

Newsletter

Hartlepool & District u3a

Issue 101, October 2025



Comments from the Chair

I hope you all enjoyed our social event last month. It is good for us to get together and have a natter and share some excellent finger food together. Not to mention the free teas and coffees! We will have some more of these events in the coming year so watch this space.

At our next general meeting on October 3rd, we will welcome Carrieanne Wilford from Newcastle Building Society who will be giving us a down-to-earth talk about fraud awareness and her approach will be specifically aimed at our members. I think we are all going to find it especially useful and I am looking forward to her presentation.

There has been a change of plan for November as we had originally booked Mark Braithwaite who was going to tell us all about 'Double Jeopardy' from a police perspective. Some of you may have watched the recent drama on the TV called 'I fought the law' which gave the perspective from the victim's mother.

Mark will now be visiting us in December so yours truly will fill in the gap on November 7th. I hope that not too many of you will find their diaries full that day!

After what seems an age the Charity Commission has given us the go ahead for our new constitution which we voted in at our last AGM. Meanwhile, the committee have been busy behind the scenes updating our procedures and policy in line with legal requirements and models from the Third Age Trust. All these can be found on our website under Governance. They are there for the benefit of all of us.

Take care

Roger

Rail 200 Martin Green



This year and into 2026 our railways are celebrating Rail 200 with multiple events and even including an exhibition train which is spending much of this month in County Durham.

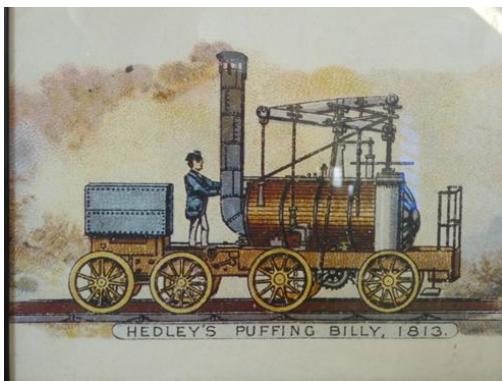


This celebration stems from the bicentenary of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway on 27th September 1825. But was this the very first railway? Well, no. There had been



wagonways from the early 17th Century. These early systems were primarily used for transporting heavy materials like coal and ore in horse drawn wagons over relatively short distances. They evolved from simple paved tracks to wooden rails and eventually incorporated features such as cast-iron rails. It was 1712 by the time Thomas Newcome had developed the first commercially successful and practical stationary steam engine and another century later (21st February 1804) before Richard Trevithick put a steam engine onto rails on the 9 miles from the ironworks at Penydarren to the Merthyr–Cardiff Canal in South Wales.

Meanwhile the industrial revolution was in full swing in the northeast of England where many



mines and iron works were springing up, especially around Tyneside and where George Stephenson, enginewright at Killingworth Colliery, constructed his first locomotive. The oldest surviving steam engine from this time which can be seen today in the London Science Museum is William Hedley's 'Puffing Billy', built in 1813/14 for the Wylam Colliery railway where he was manager and Timothy Hackworth was blacksmith.

Quickly moving on a decade, Hetton Colliery in 1822 was one of the first to build a railway intended solely to be worked by 'travelling engines'. It was another three years later in 1825 that heralded the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, so called even though half of its length was actually to the west of Darlington. Why, then, should this event be regarded as the birth of the railways? It really was the first large-scale, railed public transport infrastructure in the world, designed not just for the transport of coal from the west Durham mines to the Tees, but with the carriage of passengers in mind too – an Inter-City railway. This was a railway on which anyone could run a train on paying the fee. If you wanted to see how to run a modern railway between 1825 and 1830, the only place in the world to see it was here in County Durham. Five years later the Liverpool and Manchester Railway took this to a new level, but the S&DR rightly claims to be the start of the new era.

