



# Newsletter

Hartlepool & District u3a

Issue 91, December 2024

Merry Christmas!



## Comments from the Chair

This year seems to have flown by and this will be the last Newsletter of 2024. Christmas will soon be upon us and it will be 2025 in the blink of an eye. This is a good time for me to look back over the year for our u3a as well as look ahead to the future.

It has been a good year for us. Membership has increased and we have had a number of excellent speakers on a variety of topics ranging from a well-known songwriter telling us all about his life in music, a comics illustrator who brought along many samples of his work, a talk about Mary's Meals and one from an auctioneer informing us what goes on behind the scenes. We also had a return visit from Cleveland Police who kept us up to date regarding fraud awareness. They will be

coming along again next year to keep us aware of new scams. We also had social events where we brought our own finger food to share and take part in a fun quiz. We will be having more of these 'fuddles' next year along with talks on Walt Disney, the RNLI, along with many more in the pipeline. I wish to give a big thank to all our great speakers and to all of you who have come along to support us and enjoy yourselves.

Another success story is our interest groups. We now have over twenty groups running on a regular basis which is quite astonishing seeing that we are one of the smaller u3as. A huge vote of thanks is owed to our outstanding Groups Coordinator, great Group leaders and, of course, yourselves for supporting these groups for without you our u3a would cease to exist. Behind the scenes we are extremely lucky to have a top-class Newsletter editor who keeps us entertained and informed month after month. Thanks to everyone for all your help including those who served the refreshments and those who helped to put out and put back the table and chairs.

We look forward to another successful year in 2025. On behalf of the committee (who also do a grand job!) I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year.

Take care, Roger.



## Reflections on Christmas

Compiled by Barry Liddle



"I'm walking backwards for Christmas, across the Irish Sea. I'm walking backwards for Christmas, it's the only thing for me." *From a poem by Spike Milligan*

"I once bought my kids a set of batteries for Christmas with a note attached saying 'toys not included' "*Tommy Cooper*

"The Christmas truce of 1914 reminds us even in the unlikeliest places, hope can still be found" *Queen Elizabeth II*

"Unless we make Christmas an occasion to share our blessings, all the snow in Alaska won't make it white." *Bing Crosby*

"Christmas can be hard for those who have lost loved ones. This year especially I understand why. "*Queen Elizabeth II*

"Have yourself A Merry Little Christmas". *A song popularised by Judy Garland*

"Then there was the drunken campanologist who got caught up in a rope at the Christmas Service. He caught his ding dong merrily on high". *Ronnie Barker*

"It being Christmas eve, there was, as I had foreseen, a great deal of revelry and what not." *P.G. Woodhouse*

"For it is in giving we receive." *St. Francis of Assisi*

"The minstrels played their Christmas tune. To-night beneath my cottage-eaves; While, smitten by a lofty moon, The encircling laurels, thick with leaves. A Christmas poem 'Minstrels' by *William Wordsworth*.

My mother-in-law has come round to our house at Christmas seven years running. This year we're having a change. We are going to let her in. *Les Dawson*

We shall have a harder Christmas than we have known since the War. *Edward (Ted) Heath 24 December 1973.*

Making your Christmas cake in September is perfect, as too fresh a cake crumbles when cut. *Mary Berry*

Bah Humbug! *Scrooge (to anyone who dares to wish him Merry Christmas).*

I will honour Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirit of all Three shall strive within me. *Scrooge*

The bells of waiting Advent ring, The Tortoise stove is lit again, And lamp-oil light across the night, Has caught the streaks of winter light, '*Christmas' a poem by John Betjeman*

And from the crew of Apollo 8, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas—and God bless all of you, all of you on the good earth. *Broadcast from the Crew of Apollo 8*

*Seymore*: People don't realise there is an imposter running around town pretending to be Father Christmas. *Clegg*: It happens every election. *Last of the Summer Wine TV show 1973*

Where are thou, Mother Christmas? I only wish I knew Why Father should get all the praise And no one mentions you. *From a festive poem by Roald Dahl*

What I don't like about office Christmas parties is looking for a new job the next day. *Phyllis Diller*

What is Christmas? It is tenderness for the past, courage for the present and hope for the future. *Agnes M Pahro*

