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Monthly meeting online, Tuesday 1 June 2021 at 2pm

Topic: Great British Eccentrics

Speaker: Paul Robbins

Have you ever wondered why Britain has had so many eccentrics over the centuries? 'Great British Eccentrics and Rogues' is a highly amusing talk that looks at some of the world's great eccentrics and rogues who just happened to be British! Paul takes you on a light-hearted journey that looks at some of the great characters from our past, like the lord who spent many hours floating in a large indoor glass water tank writing rude letters to the Prime Minister. You will hear about a unique singer, a comically UFO-obsessed peer and then, moving to more recent times, some of the great eccentrics of the last 30 years including some world-famous characters who you will recognise immediately, as well as wonderfully ordinary eccentric people.



Eccentric Characters of Newcastle by Henry Perlee Parker
c.1817



Paul Robbins is an experienced presenter, historian and author with over 40 years' experience in public speaking.

Monthly meeting survey

As many of you will have heard at our last monthly meeting, we are in the process of putting together a very short survey to be sent out to all members of u3a Tynedale to help us plan these monthly meetings for the coming year, as we recover from the Covid situation.

The survey will be sent by email via Survey Monkey and should take no more than 5-10 minutes to complete. Your help with this will greatly aid our planning for the future, as well as giving all of you a chance to have your say regarding subjects you would like to hear about. The results will be published in the newsletter.

When our face-to-face monthly meetings restart at the Abbey in September, we are hoping to continue to use Zoom during the meetings to include those members for whom travel to Hexham is not easy but would like to be able to participate.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who steadfastly supported the monthly Zoom meetings over the various lockdowns, including all who supported the Desert Island Discs despite the many and varied technical problems.

Barrie Mellars
Programme Secretary

Doing our best to keep safe

I sat down with a deep sigh, knowing I must talk about risk assessments. It's not as if they are a new phenomenon; all of us have been making decisions about risk from an early age. We make assessments about what we can do, and we consider dangers when we take on new challenges. Yes, some of us take more risks than others, but we all do risk assessments.

We as an organisation operating under the umbrella of the Third Age Trust are expected to carry out risk assessments to comply with the organisation's insurance. Recently groups and individuals have raised questions with me about what we do when we return to groups meeting.

Prior to the pandemic, members were asked not to attend any u3a activity if they felt unwell. We also asked members to consider the demands of any new activity before taking part. Frequently, the ageing process requires us to reassess what we can do, and we adjust, sometimes begrudgingly.

Coming out of the lockdown we ask all members to do a personal risk assessment before engaging in any u3a activity involving meeting person to person. I'm sure you would do it without being asked. Please do not take part in face-to-face activities if:

- ◆ you are self-isolating or quarantined,
- ◆ or have any Covid symptoms (high temperature, loss of smell and/or a new prolonged cough),
- ◆ or have tested positive for Covid-19.

The Tynedale u3a committee and group convenors will do all they can to ensure that the community venues where groups meet satisfy health and safety regulations. We will be making sure they are Covid compliant before groups reconvene.

Members should still take responsibility to alert the committee if they feel premises do not meet the required standards.

For outdoor activities, convenors will ensure members are given sufficient information to enable them to make their own decisions.

Wendy Dale
Chair

Hybrid meetings for groups

Now that we are starting to emerge from strict lockdown, some groups will be considering moving back towards physical meetings again. But after meeting over Zoom for more than a year, and with Covid still a real concern for many members, there can be a reluctance to move completely to physical meetings too soon. And that is where hybrid meetings come in.



These are a combination of people meeting in person in a public meeting place or private home (when allowed) with people joining the meeting using a video system such as Zoom. In support of this, I've put together some things to consider to help groups decide if a hybrid meeting might work for them.

The first thing to think about is internet access. For Zoom to work well, there needs to be good broadband provision in the meeting location. Although a mobile wireless connection can be used, it is not recommended for Zoom as it is very data hungry and not very efficient over low bandwidths.

The second consideration is the size of the room used for the meeting. In any sized room you will need to consider both the people in the room and the people joining the meeting remotely over Zoom. All attendees will need to be able to see and hear each other and any presentation materials being used by the group. The rest of this guidance is for groups meeting in small rooms, although the principles apply to all hybrid meetings.

There are really two problems to be addressed. One is to enable Zoom participants to hear what is being said in the room - inbuilt microphones in computers are often limited in range - and the other is for room participants to hear what is said on any Zoom shared screen presentation, such as a YouTube video, as the sound from the internal speakers on a computer is often limited. If internal mic and speakers are not sufficient - group leaders should hold a trial hybrid meeting to find out - then consider using external speakers and microphone. These are not expensive (many people may have smart speakers already and some may even have a remote mic) and each can be purchased for less than £20. Examples of each for meetings in small rooms are included at the end of this article (N.B. Each of these examples requires a computer with access to the 3.5mm mic or speaker jack point. Where your computer has only one multi jack point and you require both devices, you will need an adaptor kit. Link to example : <https://tinyurl.com/yzr3v6cp>).



