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Monthly Meeting, Tuesday 5 July 2022 at 2pm in the Great Hall, Hexham Abbey - and on Zoom

Topic: Living, working and doing scientific research in Antarctica

Speaker: Professor Mike Bentley



Mike Bentley is a Professor of Antarctic Geoscience in the Department of Geography at Durham University. His research work specialises in understanding how the Antarctic sheet is changing due to climate change.

He will be speaking to Tynedale u3a members on living and working in Antarctica, and highlighting some of the exciting and important scientific research being carried out by UK scientists in Antarctica, including a diverse range of glaciology, oceanography and biology.

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.

Tea and coffee will be served after the meeting.

Events

Garden party

Our association's first major event since lockdown took place at Corbridge Cricket Club on 14 June. Sixty five of our members met to socialise, play quits and croquet, and listen to live music by Robson's Choice, a group of Northumbrian pipers.

Numbers had to be restricted in case of bad weather because indoor space is limited. But the weather was fine on the day and most members chose to sit outside and enjoy the sunshine and the lovely views.

Caterers Top Nosh provided sandwiches and cakes, u3a committee members and volunteers served tea and coffee, and the Cricket Club opened the bar for those wanting soft drinks or beer.

The event itself was free of charge, but we asked for donations to St Oswald's Hospice, the charity supported by Robson's Choice. We also ran a raffle that raised £305 for the hospice.

We thank our events coordinator, Sarah Bowen, and committee members and volunteers for their part in making the garden party such a successful event.



Open Day



u3a Open Day

Friday 23 September

11:00—15:00

Venue: The Great Hall in the Abbey

The aims of the open day are:

- ◆ To showcase u3a to the public to attract new members
- ◆ To provide an opportunity for existing members to learn about other groups

Groups: We need you to support the open day by providing interesting, and preferably interactive, displays either from a single group or in combination with other groups. These displays will be the main feature of the open day.

We also plan secondary, none too serious displays:

Members: We invite you to submit a photograph or image that encapsulates what it is you get from participating in the u3a. Please include a caption for your photograph.

Groups: We invite you to submit a photograph, an object or a creation that demonstrates what you do.

Please start thinking about your contribution to these displays. We will organise collection and collation of all contributions from early September, with details in the September newsletter.

Members: We would like as many of you as possible to attend our Open Day, even if you just pop in for 15 minutes. Please support your groups if you can.

Desert Island Discs 2022-2023

Following the success of the first two series of Desert Island Discs, it has been decided that we should run a third series through next winter. This is good news and I'm delighted to act as Roy Plomley (Lauren Laverne to younger readers) once again.

However, Desert island Discs needs castaways if it is to work, so I'm looking to recruit six more members who are willing to share eight pieces of music of their choosing, together with something of their life story.

I'm already hopeful that we have two or three possible volunteers, but if you would like to take part, or find out more about what it involves, do speak to me, or give me a ring on 01434 606215. The series will run monthly from October to March.



Mike Worthington

Groups liaison update

New group for crossword fans

Chris Simmons has suggested a Crossword Group and is the point of contact for this proposal. The general way forward for a new group is for interested parties to make contact, in this case with Chris, and discuss the idea, maybe in a get-together over a coffee in a Hexham café, to compare notes on what the group should do, how it should do it, how to meet etc. All of these are down to the group to decide.



If you are interested, do get in touch with Chris by phone (01434 600993) or by email (chris@csimmons.plus.com).

Pub/board games

Here is the scenario: A pleasant evening in the back room of a local pub with a good pint and an evening of games and good conversation. Could be traditional pub games from dominoes to cribbage or any of the plethora of box games available these days.



In trying to avoid the habitual aversion to the concept of 'convenor', the set-up would be as follows: Interested parties send their name to me (Colin Argent). Each meeting one person takes on the responsibility of nominating the pub and the game/games for that evening. We anticipate that meetings would not be confined to Hexham but rather spread between pubs in the Tyne Valley, in fact anywhere with an appropriate room and good beer. Frankly, it is hard to see how you could resist the opportunity.



What do other u3as do?

Here are some interest groups from u3as around the country. Maybe one of them will spark an idea! I particularly like the last two.