God bless us everyone. *Tiny Tim's blessing at the Christmas meal in 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens.*

Christmas is the day that holds all time together. *Alexander Smith.*

Aren't we forgetting the true meaning of Christmas. You know, the birth of Santa? *Bart Simpson*

It's all fun and games until Santa checks the naughty list. *Anonymous*

Christmas doesn't come from a store, maybe Christmas means a little bit more. *Dr Seuss*



# Notice Board

## Woolly Hats, Warm Socks and Chocolate!

So, what is this about? Well, the 'shout' has gone out as it does at this time of the year and every year for Woolly Hats, Warm Socks and Chocolate...

The shout comes from the North Tees & Hartlepool Mission to Seafarers situated on Seal Sands Road North Tees; one of over 200 ports in 50 countries operating day and night, 365 days a year. These centres provide a comfortable warm place to enjoy some well-earned R&R. There is always a need for volunteers and additionally at this time of year donations for Christmas parcels distributed to ship's crews coming into port over the Christmas period; the parcels contain toiletries, a woolly hat or scarf or warm socks and confectionary; apparently visitors from other countries seem to like our chocolate.

The world-wide mission dates back to the mid 1850's and supports men and women of all nationalities who take to the high seas, facing danger every day to deliver goods and fuel keeping the world economy afloat; operating some 74,000 ships and often away for many months at a time they are separated from family, friends and loved ones. Of course, with advances in communication systems keeping in touch with family and friends has improved but there will be times when ease of communicating can be compromised due to the vagaries of the weather.

A recent item featured in our Newsletter highlighted the plight of the Hartlepool built ship the SS Armstor that floundered off the coast of New Orleans on 24<sup>th</sup> December (Christmas Eve) 1912 with the loss of all crew in the icy waters of the North Atlantic. It would be good to know if the crew of the SS Armstor managed to include some R&R at a Mission to Seafarers before embarking on that fateful journey. One wonders!!! Food for thought?

**Wendy Borthwick**

### COFFEE AND CHAT

The next meeting is on Monday 2nd December at 10.30 at the Golden Lion (next to Aldi).

Jacky Armstrong

### 'French Phrase' of the Month

My French Phrase of the Month is 'Haute Cuisine', which translates as high-class cooking, something we all aspire to (if not always achieving) when delivering the family Christmas lunch.

**Barry Liddle**

## QUIZ GROUP

Those of you who are a similar age to me will remember the bible used for sitting the 11+, the book 'First Aid in English'. The blue backed book contained a wealth of information that we were expected to know. Not only where and when to use a semicolon but a list of collective nouns.

As quiz master at our excellent u3a quiz group on 19 November, I used 25 of these for a table round. Some of them we still remember, a shoal of fish, a troupe of scouts. Maybe a caravan of camels or a wisdom of owls comes to mind. Now what is the collective noun for penguins?

It is a colony or huddle. But, I did give a point to the team who said a packet.

There is no quiz in December, but we will be back again in January. Happy quizzmas!

Jacky Armstrong

### 'Senior Moment' of the Month

I took my brother out for a pre-Christmas meal. When it came to pay, I took out my card and swiped it across the card reader. Nothing happened. I tried again, nothing happened. I was using my bus pass!

Barry Liddle

### My Top 3 Worst Ever Christmas Presents

- 1 An unwrapped second-hand tie.
- 2 A plastic pig filled with assorted wooden spoons
- 3 A cloth bag filled with washing line pegs.

Barry Liddle

### Natural History Group: Programme of Events

Our meetings usually take place on the first Thursday of the month at 1.30p.m.

**December** No meeting.

**2025**

**January 24th**, Friday 10.30a.m. Burn Valley Gardens for the Big Garden Bird Watch. Meet at the zebra crossing entrance in Baden St. Bring binoculars if you have them.

**February 20th** at 12.00 for a meal at the Golden Lion. Details later.

From **March** onwards a new programme is to follow. All new members are most welcome. If you require any further details please get in touch with the group leaders: **Irene Archer; Margaret Andrews or Beryl Turnbull.**

# Conference Report on The Prehistory of Northern England

Wendy Borthwick

'Tees Archaeology' held their first ever Tees Archaeology Conference on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at Stockton-On-Tees Library. A full day event (with lunch included) was extremely well attended; so much so that it could be said the library's function room was a bit of a squash and a squeeze.