A computer in the room can drive the Zoom session as normal but if the image can be displayed onto a large TV screen (using an HDMI cable or cast to a Smart TV) or even projected onto a white wall via a projector if the meeting room has one, then the physical attendees can see everyone more easily. I would also recommend that a second device is used in the room and set up as a Zoom participant and its camera pointed at the room attendees so that the Zoom participants can see the people in the room. An iPad or other tablet with camera is ideal for this if one of your group members has one. Just remember to invite the tablet owner to the Zoom meeting even though they are in the room, and mute the iPad to avoid feedback.



We are all finding our way with this in preparation for resuming our group activities and I'm sure we will all have experiences to share with our fellow members over the coming months. Any tips and hints that you can share on hybrid meetings, including what technology works best, will be most welcome.

Good luck and happy hybriding!

Link to an example low cost microphone: <https://tinyurl.com/m24sbh6v>

Link to an example low cost speaker : <https://tinyurl.com/pn5cxw59>

All examples in this article are provided for information only and are not endorsed by Tynedale u3a.

David Pattinson

Group news and activities

Spanish for Improvers group

Our group has met online on a fortnightly basis throughout the last year and we have continued to make really good progress with our Spanish (whilst also having fun!), thanks to our superb lead learner Sue. After all our hard work, we are taking a summer break and will reconvene in the autumn, when we look forward to meeting face-to-face again and welcoming new members. Watch out for the announcement of our restart details in the u3a newsletter and in the meantime, have a lovely summer!

Deirdre Dodd



Birdwatching group



Wheatear—Image by Richard Bentley

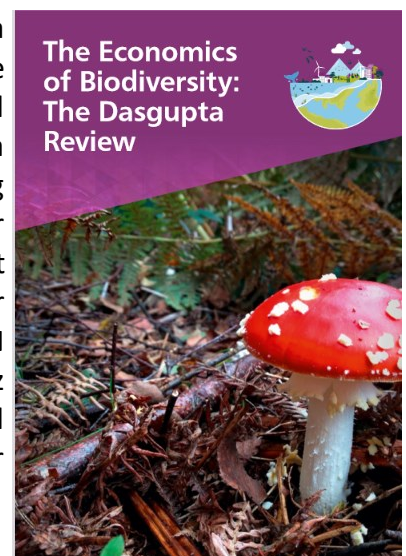
Many more of our summer visitors have arrived in the last month, and we have been able to enjoy the arrival of swifts over our towns. Further afield, common redstarts and pied flycatchers are in Letah Wood, and ring ouzels and wheatears are on the moors. The avocets are back at the coast in greater numbers, puffins are on Coquet Island, and all the five different terns that nest in the county have been seen. We are so fortunate to have such beautiful places in which to see these birds.

Richard Bentley

Environment group

We met outside by the bandstand in the Sele to talk about the Dasgupta Review, *The Economics of Biodiversity*. Some of the main points in the review about the present condition and problems of the environment, and possible ways of addressing them, were presented. This was followed by a review of the efforts that different schools of Economics have been making over the last 50 years to provide analysis and guidance in this field. Our lively discussion was just getting into the finer points of ‘weak’ against ‘strong’ sustainability, basically ‘Can casinos be an economic substitute for coral reefs?’ - a suggestion by the Chief Environmental Economist of the UN Environment programme, when we were interrupted by the arrival of a jazz group to play in the bandstand. At this point we agreed that as we needed more time to consider this huge subject, it will be on the agenda for our next meeting in June.

Richard Bentley



Hadrian's Wall group



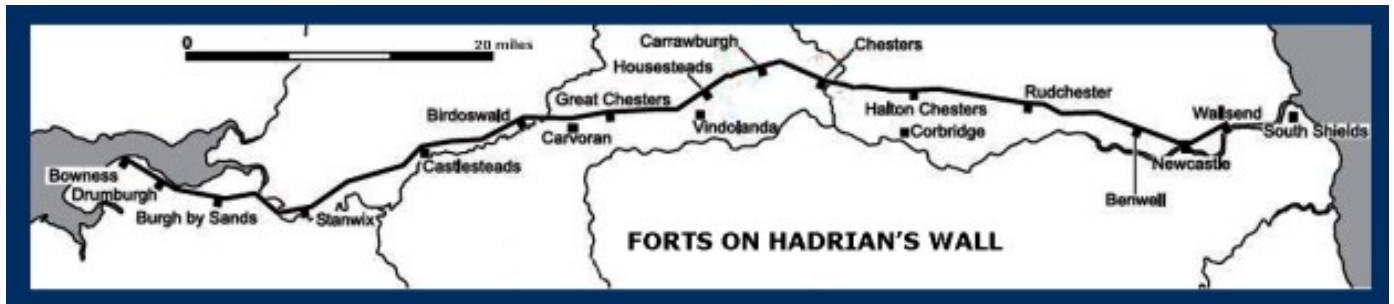
Thursday 1 July at 2pm

Social Distanced Meeting at Corbridge Roman Town (subject to any change in government regulations)

This is the start of our 8th season. I suggest we ignore most of 2020 programme and stay relatively local. We can discuss this on the day.

We will discuss Corbridge as a Roman town and compare it with other Roman towns.

We can look at the possibility of river transport up the Tyne to supply the eastern forts, with no identified road east of Corbridge.



Then we can look at the bridge, probably the largest in Roman Britain, which was higher and wider than the bridge we see today.



Everyone is welcome; the less you know, the more interesting you will find it.

Have a look at our [website](#), which covers almost all Roman sites in Northern England with almost 100 guides, many produced thanks to lockdown.

John Sandiford

Convenor

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From our members

Underwater volcanoes

Continuing the accidental theme of volcanoes that I've been following recently, there's some interesting new research on underwater volcanoes just published. Underwater volcanism is still very poorly understood, even though there is an awful lot of it happening deep under the oceans. Occasionally there are underwater eruptions which create vast pumice rafts, [like this one](#), but a lot of underwater eruptions are probably never detected at the ocean surface.



Pumice raft adrift in the Pacific Ocean, by Joshua Stevens, NASA Earth Observatory

This new research looks at the hot water 'megaplumes' that form above underwater eruptions and suggests a possible new model for heat transfer which might better explain the size of these megaplumes. It also speculates on whether megaplumes might have provided a mechanism for spreading early life forms around the planet. A readable account of the research is published [here](#).

Steve Rozario

Competitions

Photographic competition



A competition for the best photograph of u3a members doing typical u3a activities. The reward is that we will use your picture in a Hexham Courant advertising campaign and on leaflets for our relaunch this summer. We will need the permission of everyone in the shot to use the picture in this way.

Photos should show the faces and hands in close-up unless the activity is whole-body (eg Tai Chi). The people in the picture should not be looking at the camera.

The competition is to help us celebrate u3a day on the 2nd June. Photos should be taken on or around that date please.

Please send your entries in JPEG format to kevinaks@gmail.com.

Trebuchet competition

A few years ago, we (the now defunct Improbable Technology Group of the Mid-Northumberland u3a) ran a trebuchet competition. Interested parties built their own trebuchet (throwing arm limited to 1 metre) and the winning machine threw a golf ball ~35 metres.

We are now considering a second competition but with a bigger trebuchet (throwing arm of 2 metres) launching a hard rubber ball. The outcome is to be judged on distance and repeatability (proximity to a target with repeat throws).

I will build a trebuchet frame for all to use. Interested parties will only need to provide:

- ◆ A 2-metre throwing arm: material, pivot point etc of their own choice
- ◆ A counterweight to provide the throwing power: any material/design
- ◆ A sling to enhance the throw: any material/design

Schedule:

- ◆ Trebuchet frame to be ready ~mid-June
- ◆ Trial days to test arm design July – August
- ◆ Competition September / October

As with all u3a activities, a risk assessment is required. I have to report that the test/competition is likely to be interrupted by random outbreaks of beer/bbq/pizza.

Contact: Colin Argent at argent2010@btinternet.com

Your committee

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Membership

We currently have 427 members, including 9 associate members.



Tynedale u3a is a registered charity (number 515733).

Welcome!

A warm welcome to Patricia (Tish) Anderson and Hilary Gordon, who have recently joined our u3a.



Monthly meetings June-November 2021

6 July at 2pm, via Zoom: Geoff Hughes, Take me up the Tyne: Explore the river from source to mouth and discover the fascinating events and legends along the journey.

7 September at 2pm: Space Group, Hitchhiker's Guide to the Solar System

5 October at 2pm: Margret Jacot, Central Asia, where the desert meet the mountains

2 November at 2pm: Iain Moffat, The Somme 1st July 1916 - The Story of the Tyneside Scottish and Tyneside Irish

Next issue of the newsletter

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

We welcome contributions from groups and individual members.

Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor, Alicia Cresswell, at tyneu3aeditor@gmail.com by 24 June.