Archaeology, Architecture, Card Games (cribbage, whist, canasta etc), Pub Games, Ukelele, Dancing (line dancing, folk dancing etc), Marquetry, Cycling, Egyptology, Greek, Countries (Russia, China etc), Maths, Antiques and Collectables, Meteorology, Creative Writing, Anthropology, Board Games (chess, monopoly etc), Pubs and Churches, Engineering, Calligraphy, Knitting, Quilting.



Colin Argent
groupfixertynedale@btinternet.com

Group news and activities

Environment group

Are environmental problems caused by technology and economics or by human psychology? After dipping our toes in the literature on environmental attitudes last month, we returned for further immersion. Did our evolution equip us to deal with problems of 'PAIN' - Personal, Abrupt, Immoral and Now - but also give us 'Five Ds' we deploy to keep climate change messages away (Distance, Doom, Dissonance, Denial and iDentity). If global warming were caused by eating adorable puppies, surely we would all be massing in the streets?

Strident messages of imminent doom turn people off, but it is odd that climate scientists criticise the public for ignoring the climate science whilst themselves ignoring the psychological science for decades. Perhaps softer frames of insurance, health, security, preparedness and opportunity might prompt the required actions. Much will depend on how far reaching those changes are - bringing to mind the Joel Pett cartoon of 2009 where a climate sceptic exclaims, 'What if the whole climate issue was a hoax, and we ended up creating a better world for nothing?' Meanwhile, the search for low-hanging fruit and brightsiding 'opportunities' for change starting tomorrow continues.



Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

We are frequently told that future generations will never forgive us if we crash the climate, but how much time do we spend thanking our ancestors for the wealth, knowledge and institutions they bequeathed us - and to what extent are these the 'positive externalities' of burning fossil fuels? If psychology matters, presumably our descendants will be too busy gawping and gossiping at the latest celebrity tittle tattle to bother about us, whilst also treating their own problems of the day with the same incomprehension, inactivity and indifference as we muster.

Matthew Naylor

Wildlife group

We welcomed several new members this month and 10 of us met at the Dilston Physic Garden for our first outdoor gathering. Scientists are using this unique garden for education, to show how wild plants have been used by people across the Earth to help and heal since prehistoric times.

The hundreds of different plants, grouped by their uses, are tended by a team of volunteers for research, education and some grown for herbal infusions. After Elaine's talk taking us to various zones, we were free to explore the well-signed garden.

We are now looking forward to our next outing to explore the unusual wildlife at the Spetchells.

Jenny Loring



From our members

Coal holes

Whilst most of us now use central heating or gas and electric fires, coal fires were a big thing back in the day. I had not realised that coal was a vital part of establishing the British Empire and that countries set on increasing their power, like China, still put cheap energy ahead of protecting the climate. I thus recommend the book *Black Gold* by Jeremy Paxman, which is currently being serialised on BBC Radio 4 and is available [here](#).



There are many references to the North East and how coal built up the economy here. But our coal was not suitable for steam powered warships as it gave off too much black smoke, so Welsh coal was used by the navy.

I must publicly thank BBC Radio 4 people for guiding us to wonderful books like *Sapiens* and now *Black Gold*, which give such totally new insights into our lives.

Mike Foster

mikef@wowu.co.uk

Request for old candle wax



As many of you know, I make new candles from old candle ends under the label 'Candles for Charity'. Since 1994, when I first embarked on this enterprise, I have raised a substantial amount of cash for a number of local, national and international charities. Over the last two years the absence of local sales events has limited my income, but recent relaxation of Covid restrictions has resulted in a marked increase in sales to the extent that I am now in urgent need of more old candle wax.

If you have any old candles, of any shape or colour, they can be left (bagged please) at the designated wax bin at my workshop at Plunderheath, Haydon Bridge, NE476JU (immediately inside the upper gate), or behind the bar at The General Havelock Inn in Haydon Bridge. Thank you in anticipation of your assistance.

Rev Dr John Harrison

Bridge for beginners online course

I joined the u3a because I am helping Steve Carter - the UK's u3a subject coordinator for 'Bridge' to run a beginners' course online. This course is free to celebrate the u3a's 40th anniversary. There is also going to be an online tournament for bridge players in September.