Prehistory? Loosely explained to us as, 'the period of human history before written records - between the first known use of tools 3.3 million years ago and the beginning of recorded history with the invention of writing systems.'

The Conference certainly brought into focus the prehistory archaeology of northern England alongside the existing finds of the Yorkshire Wolds taking us deep into the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) and Neolithic (New Stone Age) delivered by various experts in the field of Archaeology.

The conference opened with a presentation on the excavations at *Star Carr* a Mesolithic archaeology site in North Yorkshire just south of Scarborough dated around 9000 BC not long after the last Ice Age and regarded as an important find due to the preservation of artefacts found buried deep in the peat.

Further afield we were told about prehistoric *rock art* on Wallridge Moor near Belsay, Northumberland. The archaeologists found strange cup and ring-shaped marks on various rock outcrops. Research is ongoing to identify dates and links to these interesting marks.

Closer to home in both the space of time (Neolithic) and mileage we have our own *Henges* located on raised land above the River Ure near the village of *Thornborough* (south of the river Tees). The site includes three circular aligned henges known as the *Thornborough Henges* or the Stonehenge of the North. In their time folks would have travelled great distances to gather at these sites for ceremonial and funeral rituals.

The day's journey continued, moving on to *Ingleby Barwick* looking at an early Bronze Age cemetery discovered in 1966; progressing to further exploration of Neolithic sites on three sites south of the river Tees then onto *Low Coniscliffe Enclosure* (Darlington); a Neolithic and Bronze Age Ceremonial Site on the River Tees. Finally arriving on home turf, *High Tunstall*, Hartlepool with an excavation in 2022 identifying agricultural activity dating to the Iron Age and Romano-British periods.

A fascinating journey focusing on the archaeology of northern England.

## Name That Bird!

Compiled by Barry Liddle

1. I'm portly, with a thick neck.
2. I'm a member of the finch family.
3. I'm often seen in gardens and hedgerows.
4. As a male, I have a bright pink breast.
5. I'm about 5-6 inches in size.

Answer on page 12

## Word of the Month.

My December word of the month is TRAIPISE. An informal word meaning to 'walk wearily'. This word always comes to mind every December, as I'm 'traipsing' around the shops looking for Christmas presents.

Barry Liddle

## Who am I?

I was born in 1922.

I was very tall, 6ft 3in.

I became a versatile entertainer: comedian, singer, actor and variety performer.

I appeared on my own television shows performing comedy sketches between songs.

I became a successful recording artist, and my most popular song was 'You Need Hands' released in 1958.

I made 20 Royal Variety Performance appearances.

I presented numerous television programmes including 'Family Fortunes' between 1983-85.

My catchphrase 'I wanna tell you a story' was invented by Mike Yarwood.

Answer on page 12

## Poetry Corner

### The Beauty of Clouds

November morning on the Headland  
Low clouds high clouds  
Layers of cumulus and cirrus clouds  
Shades of light and dark  
Interspersed with blue skies  
Flashes of sunlight  
Sunbeams  
Faint outline of a nascent rainbow  
A feast for the eyes  
Three geese fly across  
Surprisingly quietly  
Maybe adrift from the main flight  
Warmth of autumnal sun on back  
Pleasurable in cooler conditions  
On the shore  
Oyster catchers also peaceful  
No shrill piping for a change  
Rainbow dissipated  
Sun still shining  
Grey heron spotted  
Far in the distance  
Stock still  
Neck outstretched  
Then moves gracefully forward  
Stops again  
Invisible to all but the most  
Curious and interested  
Observer  
Sun disappears  
Immediate drop in temperature  
Heron moves on  
Disturbed by bathing  
Herring gull  
The sky above  
A mass of clouds  
All unique  
Like humans  
But unlike humans  
Shape shifters  
Form changers  
Guardians  
Of the planet

