

Newsletter

Hartlepool & District u3a

Issue 98, July 2025



Comments from the Chair

Can I thank everyone who attended our recent AGM for making this event run so smoothly. It was very well- attended and it was a good idea to have a fuddle at the end of it. The food on offer was excellent so I hope you all enjoyed it as much as I did. There was virtually nothing left at the end so it must have gone down well! Thanks as always to those who helped out with the refreshments. We make these social events a feature of our monthly meetings, interspersed with some excellent speakers. I hope you think we get the balance right.

Our next speaker is due to be Kelly Close from Cleveland Police who will be keeping us up to date with cyber-crimes and how we can protect ourselves from online scams. This should be of interest to most of us so I look forward to seeing many of you there. The date is Friday July 5th at the usual start time of 2 pm. Don't forget we don't meet in August!

Our committee meets on the last Friday of every month and our next meeting will be on the 27th of June. By the time you read this we will have agreed who does what for the following year. Every committee has to have Officers and we always elect these positions after the AGM. We have to have a Chair, Treasurer and Business Secretary and this year we intend to include a Vice-Chair. Once we have done this, we have to inform the Charity Commission as we are a registered charity.

The sun is blazing down while I write this so I am going to take the opportunity to go outside and get some vitamin D. Our climate is so unreliable that we can never tell when the next sunny period is coming from. That's my excuse anyway!

Hope to see you all soon.

Take care

Roger

Arch & History – A Walk Around Medieval Monkchester.

Chris McLoughlin

The History group picked a lovely June day for a trip by rail to nearby Monkchester to explore that big little City's long history dating back to Roman times, and all within 10 minutes stroll of the Toon Central Station. In the zeal following the Industrial Revolution, the Victorians had kindly plonked the station on top of the town Castle and walls.

We met again our guide Keiran-Ann who led us firstly around the nearby remaining Town Walls dating to the 13th Century which were also a reminder of different times when plague and marauding Border Reivers could cause havoc and destruction hence the need for strong walls. We were surprised to be shown the site of the Carmelite Priory that stood on the site, parts of the Town Wall can still be seen or traced in various areas, in total they run for two miles.

Then it was on to the Castle Keep remains from the New Castle built when the Conqueror's son Robert Curthose constructed the original Keep, later titivated by the Victorians to look like a proper Castle. The Keep itself stands on the site of the Roman fort of Pons Alieus (meaning the bridge of Alieus which was the clan name of the Emperor Hadrian) and a



(c) David House

fragment of a Monkchester Church from Anglo Saxon time.

The tour was rounded off with a call at the nearby Anglican Cathedral of St Nicholas, well worth a visit on its own just for the stained glass, one fragment of which is a Madonna & Child dates from the 13th century. St Nicholas is one of two Cathedrals in the City, St Mary's is just near the Station and of course in lighter vein, there is a 3rd Cathedral known as St James Park for a different form of worship.

Having read this far you will by now have guessed that Monkchester is in fact Newcastle-upon-Tyne, we were quite amused to find that in pre conquest times the town was known as Monkchester, Chester being the Roman fort and Monk being the religious element evidenced by the Anglo Saxon remains near the Keep.

Visit to RHS Harlow Carr

Liz Milbourn and Helen Eustace



The Garden and Art Appreciation groups combined for a visit to the RHS Gardens at Harlow Carr in Harrogate. After weeks of glorious weather, we went on the one day when light showers were forecast. We weren't put off, and all went prepared. However, the 'light' showers were anything but light, and most of us had to take cover on a few occasions.



The 58-acre gardens were glorious and we particularly liked the huge alpine house with raised beds where there were some beautiful miniature alpines.

One member braved the heavy rain and went to see the rhododendrons, which I am told were amazing. The rest of us will have to return next year in better weather to see them!



We went to the famous Betty's tea rooms (in Harlow Carr) for lunch and to avoid the rain. I have to say that there were mixed reviews from our group, with some loving the experience whilst others did not enjoy the food at all. A latte cost £5.75, and I think we all agreed that it was very expensive!

VISIT TO THE YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK

Jacky Armstrong

Some members of the u3a set off on Sunday 25th May with Lee's coaches, for a trip to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in Wakefield.

The literature says 'Yorkshire Sculpture Park is located in the 500-acre Bretton Estate. If you have a full day (or two!), you'll have time to explore the whole park.' Well, that was being a bit optimistic as our ages were of the more mature variety!

The Park really is huge. There is no way you could do it justice in just one day. This is reflected in the ticket being able to be used again. My friend and I sensibly started off with some refreshments which were excellent, sitting in a spacious glass fronted gallery restaurant looking on to the Park. I must say that this was just one of the highlights of the trip!

After suitable sustenance, we set off on our exploration. We decided to turn right and through the wood, we found Barbara Hepworth's The Family of Man, nine bronze figures cascading down the hill. Not your conventional family but you could, with some imagination, decipher who the adults were and who were the children, of all different ages. With a bit of imagination, I decided the one that went off in jagged angles was the unruly teenager. It was better looking up the hill as the sun shone on the bronze and you could see the form and shape of them.

Barbara Hepworth was born in Wakefield and there is a gallery in the town dedicated to her with even more of her works of all shapes and sizes.

Passing sculptures of all descriptions and materials and even colours, we made our way round the Park.

The abandoned Bretton Hall came into view. It was once part of Leeds University who subsequently moved the department housed there into the city. The original Bretton Hall, was the country manor built in 1720, for the landowner Sir William Wentworth. The Hall sits in 500 acres of fields, hills, woodlands, lakes and formal gardens. The original Hall is being converted into an hotel. There are several of the original follies dotted round the Park.

The banks of the Lake were being visited by hundreds of grey legged geese who were busy preening themselves or snoozing in the sunshine. They weren't bothered about the strong wind blowing!

On the hill on the way back to the Visitor's Centre you couldn't miss Henry Moore's sculpture Large Two Forms, which is cast in bronze and is enormous. The Two Forms are, shall we say, getting very friendly! He chose the site for this sculpture as he 'loved to see it surrounded by sheep'.

One lasting impression of the Sculpture Park for me, apart from the sculptures we saw, will be the trees. There are so many fabulous trees of every kind, from the original landscaping. They are hundreds of years old and are huge and magnificent.

Don't be put off visiting, as despite the hills and miles of walking, there are opportunities to sit down with several lovely Coffee stops along the way. They also sell ice cream for humans and dogs!

There were lots of statues we didn't see, but the feet told us that, after walking for about 4 miles, they were for next time. It is well worth a visit. The following are some of the sculptures we admired:



(c) Wendy Borthwick



(c) Wendy Borthwick



(c) Margaret Boddy



(c) Margaret Boddy

Music Appreciation

Wendy Borthwick

On Sunday 15th June, thirteen members of our u3a visited the Durham Gala Theatre to enjoy an afternoon of fine music.

Once again Orchestra North East returned to Durham for one of their Sunday afternoon concerts and opened with that memorable piece, Vltava, from Ma Vlast by Smetana (1824 - 1884). The music portrays the passage of the great river Vltava as it makes its way through the Bohemian countryside and the capital Prague on its way to the River Elbe with the music portraying the sound of the water as it travels over rocky beds, through wooded valleys and lowland pastures and rapids finally flowing peacefully towards Prague and the legendary royal castle of Vysehrad.

