2023 at 2pm in the Great Hall, Hexham Abbey - and on Zoom

**Topic:**            **A brief history of explosions: The science and research behind the detonations at RAF Spadeadam**

**Speaker:**       **Paul Cronin**

Paul Cronin studied for a degree in Mechanical Engineering at Coventry Polytechnic, graduating in 1980. While doing his degree, he was apprenticed to Rolls-Royce in Coventry.

Since 1981, Paul has been involved in conducting large scale trials associated with the oil and gas industry. These trials were mainly carried out at Spadeadam and have included pool fires, jet fires, gas dispersion, Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapour Explosions (BLEVEs), fracture propagation, gas explosions, rapid phase transitions, and simulating potential terrorist attacks. Paul has also worked as a blast consultant involved in the design of buildings for the storage and processing of explosives. Paul is almost retired, working as a contractor on anything that people want him to do.

**Tea and coffee will be served after the meeting.**

## Coffee morning for new members

There will be a coffee morning for new members at the end of January. We will confirm the date, time and venue, and send out invitations, nearer the time.

John Dark

Membership Secretary



## Extra open meeting: Antarctica and climate change

**Speaker:** Professor Mike Bentley  
**Date and time:** Tuesday 24 January 2023 at 2pm  
**Venue:** Masonic Hall, Hexham



Antarctica and the Southern Ocean are already hugely affected by climate change, and future projections show many of these effects will get worse. But how do we know this? What is the science behind the Antarctic climate change headlines and BBC Frozen Planet images?



In this talk, Professor Mike Bentley will talk about the science behind the methods used to monitor the changing climate in Antarctica, and the impact of climate change on the atmosphere, the ocean, the ice sheet, sea ice and ecosystems.

He will explain some of the technologies and measurements that allow us to detect change in this harshest of environments, which has the roughest seas on the planet, an ice sheet 50 times the size of the UK, and temperatures that regularly drop below minus 50C. He will also discuss changes in the plants and animals sparsely located around its margins. Mike will show how some of these impacts, such as sea level rise, are being felt beyond Antarctica.

Mike Bentley is a Professor of Antarctic Geoscience in the Department of Geography at Durham University. His research work focuses on understanding how the Antarctic sheet is changing due to climate change. Mike grew up in Hexham before attending the University of Edinburgh. He has been working in Antarctica for over 25 years, including a total of over a year spent in tents on the ice sheet! Mike has been awarded the Polar Medal by the Queen for his contributions to Antarctic research, and is Chair of the UK National Committee for Antarctic Research.

## Groups liaison news

### Thank you

As Group Fixer, I wanted to say a personal thank you to all convenors for the effort you have put in during 2022. I particularly appreciate the effort you put into the Open Day and in the follow-up while we tried to sort out and accommodate all the expressions of interest in group activities.

Happy Christmas to you all with a healthy 2023 – hopefully with a few less emails from me!

### Book Group 3

In January Book Group 3 will be reviewing their future. The choices they have are:

- ◆ Disband the group with two or three members transferring to Book Group 1, who have space for new members
- ◆ Recruit some new members and carry on as Book Group 3 invigorated by a new membership

If you have been thinking about joining a book group, NOW would be the time to sign up to Book Group 3. Best do it now because they will be making that decision by 12 January.

### The website

By the time this newsletter goes out, the website should be back up and running with up-to-date information. However, the back-up data forming the core of the reinstated website was a little out of date. I have amended the anomalies this created but I do not guarantee to have identified them all.

I would ask convenors to check the website information for their group and correct it themselves or let me know of the corrections that are needed.

## Open Day

To the best of my knowledge, we have now worked through all the expressions of interest logged at the Open Day in September. There was a lot of it and it did take longer than I expected. If you signed up for something at the Open Day and it is still outstanding, do let me know. In some cases, the only way to progress things was to start a new group, but in a number of cases we only have one or two people 'signed up' so these possible new groups are still in limbo.

## Projects with the grandchildren

The 'vacuum bazooka' (last month's newsletter) and 'packing the potential of the party popper as a weapon of mini-destruction' (this month) are easy to do. My grandchildren thoroughly enjoyed them and, to my great pleasure, began to ask 'so what would happen if we changed .....

Colin Argent, Group Fixer

## Projects with the grandchildren

### This month: Harnessing the power of the party popper



### What is it?

Party poppers contain a tiny explosive charge that propels the streamers after the string is pulled. By removing this charge and inserting it in either of the devices described below, you can use it to shoot a plastic BB pellet some considerable distance!

### The simple version

#### What will I need?

- ◆ A ballpoint pen with a threaded removable tip and an end that can be taken off to leave a clear tube.
- ◆ 6mm plastic BB pellets

#### How do I do it?

**Removing the charges from party poppers:** Remove the cardboard end using a finger or a small screwdriver. Remove the tape holding the string to the popper and, using scissors, cut a section out of the popper so that you can grip the charge and slowly pull it out with the string still attached. Don't pull too vigorously in case you set the charge off.



**Making the hand-held cannon:** Dismantle the ballpoint pen so that you keep only the tube and the tip. Ideally the inside diameter of the pen tube should be around 6mm. Unscrew the tip and feed the string of the popper charge through the tip so that the charge can stick into the tube. Replace the tip. Put a BB pellet into the tube and push it down gently until it touches the charge. If it is very loose in the barrel, you can wrap it in tissue paper. Hold the barrel in one hand and pull the string sharply with the other. There should be a satisfactory bang and the pellet should fly out.



## The advanced version

### What will I need?

- A length of 6mm internal diameter brass tube and a M6 bolt
- A wooden rammer of appropriate length
- A frame for the brass tube
- 6mm plastic BB pellets

### How do I do it?

**Making the fixed cannon:** The hand-held cannon is hard to hold steady and is inaccurate. Fixing the cannon to a frame increases the accuracy and reproducibility. The barrel is a 25 cm length of 6 mm ID brass tubing, threaded to M6 at one end to 1cm depth. The end is closed with an M6 bolt cut to give 1cm of thread and drilled to give a 2mm hole. The frame is a simple wooden plate with cross-trees to help clamp it down and a slotted tailpiece that allows the string to be grasped. Threaded feet can be used to elevate the cannon or blocks of wood can be used. The procedure for charging, loading and firing is as above.



### Safety warning

Wear safety glasses, don't aim the weapons at anyone, don't look down the barrel and don't fire it near to fragile objects.

### Testing and evaluation

Use a paper target at a suitable distance (3-4 metres) and doing repeat firings.

### Acknowledgements

The hand-held version is based on one described in "Mini Weapons of Mass Destruction" by John Austin (Ilex Press, ISBN 987-1-78157-499-7).

The fixed cannon was developed by my brother, Charles Pollock, and slightly modified by me.

Chris Pollock

## 40th anniversary of Tynedale u3a

### Wanted: Your stories of Tynedale u3a's past

Following our recent request for stories of Tynedale u3a's past, we have had some great contributions but we would like some more. If you have a spare moment, please drop Wendy a line with a memory or two of the u3a as you remember it when you first joined, or any other stories, amusing or otherwise, of happenings in our u3a.

### Events for 2023

In 2022, we had two major events, the Garden Party and an Open Day, both of which were successful.

In 2023, we hope to have more events with more opportunities to socialise. We will be greatly assisted if we have a volunteer to be Events Secretary on the committee.

*Celebrating*  
**40** *Years*

### Events planned for 2023

January 24th: Prof Mike Bentley will talk about Hexham Antarctica and climate change.

Date to be arranged: Recycling Plant Visit

Spring (date tba): Pie and Pea Supper with Quiz

April 5th: Coach Trip to Yorkshire Sculpture Park

May 10th: Hadrian Wall Festival of Fun at the Sill, showcasing the u3a

June (date tba): 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

August 1st: Coach trip to Edinburgh Botanic Gardens

More information about these events will follow in the coming months. We hope you will join us.

With best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.

Wendy Dale

## Group news and activities

### Blue Remembered Hills Group

We are not meeting in December, so the next meeting will be on the third Monday in January, which is the 16<sup>th</sup>. Oliver Dixon will complete his Coastal Odyssey with the section 'Budle Bay to Broughty Ferry'. David Clouston will present 'A Pioneer on Every Continent', about New Zealand. We have the Residents' Lounge booked at the County Hotel from 7pm onwards.

John Dark



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## Wildlife Group

### December meeting

On a frosty, foggy December afternoon, we gathered in a cosy room with mince pies and tea to enjoy a trip to the Antarctic guided by Professor Mike Bentley of Durham University and the British Antarctic Survey.

Mike introduced us to the wildlife of the Antarctic, the area of our world extending from the South Pole to about 50° South, including the continent of Antarctica, the southern oceans, the Falkland Islands and South Georgia.

On the continent only two species of native higher plants can grow, and they reach only an inch or two high. Lower plants, algae and lichens grow directly on, even within, the rock. Animals that are confined to land are all microscopic, the largest are tardigrades which measure less than 2mm. Within lakes, the water below ice gets surprisingly warm with depth, due to the way ice transmits light and heat. The Antarctic waters support specialist aquatic fauna, including ice fish which have white (rather than red) blood containing an anti-freeze.

We are more familiar with warm blooded Antarctic marine life thanks to David Attenborough and other TV documentaries. These birds and mammals feed from the oceans. The variety of penguins - Emperor, King, Adelie, Chinstrap and Gentoo - form their breeding colonies on the continent or islands in places where they can reach their preferred food, whether fish or krill. Many of the flighted birds, including albatrosses, petrels and our migratory little terns, also feed from the rich marine life of the cold waters. Unlike the micro-organisms on land, marine animals include large mammals which range in size from fur and Weddell seals to orcas, right and humpback whales. We learnt how these marine populations have been seriously impacted for over two centuries, directly by human activities and by changing climate.



Images provided by Mike Bentley (individually credited)

Despite the history of near extinction for many Antarctic marine species due to whaling, sealing or fishing, Mike ended with good news. Legal protection, introduced internationally since early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has resulted in many marine life populations recovering to significant and sustainable numbers. Also, recent changes introduced in fishing methods are reducing losses, with encouraging results across the Antarctic. Work towards recovery is informed by survey and research and funded by international commitments. Many successful projects are supported through the Government of South Georgia and the charity the South Georgia Heritage Trust.

We can now look forward to Mike's next talk to our u3a at January's extra open meeting, where we can learn more about the science behind the work of the British Antarctic Survey. Among other Antarctic projects, we will learn how studying the lives of Weddell seals is making a major contribution to Antarctic oceanography.

Jenny Loring

## Putting the World Right Group

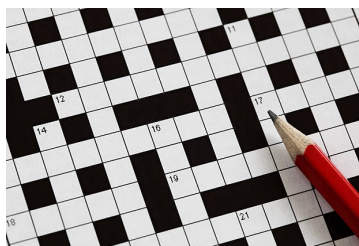
The group had a wide ranging discussion on 'Labelling' and how people perceive things as good or bad. We noted polarisation of beliefs and the 'I am right and you are dead' opinions infecting aspects of life. We are a mellow, tolerant group, though usually prefer one outcome over another. We do try to change what we can when needed.



Mike Foster [mikef@wowu.co.uk](mailto:mikef@wowu.co.uk)

## Cryptic Crosswords for Beginners and improvers Group

"How to get an anagram, of course" (6)



Consisting at present of the smallest number that can legitimately be described as a group, the **Cryptic Crossword Beginners and Improvers** have now met twice.

Future meetings are scheduled for the second Thursday of each month, beginning at 10.30am and lasting about an hour. The meeting place is The Garden Café in Hexham.

The format of meetings is still developing, but will definitely be interactive! If you would like to know more, please contact Chris Simmons at [chris@csimmons.plus.com](mailto:chris@csimmons.plus.com).

## Desert Island Discs 2022-2023

My castaway for the December was Bill Walton, former Tynedale u3a Chair. The following were Bill's eight choices of music, reflecting the different stages of his life.

1. Big Rock Candy Mountain. Burl Ives
2. My Boy Lollipop. Millie
3. It's All Over now. The Rolling Stones
4. Green, Green Grass of Home. Tom Jones
5. Hey, That's No Way to Say Goodbye. Leonard Cohen & Judy Collins
6. All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name. The Tamil Massed Choir
7. Canzanetta Sullaria, from Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro. Sung by Kiri Te Kanawa & Mirelle Freni
8. Beethoven's 6th Symphony, The Pastoral. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Herbert von Karajan

The next Desert Island Discs will be on **17 January**, when my castaway will be Ian Diggory.

I am still looking for one volunteer to complete Series 3. If anyone is interested in sharing the eight choices of music they would take with them to a desert island, do please contact me, Mike Worthington, on [worthington1942@btinternet.com](mailto:worthington1942@btinternet.com).

## Are you a Facebook user? If so, please read on...

Sharing our Open Day event details to other local groups on Facebook in September was very successful in attracting non-member visitors to come along. So whilst social media is not for everyone, it's a great way to get new members and share information on our activities.



If you have a Facebook account, please join the group - just search for Tynedale u3a and click on 'join group'. Take a look at the group rules, then start posting, share information and photos of your u3a activities, and 'like' and comment on the ideas and stories that you will find there.

For many, social media is beginning to replace print media. The more people contribute to the Facebook group and share their posts with others, the more chance we have of a thriving u3a in the longer term.

Sally Hewitt



## From our members

### Delicious diversions

It's the fag end of the year and an *annus horribilis*, so here are a couple of entertaining diversions courtesy of BBC Sounds.

In *The Thick of It* author Mark Tavener has a wicked and mischievous murder mystery, [High Table Lower Orders](#), where the gossipy male academics usually indulge themselves playing Put Down. But a mysterious death occurs, triggering the arrival of a former student to investigate. Some lovely, lovely lines giving insights and smiles.

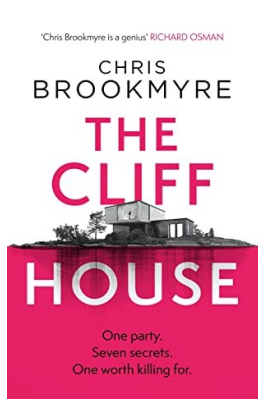


While I love books set at the end of WW1 with people trying to cope with the social and economic upheavals, [Bulldog Drummond](#) has nothing to do with reality. Usually broadcasts of the swashbuckling hero come with a health warning about reflecting the social attitudes of the time, but this adventure has few 'isms'. Instead, what we get is an excess of gung-ho patriotism, a woman who needs saving, dastardly villains who come together, and a sports car that apparently never breaks down. Interesting to listen to an original rather than the parodies.

Mike Foster

### Forgiveness and redemption

Crime Fiction provides a template which authors can use to explore social, personal and other aspects of life amidst the gore. I thus set out one cold December day to the Newcastle Noir festival lower down the Tyne. And despite the weather and the country's pantomime chaos, it surpassed expectations and was very inspiring.



In the session entitled 'With Friends Like These', three authors discussed the roles of friendship in their new novels, from long-lasting childhood relationships to mates at work or the gym. Chris Brookmyre talked about his new book *The Cliff House*, with seven women having a hen party on a remote Scottish island. His inspiration had been Kim Kardashian having a girlie weekend on an island during lockdown. When Chris told his wife he'd like to kill the lot of them, she pointed out he had a theme for next book. Gruesome secrets are revealed, but alongside the arguments and betrayals, there emerges forgiveness and redemption, two themes for me to reflect on this coming new year.

Mike Foster

## Hexham Bridge Club: opportunities for Tynedale u3a members

Hexham Bridge Club classes start on 18 January and will run on Tuesdays. We are offering the first five lessons free as a taster. Details are on the [Hexham Bridge Club website](#).

We can also offer u3a members a free period of membership (up to a year) if they wish to play online at 'Bridge Club Live' with friends and other u3a members across the country.

Please contact Ann Rooke at [annrooke5@gmail.com](mailto:annrooke5@gmail.com) for more information.



## Your committee

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## Membership

We currently have 487 members, including 11 associate members.



Tynedale u3a is a registered charity (number 515733).

# WELCOME

A very warm welcome to Sallie Piper, Roger Newsome, Kate Robinson, Karen Barrett, David Piper and Philip Ashmore, who have recently joined our u3a.

## Dates for your diary

### Monthly meeting - 3 January 2023 at 2pm

Spadeadam, Paul Cronin

### Desert Island Discs - 17 January 2023 at 2pm

Castaway: Ian Diggory

### Extra open meeting - 24 January 2023 at 2pm

Professor Mike Bentley, Antarctica and climate change

### And beyond January:

### Monthly meetings - February to June 2023

7 February	Confessions of a cheesemaker, Simon Raine
7 March	AGM
4 April	Tales of the Tyne, Jo Bath
2 May	RNLI, David Hastings
6 June	Northumberland Greyhound Rescue
7 July	Cragside, Liz Finch



## Next issue of the newsletter

The next issue of the newsletter will be published in February 2023.

We welcome contributions from groups and individual members.

**Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor, Alicia Cresswell, by 26 January. Email address: [tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com](mailto:tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com).**

Thank you