Roger Say

## Whither the Weather

Roger Say

We live in an age where it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction, leading to befuddlement or discombobulation. I have to relate that the prevailing attitudes has affected my weather instruments which appear to have entered into the spirit of the times. I refer to the barometer which resides inside the house and the outdoor thermometer which, naturally enough, resides outside. The outdoor thermometer was a recent purchase while the barometer is well over a hundred years old and has been with us for over 30 years. It has never been very hasty in making any movement either upwards or downwards but recently bears little relationship to future weather conditions. I cannot be certain, but I suspect that it now tells us what the weather was rather than what it is going to be. This does have its uses as the human occupants both have short-term memory loss (as well as long-term but that is another story) and it is good to have a reminder of what the weather has been like in the recent past. When a neighbour comments about the weather one can say, with a degree of confidence, that it is better or worse than it has been or, in some cases, that we hope it continues or improves in the coming days.

The new outdoor thermometer has never really got to grips with reality. It adopted an optimistic attitude to the prevailing conditions as soon as it took up residence. I thought at first it was a case of giving us Fahrenheit rather than Celsius but now I know better. When we shiver in 10C it assures us it is 20C plus. It is positively exuberant when the sun shines on it and has no hesitation in zipping the temperature up to a heady 30C which bears no relationship to reality whatsoever. However, I have begun to warm to it as I realise that this is no bad thing. Imagine the postie coming up to the house and seeing the temperature displayed far higher than s/he imagined. Immediately their spirits are raised and they saunter off with renewed energy and a more jaunty outlook on life.

So there we have it. Having idiosyncratic weather predictors and indicators is not all bad. Just as long as they are taken with a large pinch of salt.

Disclaimer: Any resemblance to any extant barometers or thermometers or humans is purely coincidental. Or is it?

## Christmas Quiz

Compiled by Barry Liddle (Answers on page 12)

**Q1 What gifts did the three kings bring baby Jesus?**

- a They brought him gifts of emeralds, frankincense and myrrh
- b They brought him gifts of gold, sandalwood and myrrh
- c They brought him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh

**Q2 If you are having Poussin for Christmas Lunch, what would you be eating?**

- a Chicken
- b Duck
- c Goose

**Q3 “Santa Baby” was originally recorded in New York in July 1953 and became a huge hit for which of the following artists?**

- a Eartha Kitt
- b Nina Simone
- c Sarah Vaughan

**Q4 Every year since 1947, the people of this Scandinavian country have given the people of London a Christmas Tree. This gift is in gratitude for Britain’s support during World War II. Can you name the country?**

- a Denmark
- b Finland
- c Norway
- d Sweden

**Q5 “Driving Home for Christmas” is a Christmas song written and composed by a British singer- songwriter from the North of England. Who is he?**

- a Sting
- b Mark Knopfler
- c Chris Rea

**Q6 The main character in ‘A Christmas Carol’ is Ebenezer Scrooge. At first we see his miserliness in contrast with his humble clerk Bob Cratchit and his cheerful nephew. What is the name of the nephew?**

- a Fred
- b Henry
- c William

**Q7 “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year” is a popular Christmas song that was first recorded in 1963 and was released by a well-known American singer on his first Christmas album. Who was the singer?**

- a Bing Crosby
- b Dean Martin
- c Andy Williams

**Q8 Pantomime (or Panto for short) is a traditional British Christmas play. All the following are traditional panto characters, except one. Who is the odd one out?**

- a Abanazar
- b Buttons
- c Mister Blobby
- d Mother Goose
- e Widow Twankey

**Q9 In 1984 Bob Geldof and Midge Ure wrote a song to raise money for those suffering in Ethiopia. It was first recorded by Band Aid – a supergroup of popular British and Irish singers and musicians. What was the name of the song?**

- a All I want for Christmas
- b Do They Know It's Christmas?
- c The Christmas Song

**Q10 In the popular 1990 comedy film 'Home Alone', The McCallister family travel to Paris for Christmas but in the confusion and rush they accidentally leave one of the children at home. Who did they leave behind?**

- a Kate
- b Kevin
- c Peter

**Q11 Some people enjoy a glass of Bucks Fizz with their Christmas Breakfast. What is Bucks Fizz?**

- a A cocktail, two parts sparkling wine and one part cranberry juice.
- b A cocktail, two parts sparkling wine and one part orange juice.
- c A cocktail, two parts sparkling wine and one part vodka

**Q12 Which pop group had a big hit with the song 'Last Christmas'?**

- a Pet Shop Boys
- b Slade
- c Wham

**Q13 Raisins, Sultanas and Currants feature in many Christmas cakes, desserts and puddings. That are they?**

- a They are all types of dried berries
- b They are all types of dried grapes.
- c They are all different types of fruits.