NB – Ma Vlast is a huge piece of work made up of six poems but its popularity is due mainly to the second one, Vltava i

The Violin Concerto no 2 in D minor by Henryk Wieniawski (1835 – 1880) followed with its gentle opening and the romantic, soulful slow second movement then the third movement allowing the music and the violin soloist to excel with a showy solo passage more akin to a gypsy style of playing in Eastern Europe – the orchestra certainly deserved the audience appreciation for their energy and vibrancy. ii

Following on and the final piece was Symphony No.9 from the New World by Antonin Dvorak (1841 – 1904), more often recognized as the ‘Hovis Bread tune’ and written as a result of his visit to America. However, there is some debate as to whether the music is ‘American’ style as it was composed whilst he was living in the mid-west with some Czech immigrants reminding him of their old world (home) as against the vibrancy of life in a new country.iii An evocative piece of music and again the orchestra received much deserved applause.

Indeed, a lovely way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

Notes

i Classic FM Hall of Fame ii Orchestra North East Programme iii Orchestra North East Programme

Notice Board

SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

COFFEE & CHAT on Monday, 7th July and the first Monday in the month. We meet at the Golden Lion (near Aldi) at 10.30 am. Everyone is welcome.

LUNCH AT HARDWICKE HALL, BLACKHALL on Wednesday 9th July at 12 noon. I have booked a table. Carvery and dessert £15. Other food is available to order. Everyone is welcome.

Jacky Armstrong

Gardening Group

We are planning the following Garden group visits, with Lees of Durham coaches.

- Tuesday 22nd July Breezy Knees Gardens, nursery and cafe near York. £35 including admission.
- Wednesday 10th September, Northallerton market and Arcadia Garden Centre £19.

Payment for these trips is required before booking, N.B. we do get a £2 reduction on the Lees prices above for group bookings. Please let us know if you want to go on any of these trips.

Liz Milbourn and Helen Eustace

Natural History Programme 2025

- July 3rd Cowpen Bewley. Meet in the car park.
- July 22nd Tuesday We may join the gardening group on a trip to Breezy Knees Garden near York. Liz Milbourn has circulated details about this.
- August 7th Summerhill Meet in the car park to do the Butterfly count.
- September 4th Blackhall Rocks. Meet in the car park off the main road.
- October 2nd Burn Valley Gardens to look for fungi. Meet at the zebra crossing entrance on Baden Street.
- November 6th Peoples centre for an indoor meeting. Last year we enjoyed a talk on weeds by Carole, bird song identification by Irene and Margaret and Geoff gave us an interesting talk about Thorpe Thewles wood.
- December No meeting.

Further details from Irene Archer, Margaret Andrews and Beryl Turnbull.

The Letters

Jacky Armstrong

My cousin Dave was a fantastic gardener. He was also a fantastic hoarder. Nothing was thrown away, as it might come in useful one day. When he died recently, the family were left with a mammoth task. His allotment, which has been in the family for 3 generations, over a hundred years, was the least of their worries. His dozens of potted cuttings of bay, box, lavender, fig, mint and more were given to the Hospice. Hopefully they will be a lasting memory of Dave the Gardener and bring beauty to all who see them.

But the house! That was an enormous job which the family tackled and sorted. Where do I come into this? Read on.....

Dave had acquired a pile of letters. Where from, we are not sure, but probably when he was doing some jobs for his sister when she was studying in Leeds and living in student digs, many years' ago. My cousins know I love family history research, so I was presented with the pile of letters, very dusty and some with a few nibbles out of them.



(c) Jacky Armstrong

All the letters, about 160 of them, are addressed to Mrs J Batley and are from her husband Jack who was on active service in WW2 in Nairobi, India and Ceylon.

Doing some research on Find My Past, Mrs J Batley was her formal name. In those days married women took the identity of their husband. In fact, she was Olive, a secretary, nee Russell. The address of 'Russells' pertained to the newsagent, sweet and tobacconist shop where Olive was living with her parents Arthur L 14.8.90 and Jane A 3.7.91. Olive was born in March 1918 and married 'Jack' in 1940.

I have only looked at a few of the letters, all dated from 1941-1944, as they are very personal and quite difficult to read. It appears they had a daughter Valerie, that Jack had never seen. He gives a couple of clues that he may have been something to do with entertainment 'getting my glad rags on' and 'I've had this show on'.

He was a keen hockey player and encloses some small newspaper cuttings of matches he had played in Kandy, India.

I'll give you a little peep into one of the letters

'Hello Darling'.....'thanks sweetheart you've simply no idea what it does for me - to see your handwriting - you are a smashing wife you know, there is no other than you.'

He ends each one *'All my love for ever. Your loving husband and sweetheart Jack (with 34 kisses)*

Each letter is dated when he writes, and Olive dates the front. Every letter is signed by the Censor. Some say 'written in English'.

Originally the letters were on blue paper but there's a little trace of the blue left on only some of them as they've faded over the years.

Jack's service number is 7595840 and is written on each letter, saying 'On Active Service'. Each letter contains postage stamps from either Tanganyika/Kenya/Uganda, India or Ceylon.

I contacted a Facebook page on Halton, now part of the bigger Leeds. Lots of people remember the family. One person was a paperboy for Russells. Others used to go into the shop for sweets when they were small. Some potential clues are the possibility of Valerie marrying, with two suggestions of surnames given, the fact that Jack belonged to Whitkirk Sports and Social Club and other memories of the shop near Crossgates Station.

I kept looking through 'Find My Past' for clues and looking on Leeds websites. I looked through newspapers. All to no avail. Then one night, I had a thought. I would look at the Electoral Roll. Eureka! I think I might have found Valerie.

I have written to her saying why I am writing and explaining the reasons for my letter. I don't want her to think I am a scammer! The letters are too precious to throw away.

Superstitious? Not me!

Roger Say, Creative Writing Group

Let me start by stating categorically that I am not in the least superstitious which I am firmly of the opinion that it is all stuff and nonsense. Friday the 13th does not leave me quaking in my shoes or makes me stay in bed all day hiding under the covers. No siree! I take a deep breathe, face the challenge and simply treat the day as any other. Why wouldn't I?

Of course, there are other superstitions apart from Friday the 13th that I also scoff at. The example of walking under a ladder springs to mind. I do not walk under a ladder simply because I notice that there is a chap on the top rung painting the top window ledge and I do not want to get sprayed with paint if he drops the paint pot. Nothing to do with being superstitious. No, it's purely practical.

There is another foolish superstition regarding putting your shoes on the table which is supposed to bring you bad luck. Total phooey! The only reason I do not participate in this unhygienic activity is the memory of a clip around the ear from my mother in my formative years, and the certain knowledge that I would receive a severe admonishment from my wife at the present time. Superstition? Tosh!

Another superstition relates to black cats crossing your path. I am never quite sure whether this is good or bad luck, so a sensible precaution is to avoid one of them doing so. You never know where these cats have been. They may be flea-bitten or have a violent disposition so best keep out of their path. This is everything to do with self-preservation and nothing to do with superstition.

As I am writing this, I look at my calendar and notice the date: Thursday the 12th. Eek! Tomorrow is Friday the 13th. I suddenly feel a bit queasy and lightheaded. I think I must be sickening for something. Best to stay in bed tomorrow. Don't want to spread any bugs about.

Sunderland Point Causeway

Barry Hayton

Some years ago, when digital photography was in its early days, I made a memorable journey along Sunderland Point Causeway. This is a single-track road with an unusual extra hazard as it winds through salt marshes between Morecambe Bay and the river Lune estuary. Seaweed hanging from a river bridge guard rails gives every driver a clue. A man high roadside notice board is more explicit. 'At high tide this board may be covered'. Tide tables record that the change in sea level in this area may be as much as 29 feet. That is a rise and fall equivalent to the height of two double decker buses!



(c) Barry Hayton

The Royal Family Quiz

Compiled by Barry Liddle

Q1 When was the abdication of Edward VIII?

- a) 1906
- b) 1926
- c) 1936

Q2 Who was Henry VIII's first wife?

- a) Ann of Cleves
- b) Jane Seymour
- c) Katherine of Aragon

Q3 Who is the current 'King of Scots'?

- a) Duke of Argyll
- b) Duke of Edinburgh
- c) King Charles III

Q4 Which King was found buried in a Leicester car park in 2012?

- a) Edward III
- b) Henry III
- c) Richard III

Q5 Which school did King Charls III attend?

- a) Eton
- b) Fettes College
- c) Gordonstoun

Q6 In which sport did Princess Anne compete in the 1976 Olympics?

- a) Equestrian Three-Day Event
- b) Polo
- c) Showjumping

Q7 Which Football Team does Prince William support?

- a) Arsenal
- b) Aston Villa
- c) Chelsea

Q8 Before adopting the surname Windsor in 1917, the British royal family used the surname:

- a) Habsburg
- b) Mountbatten
- c) Saxe-Coburg-Gotha

Q9 Who was the king of England immediately before William the Conqueror?

- a) Edward the Confessor
- b) Edward the Elder
- c) Harold Godwinson

Q10 Who did Princess Margaret marry in 1960?

- a) Antony Armstrong-Jones
- b) Peter Townsend
- c) Roddy Llewellyn

Q11 What was the name of Queen Victoria's private summer residence on the Isle of Wight?

- a) Cowes Castle
- b) Bembridge House
- c) Osborne House

Q12 Which King was forced to sign the Magna Carta by rebellious barons?

- a) Henry III
- b) King John
- c) Richard I

Q13 Prince Harry and Megan live in the USA at:

- a) Malibu
- b) Montecito
- c) Santa Ana

Q14 During WWII, the former King Edward VIII, was appointed:

- a) Governor of the Bahamas.
- b) Governor of East Africa
- c) Governor of Singapore

Q15 In 1974, a member of the Royal Family was returning to Buckingham Palace when a car forced their Rolls-Royce to stop, and the driver of the car then began firing a pistol.

Which Royal was involved?

- a) Princess Alexandra
- b) Princess Anne
- c) Princess Margaret

Q16 What is a Royal Peculiar?

- a) A cottage within the grounds of a Royal estate.
- b) A church directly subject to the monarch and not the local bishop.
- c) A type of cake made exclusively for the Rual Family on state occasions

Q17 What was Price Andrew's role during the Falklands War?

- a) Royal Navy Helicopter Pilot
- b) Royal Marine Commando
- c) Staff Officer

Q18 The Prince of Wales has 3 children, they are called:

- a) Prince George, Prince Alice and Prince Louis
- b) Prince George, Prince Charlotte and Prince Arthur
- c) Prince George, Prince Charlotte and Prince Louis.

Q19 Which member of the Royal Family is the current patron of the Scottish Rugby Union?

- a) Duke of Edinburgh
- b) Princess Anne
- c) Prince William

Q20 Who was king when the gunpowder plot took place?

- a) James I
- b) James II
- c) William III

Answers on Page 14

Directory

List of Committee Members for 2025

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,

Paul Eustace, Helen Eustace.

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

Quiz Answers

Q1 c) 1936; **Q2** c) Katherine of Aragon; **Q3** c) King Charles III; **Q4** c) Richard III;

Q5 c) Gordonstoun; **Q6** a) Equestrian Three-Day Event; **Q7** b) Aston Villa;

Q8 c) Saxe-Coburg-Gotha; **Q9** c) Harold Godwinson; **Q10** a) Antony Armstrong-Jones;

Q11 c) Osborne House; **Q12** b) King John; **Q13** b) Montecito; **Q14** a) Governor of the Bahamas; **Q15** b) Princess Anne;

Q16 b) A church directly subject to the monarch and not the local bishop; **Q17** a) Royal Navy Helicopter Pilot; **Q18** c) Prince George, Prince Charlotte and Prince Louis; **Q19** b) Princess Anne; **Q20** a) James I.

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 June 2025.

Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor