

# Newsletter

Hartlepool & District u3a

Issue 86, July 2024



## Comments from the Chair

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who attended last month's AGM. We had a very good turnout with over 40 members on the day. I suspect the draw of a quiz from yours truly helped to boost the numbers, and I completely reject the suggestion that the thought of my quiz actually reduced the numbers. Perish the thought! Free tea, coffees and biscuits might have also played their part. As you know, we usually charge 50p and this helps, along with the raffle, to keep our fees at £20 for the coming year.

The AGM is a very important affair where members get to hear about the state of our u3a, including how your membership fees are spent, and the number of groups that are available for you to join. You also get to elect the committee as a whole and you can nominate new members for the committee and put forwards resolutions to be discussed and voted upon. This AGM saw one of our committee stepping down so we now have 7 at the moment. We have to have a minimum of 5 up to a maximum of 12 so we need more of you to step up and fill the gaps. Some of our committee are having to take on 2 or 3 roles, and some of us will reach the end of their tenure shortly. Without a committee there will be no u3a, so it is up to you. Anyone can be co-opted on to the committee at any time of the year and so we will be delighted to see some new faces.

Our next speaker on the 5th of July will be James Ruddock from Tees Rover Rescue so that should be well worth coming along for. As you know, the hall is shut during August, so after the July meeting we will be having a break until September.

Meanwhile,

Take care everybody.

Roger.

## Natural History Group Visit Spion Cop

Irene Archer

We met at the entrance to Spion Cop Cemetery on the afternoon of Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June on a cloudy blustery day. Carole helped us to identify many different flowers and Barry Hayton took some wonderful photographs. This is the third time that we have visited, so it was easy to find the pyramidal orchids on a sunny bank that we had seen before. Carole pointed out some bee orchids growing in some long grass which was particularly long with all this rain.



Bee Orchid. © Barry Hayton

Bee orchids like a limestone rich habitat which is low in nutrients. In order to extract sufficient nutrients from the soil, it relies upon a symbiotic relationship with mycorrhizal fungus. In the northern hemisphere the orchid is self-pollinated but in the Mediterranean region, they are pollinated by bees which are attracted by the bee-like flower.

The pyramidal orchid (shown below) is pollinated by butterflies and moths and can grow on loamy, clay and limestone soil.



Pyramidal Orchid © Barry Hayton

Our next meeting is at Dalton Piercey, 4th July at 1.30, to look at a wild flower meadow.

## From D-Day to the TT races

Cliff Cordiner

With the recent D-Day commemorations I am sure many of you think about your own family members who were involved in the first and second world wars, and maybe even D-Day itself. I know I do. While none of my family were involved in D-Day itself, I have several relatives who took part in both wars including my grandfather who took part in the Atlantic convoys and my great grandfather who fought in the first world war. Although like many others, neither of them ever spoke about it.

You may also have seen the Isle of Man TT races in the news which have taken place recently. One of my ancestors was involved in both the Great War and also the TT races after the war, and it is his story I am writing about here.

Thomas Yates Cordiner was born in the village of Octon in Yorkshire on 7th March 1898. Thomas was one of seven children born to Richard and Frances Cordiner, four boys and three girls. Up until then my family had been farmers, but Richard broke the mould and eventually went on to be the House surgeon at Noble's Hospital in Douglas on the Isle of Man. Two of their sons were killed at the Somme in 1917 which must have been particularly devastating for the family as, like many others, they were never found. They are both commemorated on the memorial at Thiepval.

Thomas was only 16 when war broke out. He joined the Royal Flying Corps on 8th September 1916 as a fitter with the rank of Air Mechanic Class 2. He served in the 58th squadron which was first formed at Cramlington on 8th June, 1916. The squadron moved to France on 10th January, 1918, flying its first operational mission, a bombing attack on an airfield at Rumbeke on the night of 2nd / 3rd February, 1918. They attacked German road and railway targets during the German Spring Offensive in March to April 1918 to disrupt the German advance. In August 1918, the squadron flew night bombing missions in support of the Allied offensive at the second battle of Bapaume.



In September 1918 the squadron replaced its fleet of F.E.2 aeroplanes with the much larger twin-engine Handley Page bombers. At that time they were based at an airfield at Alquines which was not ideal for the large bomber, having poor operating surfaces and awkward approaches. The squadron flew its first mission with the Handley Page on the night of 20th – 21st September, 1918.

By the end of the First World War the squadron had dropped 247 tons of bombs and fired over 400,000 rounds of ammunition while strafing ground targets.

In 1919 the squadron was relocated, and Thomas took part in a non-stop flight from Provence in France to Heliopolis in Egypt. For the day, it was very much a pioneering trip, and it is well known that Air Mechanics often had to carry out hazardous running repairs, even as their aircraft were in flight



By then Thomas was an air mechanic 1st class and was awarded three medals. The George V Air Force Medal, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. The original medal recommendation states: "Thomas Yates Cordiner A.C. 1. Flight from France to Egypt, May to July 1919. A brilliant engine fitter, who was mentioned for special services by his squadron leader."