**Q14 Who had a big hit with the song 'I Wish it Could be Christmas Every Day'?**

- a Elton John
- b Slade
- c Wizzard

**Q15 In the 1970s the Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show was the highlight of Christmas night viewing for millions of viewers. But what were their real names?**

- a John Eric Braithwaite and Ernest Wiseman
- b John Eric Bartholomew and Ernest Wiseman.
- c John Eric Bartholomew and Ernest Wise

**Q16 Which American female singer had a hit song with 'All I Want for Christmas is You'?**

- a Beyonce
- b Dolly Parton
- c Mariah Carey

**Q17 Inside a Christmas cracker there are two long strips of card attached together with a slight overlap. The overlap is treated with gunpowder. When the cracker is pulled the friction between the strips causes enough heat to set the gunpowder off. Which country invented gunpowder?**

- a China
- b India
- c Mexico
- d Persia

**Q18 The following is a verse from a very popular Christmas Carol. Can you name the carol?**

*'Christ, by highest Heaven adored  
Christ the everlasting Lord  
Late in time, behold Him come  
Offspring of the favoured one'*

- a God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
- b Hark! The Heral Angels Sings
- c O Come, All Ye Faithful

**Q19 Which of the following plants is closely associated with Christmas?**

- a Poinsettia
- b Spider Plant
- c Yucca

**Q20 In the Film 'White Christmas' after helping the Haynes sisters escape from their landlord, singers Bob Wallace and Phil Davis ask them to perform in a joint Christmas show to put their old commander's failing inn back in business. Bing Crosby played Bob Wallace. Who played Phil Davis?**

- a Fred Astaire
- b Bob Hope
- c Danny Kay

# Directory

## List of Committee Members for 2024/25

### Chair, Speaker Finder & Web Admin.

Roger Say

### Vice Chair–

Vacant

### Business Secretary –

Wendy Borthwick

### Treasurer –

Cliff Cordiner

### Membership Secretary –

Andrea Reid

### Group Co-ordinator & Beacon Admin.

Pauline Williamson

### Minutes Secretary

Vacant

**Committee** – Keith Alder; Irene Archer

## Interest Group Leaders

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

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

**Board Games:** Irene Williams.

**Backgammon Group** Ann Gardiner

**Bridge:** Phil Jefferies.

**Chess Group:** Roger Say.

**Coffee & Chat** Jacky Armstrong

**Concert Group:** Pauline Williamson

**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:** Vacant

**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

## Roles of Non- Committee Members

### Newsletter Editor-

Barry Liddle

## Merry Christmas Quiz - Answers

**Q1** c They brought him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh ; **Q2** a Chicken ; **Q3** a Eartha Kitt; **Q4** c Norway; **Q5** c Chris Rea; **Q6** a Fred; **Q7** c Andy Williams; **Q8** c Mister Blobby ; **Q9** b Do They Know It's Christmas?; **Q10** b Kevin; **Q11** b A cocktail, two parts sparkling wine and one part orange juice; **Q12** c Wham; **Q13** b They are all types of dried grapes; **Q14** c Wizzard; **Q15** b John Eric Bartholomew and Ernest Wiseman; **Q16** c Mariah Carey; **Q17** a China; **Q18** b Hark! The Herd Angels Sing; **Q19** a Poinsettia; **Q20** c Danny Kay.

Name that Bird -Answer: Bullfinch.

Who Am I? -Answer: Max Bygraves.

## Copy Wanted for This Newsletter

Articles, Short Stories, Interesting Photographs (with captions), Limericks & Poems.

Items for the Newsletter's 'Notice Board' are also welcomed.

All contributions to the next Newsletter are most welcome.

Copy deadline for the next issue is 20 December 2024.

**Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor**