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Straight from the horse's mouth - out with the old and in with

A very Happy New Year to all our Members

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday 2nd January at 2pm

in the Great Hall at Hexham Abbey

Topic; 'The Reivers'
given by Maks Loth-Hill

Maks is a Teaching Fellow in the Department of History at Durham University and has worked at Carlisle Castle, Lanercost Priory and Tullie House.

The Border Reivers were raiders along the Anglo-Scottish border from the late 13th century to the beginning of the 17th century. They raided the entire Border country without regard to their victims' nationality.

Their heyday was in the last hundred years of their existence and their exploits have been romanticised by novelists such as Sir Walter Scott and through the folk tradition and ballads.

Maks' talk addresses this mixture of fact and fiction.

Just a reminder that if you miss the Monthly Meeting talk,
it is made available on YouTube and all members are emailed the link.

Your Opportunity to Be a Willing Volunteer!!

There will be a vacancy on the Committee from March for a new Program Secretary. This post is responsible for finding speakers for our monthly meeting and making suitable arrangements. In practice, most potential speakers come to us or are recommended by members.

It is not an onerous task but you do need to be fairly organised and capable of running a calendar.

The current incumbent has arranged talks up to and including August (plus November) of 2024, so it gives the incoming Program Secretary plenty of time to find their feet.

It is a very fulfilling and influential position.

If this is something that you think may interest you, please contact our Chair Wendy or the retiring Secretary Barrie, both of whom will be very happy to talk you through the role. Wendy and Barrie's contact details are on the last page of the newsletter.



FOR YOUR DIARY

IN 2024 we are hoping to hold a number of fun events, beginning with an introduction to Carpet Bowls at the Community Centre in Hexham.

Planning is underway for trips to Auckland Castle and the Usher College in Durham sometime in the middle of the year.

We are also looking to go to Wallington on a tour that includes the Attics and Cellars. Another interesting trip will be to Marchmont House in the Scottish Borders.

As soon as the dates are known we will advertise them so that you express your interest and make your bookings.

Margaret Earl

For information, or to register for events please contact
Margaret Earl at - tu3aevents@yahoo.com or by telephone at 01434
689123

A Few Warming Words for the New Year

Colin our Groups Coordinator has been helping convenors find new venues for the different groups but he's been faced with unexpected problems.

The Welsh groups need a building with a roof full of leeks whilst the French people want somewhere with a convenient place to oui. Some Geology members only want to get stoned and Jazz Appreciation is happy to ad lib anywhere. Poetry people love working with the adverse whilst the Bridge club needs somewhere close to troubled waters. Finally, the music groups just need a room available at 5/4 time.

So a BIG THANK you to Colin for his efforts and please let me know of any support groups to help overcome a Christmas cracker joke obsession.

Mike Forster

NEW INTEREST GROUP IDEAS

Here are some new group ideas for you to think about for 2024

Summer carol singing – to avoid the cold weather

Singing for fun – because it ought to be

Pole vaulting with a rubber pole – for those afraid of heights

Motor cycling

Fishing

Potholing – aka driving on Northumberland back roads

Understanding Russia – because we probably should

Philosophy – because I think Sometimes

Hopscotch – a beer and whisky group

Getting to grips with using AI – Note: The 'I' is for intelligence not insemination

Railway challenge – accurately predicting a strike free day

YouTube – sharing the most informative / ridiculous / etc. finds on YouTube

The Group Fixer's ideas after sampling mulled wine....

A Reminder.....

How to Make a Geological Map - of a bit of Northumberland, Britain...and the world...

Following on from Ian Jackson's talk at the 7th November Monthly Meeting on Northeast Rocks: The history of the Northeast in 20 stones, he has kindly agreed to give a more specialist talk on Tuesday 23rd January 2024 at 7pm at Hexham Golf Club.

The bar will be open at the Golf Club serving teas, coffees, soft and alcoholic drinks (to be paid for). The talk will last for 40 minutes to an hour and will be followed by an opportunity for questions.

There is no charge to attend, however I need to keep an eye on numbers just to ensure we do not exceed the capacity of the room (100). It would be helpful therefore if you could let me know if you would like to attend by emailing steve_rozario@hotmail.com or calling him on 07748981847.

Background to the Topic

The challenge of a BGS field geologist in producing each of his 1:10,000 scale map sheets of 25 square kilometres of Britain is to use his expertise to interpret whatever evidence there is - outcrops, the shape of the topography, boreholes, river and road exposures, and in the absence of those, soil type and vegetation - and complete his map.

The challenge of BGS, as the body responsible for Britain's geology since 1835, is to assemble those map sheets (many thousands), into a consistent national map and make them available to society; in the 21st century this means digitally. The challenge of geology as a science is to recognise that the world and its peoples need the best and most coherent geological data possible to achieve sustainability for our environment and resource demands. Rocks and the opportunities and hazards they present do not respect or stop at political frontiers and so to the best of our ability our maps and science need to be joined up.

This talk will describe those three challenges and how successful we have been in achieving them.

CONVENOR CONSULTATION MEETING

Help for Convenors - One issue discussed at the convenor consultation meeting in November was the apparent general reluctance of members to take on the role of group convenor. A number of practical measures were discussed to assist a convenor starting a new group or taking over an existing group. Two key items were:

To provide a mentor(s) for new convenors. The mentor being an existing convenor for a similar type of group e.g. a language group mentor for a new language group.

The 'group fixer' to run a discussion / advice session for new and prospective convenors on a monthly basis. These would be 'on request' sessions.

New Group - We encourage all members with ideas for new groups to submit their ideas for inclusion in the newsletter.

We also encourage existing groups to help develop new 'spin off' groups in the same general subject area as a means of handling waiting lists.

Meeting Venue Survey -If you have not already responded to the 'group fixer' to say whether your group is interested in subsidised, rented accommodation do please let him know your response as soon as possible in January.

Have a great year. Colin

Visit to Suez Waster Recovery A Load of Rubbish - Energy from Waste

Once a fortnight, every home in Tynedale parks a green household rubbish bin at the roadside. Then the nice bin-men tip the contents into a wagon called Dennis and take it away. What happens next? Well, on 29 November a small group from Tynedale U3A travelled to the Suez Waste Recovery site at Billingham on Teesside to find out.



On arrival at the smart reception area, we were warmly welcomed by John, our affable host for the next two hours, and shown into a conference room for tea and coffee. John explained the history of the plant, which goes back over 25 years, initially serving just Teesside.

Since then the plant has more than doubled in size and now handles the non-recyclable waste for all of the north-east local authorities and also numerous independent businesses. Suez has long-term contracts with the local authorities for which we all pay via our Council Tax. (Suez UK is the British arm of Suez SA, a French based Water and Waste Management Company.)

Tynedale's waste is first taken to Hexham Household Waste Recycling Centre (known to most of us as "the dump" or "the tip"). The waste is then loaded on to closed articulated lorries, which carry up to 24 tons - the contents of three full bin wagons - before being driven the 60 miles to Suez on Teesside. The rest of the process we would see on our visit.

After first being fitted out with high-vis jackets, hard hats and safety goggles we were taken to the high-tech Weigh-bridge. Here the trucks are weighed in - Suez charges its users by the kilogram of waste. There is a constant stream of vehicles during opening hours (8am-7pm, although the plant operates 24 hours a day). The trucks then drive up a ramp and tip their load into giant holding pits, one of which we were taken to see from behind a glass screen on the fifth floor control room, which is full of all manner of technology. The waste is progressively fed into huge furnaces which incinerate it at temperatures of 1200°C. The heat produced is used to boil water, producing steam to drive turbines which generates electricity, which is fed into the national grid at a substation on site.



The plant produces enough electricity to power a city the size of York. It is a very efficient and highly automated process which is a vast improvement, both economically and environmentally, on the old method of waste disposal i.e. landfill.



As we toured the site, we asked many questions, most of which John anticipated. I was surprised to learn that there is no close inspection of the refuse before incineration, although large non-combustible items are removed if spotted in time. Sometimes bad stuff does get through, for example John said that large steel gas bottles occasionally find their way in and at 1200°C these explode with some force, so the furnaces are armoured. He mentioned a case a few years ago, when some discarded munitions went in a furnace, which resulted in a lot of noise and no little excitement!

However, it was very clear to us is that Health and Safety is paramount on site with rules rigidly applied. Emissions from the site are strictly controlled with noxious substances removed by filters and scrubbers. but suffice to say that data relating to emissions is recorded continuously and the plant has never failed an inspection by the relevant authority.

This was a most enjoyable and enlightening visit. Suez is keen to raise public awareness of what they do and future visitors would be welcome. I would encourage fellow U3A members to take the opportunity when it arises.

Your committee

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Membership

542 Members
14 Associates



A VERY WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

David Laffey
Jeanne Robertson
John Ord
Janet Shucksmith
Elizabeth Jane Mavin

Raymond Bell
Ellen Wallbanks
Janice Graham
Kevin Mavin

Next issue of the newsletter

We very much welcome written contributions and photos from groups and individual members.

Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor, Tim O'Brien, at tyneu3anleditor@gmail.com

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.....

DEADLINE for the NEXT NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 25th

Forthcoming Monthly Meetings Topics and Speakers

6 February 2024
Battle of Britain North East
given by Dennis Fox

5th March 2024
Annual General Meeting

We do hope you have enjoyed this edition of the Newsletter

Please join us on the Tynedale u3a Facebook page to keep up to date with information on events,

 Follow us on