After the war he returned to the Isle of Man. He must have been a bit of a daredevil and had a "need for speed" as, after the Great War, he took part in the Isle of man TT races in 1923, 1924, and 1925. He is pictured here on his 350cc Matador motor bike in 1925. He finished 15th overall with an average speed of 58 mph. Today they complete the course with an average speed of 135mph!!



Thomas married in 1934 and lived in Ramsay on the Isle of Man until his death in 1986 at the age of 88. He certainly lived a full and exciting life and I would love to have met him.

*All Photographs © Cliff Cordiner*

## Gardening Group Visit to Thornton Hall Liz Milbourn and Helen Eustace



Our Garden group May trip on Bank Holiday Monday was to Thornton Hall near Darlington, we managed to fill a 16-seater minibus, everyone appeared to enjoy themselves, from looking at the lovely gardens to buying plants from the annual plant fair. We will definitely be going again next year.



Photographs © Paul Eustace.

## Murder Most Foul

Barry Hayton



Moor south of Blanchland village, the ruin to the far right - Belmont Farm © Barry Hayton

After an outing to Blanchland in the Derwent Valley I was Googling the area when a 'Castle' icon on the map at Belmont Farm attracted my attention. Further research revealed varieties of the story related below.

Early in the first morning of the year 1880 the young lady housekeeper of Belmont Farm went to the byre. Staining the straw on the floor she saw blood, which she later claimed dripped onto her from the workshop above. She rushed back into the house to raise the alarm with her employer, the elderly, infirm and tottering, Archie Snowball. Together they returned to the byre. Up the stairs they found Archie's eldest son, Robert Snowball, bent over his workbench and a large, bloodstained hammer nearby. Robert was dead with a hammer sized impression in the back of his head.

A doctor was called. He recorded that he believed that Robert had undergone a stroke or similar event and had collapsed on to the bench as some of poor Robert's teeth were embedded in the bench. He recorded no mention of the hammer. Subsequently the local policeman held an inquest which, based on the doctors' findings recorded an accidental death. Robert, a popular man, was buried before many villagers in a local church yard. A day or so later a telegram was sent to Stanhope requesting the attendance of a coroner to an accidental death. About a week later the coroner, policeman and doctor visited the scene. They found that the infirm and tottering Archie had scraped, washed and scrubbed clean the workshop, throwing the washings onto a midden behind the byre. Inspection of the midden revealed more of poor Robert's teeth.

The housekeeper, already under arrest because of her blood-stained clothes, was charged with Robert's murder and incarcerated in Bishop Auckland jail. Archie, infirm and tottering was never considered other than a witness after the event. At the trial in the spring the judge halted the proceedings for lack of evidence and freed the housekeeper.

In the Census of 1881 the young lady housekeeper is recorded as in household employment at Boldron where her history was unknown. Robert's younger brother, seemingly resident at Belmont during these events, is recorded as running the farm. Archie, infirm and tottering, had employed another young lady housekeeper.

No one went to the gallows for the murder of poor Robert Snowball.

For a link to the poem visit [https://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=46533#google\\_vignette](https://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=46533#google_vignette)

# Notice Board

## Natural History Group Meetings 2024

- **July**, Thursday 4th at 1.30 The Batts, Dalton Piercy. This is a new venue. Details about parking and where it is will follow. There are some beautiful meadows here.
- **August**, Thursday 2nd at 1.30 Cowpen Bewley. Meet in the car park for the Butterfly Count.
- **September**, Thursday 5th at 1.30 Hardwick Hall Country Park. Meet near the cafe. Please note that there is a car parking fee.
- **October**, Thursday 3rd at 1.30 Wynyard Woodland Park. Meet outside of the cafe.
- **November**, Thursday 7th at 1.30 the North Gare. Meet in the car park.
- **December**, no meeting

Irene Archer

## Gardening Group Programme 2024

- **June** On Sunday 23rd June we are going to the NGS Open Gardens at Old Quarrington, near Bowburn. Helen and I went last year, the 3 very distinct gardens were lovely, and there were plants for sale and refreshments available. We have 2 car drivers going and we have enough people to fill them, but anyone else is welcome to make their own way there. Meet at the Golden Lion at 11am.
- **July** July's visit is on Saturday 6th July, and will be a visit to the Haughton Le Skerne Open Gardens, near Darlington, these are a range of secluded gardens and there are teas available at the church hall. Only a few of you have signed up for this, so at the moment, it looks like we will again be car sharing.
- **August** Helen and I are away for over half of August and a lot of you may be on holiday too so we will see nearer the time if people want us to arrange anything for August. It will likely be during the last week of the month.
- **September** Garden group visits is to the RHS autumn flower show, at Newby Hall, on Sunday 15th September, we are going by Lee's of Durham coaches again and the price for the coach and RHS admission will be about £40. We have booked seats for the 15 who have said they want to go, but if there is anyone else who wants to go, let us know now and we can book more as long as Lee's still have tickets available.

Contact us if you would like to join us on our garden group trips.

Liz Milbourn and Helen Eustace

## Poem of the Month

### Eiders on the Headland

Low tide on the Headland  
Third day of mists  
And sea frets  
Somewhat eerie feeling  
Along the coast  
Clamminess in the air  
Misty curtain over sea  
Opens  
To a surreal scene  
Of a raft of eiders  
Bobbing gracefully  
On a still sea  
Over one hundred  
Vast majority males  
Majority have left  
Females on nests  
Though the odd male  
Rises  
Our of the water  
Puffing out their chests  
Displaying  
For unattached  
Females  
Who seem  
Suitably unimpressed  
Probably a little  
Too late  
In the season

Roger Say

## Word of the Month

**Bumph (Bumf)** -an informal word for official documents and forms.

In my little office at home (where I edit this Newsletter) I'm surrounded by Bumph. Some of the bumph is filed away in a series of folders and placed on the bookshelves that line the office walls, but there have always been several piles on the floor. The bumph on the floor includes extraneous books & journals. It was one of these combined piles that I tripped over bashing my knee into the office door frame. No doubt many of you will have seen me hobbling about with a walking stick as a result. Needless to say, the office floor has recently been completely cleared of all bumph!

Barry Liddle

## Selected Major Historical Anniversaries in July

- Hong Kong is returned from British control to China (1997)
- Battle of the Somme in WW1 begins (1916)
- Amelia Earhart (American aviation pioneer) disappears (1937)
- Declaration of Independence (founding document of United States) is adopted (1776)
- The National Health Service (NHS) is founded (1948)
- Dolly the Sheep is cloned (1996)

Sources Google/Wikipedia

Barry Liddle

# Life Choices

Barry Liddle



'Life Choices' is hopefully going to be a light-hearted regular column, featuring a different member of our u3a each month. To show you what is involved, I've had a go myself. If you are interested, please get in touch and we can discuss how to customise the questions to reflect your particular 'Life Choices'.

## **Cinema or Theatre?**

Cinema, although I've not been since Covid began.

## **Football or Tennis?**

I'm a sucker for watching all sports.

## **DIY or Gardening?**

Gardening, but my dodgy knees are a hindrance.

## **Playing Guitar or Piano?**

Sadly neither, I was even rubbish at playing the recorder at school.

## **Knitting or Jigsaw?**

Neither – I lost the art of finger knitting when I was 8.

## **BBC1 or ITV1?**

I find very little worth watching on either channel.

## **Broadsheet or Tabloid?**

Reading a newspaper is one of life's great pleasures.

## **Crime Novel or Romantic Fiction?**

Crime - particularly the novels by Ian Rankin

## **Popular or Classical Music?**

I love both and most of the other genres in-between.

## **Pet or animal free zone?**

Pets are for other people.

## **Car or Public Transport?**

Never learned to drive, so it's Shanks's pony, taxi or public transport.

## **Staycation or holiday abroad?**

I've given up on holidays, I like to sleep in my own bed.

## **Home Cooking or Microwave?**

I pretend to myself that I'm Hartlepool's answer to Rick Stein.

## **Fish 'n' Chips or Chinese/Indian.**

Fish 'n' Chips, mushy peas, salt & vinegar from Verrills on the Headland.

## **Cocktails or Single Malt?**

Definitely Single Malt (when I can afford it!)

## **Owl or Lark?**

'Early to bed and early to rise' has always been my motto.

## **Spender or Saver?**

There are cobwebs in my wallet.

## **Glass half full or Glass half empty?**

Sadly, half empty.

## Plains, Trains and Automobiles Quiz

Compiled by Barry Liddle

This quiz does not require any specialist knowledge of planes, trains and automobiles. It has been designed for the enjoyment of all U3A Members. So please give it a go. Answers on page 13.

Q1 Which American President flew on *Airforce One* into Teesside Airport to have lunch in Sedgefield with a British Prime Minister?

- a President George W Bush
- b President Bill Clinton
- c President Donald Trump

Q2 Who was the principal author of a report called '*The Reshaping of the Railways*' published in 1963 that many say decimated the railway network?

- a Bailey
- b Beeching
- c Beveridge

Q3 Which brothers are credited with inventing, building and flying the world's first successful airplane?

- a The Wrong Brothers
- b The Wright Brothers
- c The Chuckle Brothers

Q4 What car did Inspector Morse drive around the streets of Oxford in the TV series of the same name?

- a Jaguar E-Type
- b Jaguar Mark II
- c Lotus Elan

Q5 What is the current name of the principal railway station in Edinburgh?

- a Edinburgh Caledonian
- b Edinburgh North British
- c Edinburgh Waverly

Q6 The Spitfire was one of the most iconic aircraft of WWII. But what was its full name?

- a Hawker Spitfire
- b Hurricane Spitfire
- c Supermarine Spitfire

Q7 The North Yorkshire Moors Railway is a heritage railway running steam trains. Where would you find the engine sheds where the locomotives are maintained and restored?

- a Doncaster
- b Grosmont
- c York

Q8 Which airline entrepreneur was the first to adopt 'low cost/no frills' service for flights across the Atlantic?

- a Sir Richard Branson
- b Sir Freddie Laker
- c Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou

Q9 The National Railway Museum is located in which City?

- a Birmingham
- b London
- c York

Q10 Which actor played the role of WWII flying ace Douglas Bader in the 1956 film 'Reach for the Sky'?

- a Jack Hawkins
- b Kenneth Moore
- c David Niven

Q11 What do you call a payment method available in London that can be used on virtually all travel modes including London Buses, Underground, Docklands Light Railway, London Overground, some river boat services and most National Rail services within the London fare zones?

- a The London card
- b The Oyster card
- c The Venture card

Q12 The Gravelly Hill interchange, popularly known as *Spaghetti Junction*, is located in which part of the country?

- a Birmingham
- b Greater Manchester
- c North London

Q13 What was the name given to the anonymous racing driver on the popular TV series Top Gear?

- a The Trig
- b The Stig
- c The Whizz

Q14 Who was brought in by British Rail management in 1980 to reinvent their much-criticised sandwich offering?

- a Fanny Cradock

- b Prue Leith
- c Margaret Patton

Q15 In 1974 British Airways was created by the merger of which two companies?

- a British Overseas Airways Corporation and British European Airways
- b British Overseas Airways Corporation and British Midland
- c British European Airways and British Midland

Q16 Benjamin Britten wrote the music and a well-known poet wrote the words. He famously put the rhythm of the rails into rhyming couplets: 'This is the Night Mail crossing the border/  
Bringing the cheque and the postal order, /Letters for the rich, letters for the poor' etc. Who was the poet?

- a W H Auden
- b John Betjeman
- c Philip Larkin

Q17 The stainless-steel DeLorean sports car with distinctive gull-wing doors was featured in the time-travelling film trilogy 'Back to the Future'. In which city was the DeLorean manufactured?

- a Belfast
- b Detroit
- c Madrid

Q18 Which London train station is the busiest in the UK and also the biggest with twenty-four platforms in operation.

- a Euston
- b Victoria
- c Waterloo

Q19 The M1 was the first full-length motorway in the UK, spanning five counties with initially no speed limits or any lighting. When was it opened?

- a 1949
- b 1959
- c 1969

Q20 Where is the John F. Kennedy International Airport?

- a Boston
- b New York
- c Washington

# Directory

## Committee Members 2024 -25

**Chair, Roger Say**

The roles and responsibilities of the new committee (following the recent AGM) will be decided at the next committee meeting scheduled for the end of June.

## Roles of Non- Committee Members

**Newsletter Editor-**  
Barry Liddle

## Interest Group Leaders

**Archaeology/History Group:** Chris McLoughlin.

**Art Appreciation:** Co-Leaders: Irene Archer, Andrea Reid.

**Board Games:** Irene Williams.

**Bridge:** Phil Jefferies.

**Chess Group:** Roger Say.

**Coffee & Chat** Jacky Armstrong

**Creative Writing Group:** Roger Say.

**Family History:** Co- Leaders: Jacky Armstrong, Pat Rutter.

**Film Group:** Contact Phil Jefferies.

**Fun with Fabrics:** Ann Say

**Gardens and Gardening:** Co-Leaders: Liz Milbourn and Helen Eustace

**Lawn Bowls:** Ray Elliston.

**Music:** Steve Cole

**Natural History Group:** Co- Leaders: Irene Archer, Margaret Andrews and Beryl Turnbull.

**Photography for Fun Group:** Ray Elliston.

**Quiz Team:** John Campbell.

**Reading Group:** Andrea Reid

**Shibashi Exercise Group:** Marjorie Reynolds.

**Tuesday Book Club:** Mary Waldmeyer

**'View to Vue':** Roger Say.

**Walking Group:** Keith Alder

## Answers to the Quiz

Q1 a; Q2 b; Q3 b; Q4 b; Q5 c; Q6 c; Q7 b; Q8 b; Q9 c; Q10 b; Q11 b; Q12 a; Q13 b; Q14 b;

Q15 a; Q16 a; Q17 a; Q18 c; Q19 b; Q20 b.