I know that Tynedale used to have a bridge group with Brian Elias but I understand it is no longer running. If you would like to learn bridge online, please contact Steve Carter in the first instance at u3aBridgeGroup@hotmail.com.

Ann Rooke

Coffee morning



We are holding a coffee morning for new members and potential members on Friday 8 July in the Wilfred Room in the Abbey buildings at 10.30am. If you have joined our u3a this year and have been unable to attend a coffee morning, you are very welcome to join us. If you know someone who may be interested in joining the u3a, please invite them along. Any enquires to John Dark, tyneu3amemesec1@gmail.com or 602584.

Flash fiction

In this issue we publish three more stories submitted by our members.

What a lovely morning by Susan Turnbull

Oh, what a lovely morning! The sun is shining and the dew on the grass is glistening. A gentle, spring breeze is ruffling the swathe of daffodils and crocus that adorn the lawn; the birds are singing.

What is that? Movement at the edge of the garden? Yes, that makes the scene perfect; a roe deer has just effortlessly sprung over the fence and entered the garden. It is amazing that they can jump so high without any run-up or show any sign of effort. It sauntered across with its delicately light tread on those spindly legs which don't look strong enough to bear its weight. It has perfect fur, as if it has just been bathed and groomed, and such a lovely russet brown. What a privilege to have this creature in my garden. Should I go for the camera? To do that would mean letting go of the sight before me – no, I don't want to miss a second; it probably won't stay long.

It starts to sniff the daffodils – oh no, it is eating them! What do I do? What do I do? Stop! Stop! You nasty animal, shoo, shoo, go away!

Afterlife by Barrie Mellars

Whack! Went the golf ball, wow! 300 yards.

Whack! Went the ball of the second golfer, my word! Another 300 yards.

Both balls stopped on the sunlight fairway. The grass was short, the air balmy and the greens beautifully cut and fast.

"You know" said the first player, "This is just about the most perfect course I have ever played"

"I know" replied the second man "I never thought it would be like this in Hell"

"Hell?" answered the first, "What about this could possibly be Hell?"

"Wait until you get to the green and try to putt"

Two more shots sailed gracefully through the air both landing on the immaculate green.

"Wait a second" cried the first "Where's the hole?"

"If you think this is bad, wait until you try the snooker!"

WELCOME TO HELL

Coming up Trumps by Ian Diggory

The Johnsons at number 10 were a byword for antisocial behaviour in the village. Now they were gone. No one could be definite about the circumstances of their sudden departure. Village gossip suggested they had moved to a commune on a Scottish island. The detritus spread around their garden was the only evidence they had lived in the village. Soon all that would be erased, ready for the next tenant to take up residence.

Theresa, the parish council chairperson, noted with satisfaction that complaints about the Johnsons would no longer feature on the council agenda. She was pleased to see how her Cleansing sub-committee had again demonstrated its ability to resolve a tricky issue. It had been a struggle to get the funds, but constructing the memorial wall foundations in the parish cemetery had proved both propitious and appropriate as events turned out.

Theresa regularly received enquiries from other councillors seeking advice on their "Johnson" families. As she perused the latest batch of enquiries, her attention was drawn to the case of the troublesome Trump clan. Theresa thought this case definitely merited further attention and immediately convened a Cleansing sub-committee meeting. 2022 was going to be an interesting year!

Your committee

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Membership

We currently have 444 members, including eight associate members.



Tynedale u3a is a registered charity (number 515733).

welcome

A very warm welcome to Gary Law, Liz Sterland, Kenneth O'Hara, John Barnes, Ann Rooke and Susan Wilson, who have recently joined our u3a.

Dates for your diary

Monthly meetings - September to December 2022

All meetings start at 2pm

- 6 September: Tony Flynn, The Brasilia of the North?
- 4 October: Richard Young, Buildings of Northumberland
- 1 November: John Richards, Flora of Northumberland
- 6 December: Chris Pollock, Plants that kill you



Next issue of the newsletter

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

We welcome contributions from groups and individual members.

Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor, Alicia Cresswell, by 25 August. Email address: tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com.

Thank you