And of course, the engine that pulled the opening day train was Locomotion, driven by George Stephenson himself. That original locomotive was able to take its place in the 1925 centenary celebrations, though propelled by a petrol engine hidden in the tender, but by 1975 a working replica had been built for the '150' cavalcade. This replica will be traversing the tracks between Shildon and Stockton again over the weekend of 26th to 28th September necessitating the suspension of Northern's trains at various times. I had the privilege of travelling with this locomotive and its replica train during a trial run on the Weardale Railway from Wolsingham to Stanhope and back. All went smoothly apart from an unscheduled halt at Frosterly to acquire a large nail from a local homeowner to replace a missing cotter pin!



All photographs © Martin Green, Other images copywrite free.

Stockton & Darlington Railway Excavation

Preston Park Museum Grounds

Cliff Cordiner

As you can see from the previous article, this year marks the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington railway. To mark this, and as part of my role with Tees Archaeology, I took part in a number of excavations in the grounds of Preston Park Museum in a joint project with Stockton Borough Council.

The present museum grounds were bought by David Burton Fowler in 1820 and the hall was finished in 1825. It was remodelled in 1882 by Sir Robert Ropner. The park contains the remains of the Whin Sill quarry which was in use until the first half of the 19th century.

The Stockton and Darlington Railway was built to provide faster and cheaper movement of coal from the West Durham coalfields to the sea, where it could be shipped further afield. In 1821 the bill to allow the construction of the S&DR was given Royal Assent and in January 1821 George Stephenson was appointed engineer to the project. Construction commenced on May 23rd 1822, and on 27th September 1825 history was made when the S&DR became the first successful steam hauled public railway.

To begin with anybody could pay a fee to provide transportation along the line, and local innkeepers operated single horse drawn coaches. Then on October 10th, 1825, the first regular horse drawn passenger service began. Horsepower was the mainstay of the early years of the railway up until 1833.

George Stephenson had always envisaged using steam engines on the railway and the first train was pulled by Engine No.1, later renamed Locomotion.



Locomotion No1, Shildon Railway Museum

The first engine was joined by three others, Hope, Black Diamond, and Diligence. The engine driver was a sub-contractor who was paid a fee by the company. Engines were often kept in sidings in their gardens!

Most of the early railway lines were made of cast iron. However, this proved too brittle for sustained use and was replaced by malleable iron. The track was set on square sleeper blocks. Stone was used to the west of Darlington and oak to the east. The rails were scooped and known as fishbellies.



Fishbelly rail track, Shildon Railway Museum

There were no signalling arrangements in place, so passing loops were installed every quarter of a mile. Who should pass who was a matter of argument and soon became problematic. So, in 1831 double tracks were laid all the way from Shildon to Stockton.

The section of track bed in Preston Park is part of the original Stockton and Darlington Railway and on 25th January 1853 this track bed was abandoned in favour of one to the north, which is still in use. The earthwork in Preston Park is one of the best preserved and earliest railway tracks in the world and is a scheduled monument.

In 2005 an excavation revealed evidence of the construction of earthwork as well as proof that the track had been widened around 1831. There were also hoof prints from the horses which were used alongside the steam engines.

In April of this year, we carried out an excavation in the garden of South Lodge which is just inside the main gates of Preston Park. This revealed the original track bed, including evidence of the sleepers for a double track and some of the chair furniture fastenings. We also uncovered layers of clinker and ash.

In September, to mark the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, I took part in another excavation when we opened three more trenches.

One was located in an area of the park south of north lodge where there is earthwork evidence of a platform, ramp, and possible siding.



As you can see it was very hard work. As well as uncovering the earthworks we also found some original stone railway sleepers.

Another trench was inserted south of Butterfly World which we thought may expose a temporary track which either went to the Whin Sill quarry or may have been related to the building of Preston Park Hall in 1825.



We found nothing railway related, although we did find evidence of ridge and furrow.

We then opened a third trench in the woods to try and find a building which was marked on a map from 1846 which may have been related to the railway. This proved more successful and we found

evidence of a building exactly where we hoped it would be.



As well as part of the foundation we also found some pottery, clay pipe stems, a wooden button, and some nails with timber fragments still attached. We also found fragments of plaster, some painted pink some white, and some which was decorated with a pattern.

Now that the excavation has been concluded, the post excavation analysis begins. This is a part of archaeology I find just as rewarding as the excavation itself, if not more so. Whether the building is related to the railway or completely unconnected is uncertain, but hopefully the post excavation analysis will reveal more. Whatever the outcome we now have a better understanding of the early days of the railway which all began right here on our own doorstep.

So next time you visit Preston Park make sure you take a walk through the woods where you can see the original Stockton and Darlington Railway embankment.

Railway Artwork

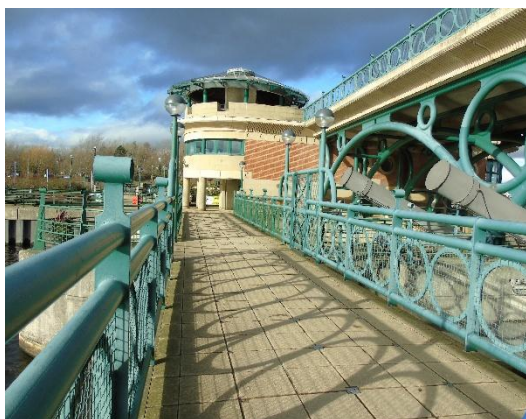
Barry Liddle



As we are celebrating 200 years of rail travel, I thought it timely to display some photographs taken in 2018 at the Shildon Railway Museum.

Discovering Maze Park Nature Reserve

Ray Elliston and Barry Liddle



Tees Barrage. Photo (c) Barry Liddle

Over the years the Photography for Fun Group has visited most places of interest within a 45-minute drive of Hartlepool, some on multiple occasions. So, it was exciting to discover a nearby nature reserve that is completely new to us. The postcode gave the location as Thornaby, but when we arrived, we found ourselves just a short walk from the Tees Barrage – a place we have photographed many times without knowing the Park existed.

Maze Park is a 42-acre urban nature reserve on the south bank of the Tees on part of the former Tees Marshalling Yard. It was created by Teesside Development Corporation and is



Curlew Photo (c) Ray Elliston.

now owned by the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust. We found it a real hidden gem.

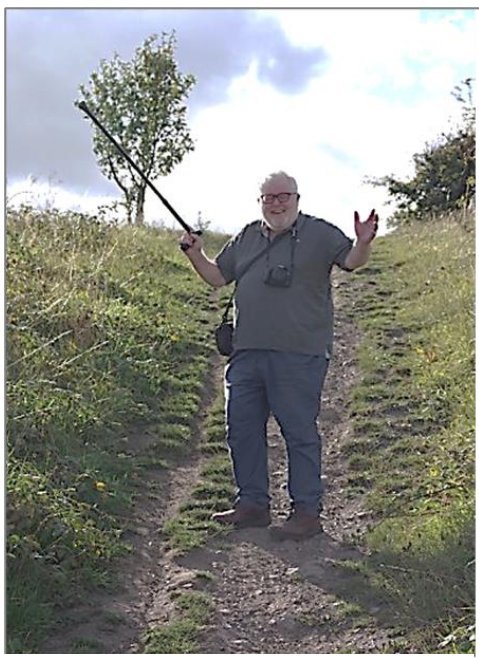
The reserve is a maze of surfaced and grass pathways adjacent to the River Tees. Walking along the riverbank towards the sea we spotted several species of bird including a curlew and an intriguing black and white bird on the far side of the shore – which we struggled to identify.

In addition to bird life, we also saw an

abundance of wild grasses, berries and flowers, including bird's foot trefoil and a very delicate small purple flower. We also saw some common butterflies (although numbers generally seem down this year for some reason).



Identified by its Botanical name - the Purple Flower. Photo (c) Ray Elliston



King of the Mountain. Photo (c) Ray Elliston

After walking for some time, we came close to a major road bridge and then on the return journey via a different trail, we discovered a large mound. With our arthritic joints being put to the test, getting to the top of the mound was a challenge, but we made it and were rewarded with panoramic views of industrial Teesside.



Cooling Towers viewed from the Mound. Photo © Ray Elliston.

With the occasional sculpture to complement the rural setting, Maze Park is well worth a visit – particularly for the Natural History Group

Photography for Fun Group at Hardwick Park

Ray Elliston



Photo © Ray Elliston

On a recent visit to Hardwick Park, we came across this Canada Goose enjoying an autumnal bath

Notice Board

CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2025



The Christmas Lunch has been booked for the Indoor Bowls Club on Friday 19th December 12.30 for 1 o'clock. The price is £18 which includes the tip. There is a £5 non-refundable deposit.

There is a choice of menu with the main course turkey or beef. Vegetarian and gluten free meals can be catered for if booked in advance. There is a bar for those of us who like wine or whatever to accompany our meal. Unlimited tea and coffee will be served after the meal.

We are restricted on numbers, but if you would like to join us, please let Jacky Armstrong know accompanied by your deposit, as soon as possible. Incidentally, male members of u3a are very welcome!

Jacky Armstrong



Blood Moon

Brian Liddle (brother of the Newsletter Editor) took this photo of a Blood Moon in September, whilst on a sailing holiday in the waters around Corfu - off Greece's northwest coast.

A Blood moon occurs when the Moon moves into the earth's shadow, causing the moon to be darkened.

Gardening Group

Visit to Helmsley Walled Garden and Future Events Up-Date



Our Garden Group trip for September took us to the beautiful **Helmsley Walled Garden**. Although many of the early-flowering plants had finished, the garden was still a delight, full of colour from autumn-flowering shrubs and perennials.



Being right next to Helmsley itself – a charming town with plenty of cafés – made the day even more enjoyable. A big thank you to Paul and Myrna for sharing their lovely photos of the visit.

Future Programme

October Trip – Thorp Perrow Arboretum & Bird of Prey Sanctuary

Our October outing, organised jointly with the Natural History Group, will be to Thorp Perrow Arboretum and Bird of Prey Sanctuary, North Yorkshire, on Thursday 2nd October.

Interest has been high, and we now have only a possible **one place remaining**. If you would like to go, please contact me or Helen as soon as possible as someone may have to drop out before the 2nd.

- **Departure:** Thursday 2nd October Golden Lion car park, 10:00am
Return: 3:30pm
Payment: Please pay in advance by bank transfer to the u3a or contact us to arrange cash payments.

Looking Ahead

We have not arranged a visit yet for November but are hoping to book our **annual Christmas lunch** for late November or early December, with the **Raby Arms, Hart** as our preferred venue.

Liz Milbourn



Pondering Life's Little Choices

Barry Liddle

Full English or Cereal & Toast?

I usually settle for a bacon sandwich.

Holiday abroad or Staycation?

Neither I'm retired from holidays

Dog or Cat?

Dog. Can't abide cats.

Christmas Day or Boxing Day?

Boxing Day – no contest.

Wine or Beer?

With food wine, otherwise beer.

Beatles or Rolling Stones?

Beatles

Meat or Lentils?

Both. I could be vegetarian if it wasn't for the bacon sandwiches.

Dr Who or Star Trek?

Star Trek – "It's life Jim but not as we know it."

Cappuccino or Espresso?

Neither. Americano for me.

Night in or Night Out?

Depends on what is on offer.

Coronation Street or Eastenders?

Coronation Street but not since Elsie Tanner & Albert Tatlock.

Football or Rugby?

I love both

Cheese & Onion or Salt & Vinegar crisps?

I like both but if push comes to shove - Cheese & Onion

Shopping or Anything Else?

Anything Else.

Garlic or No Garlic.

No Garlic.

Pudding or Cheese & Biscuits?

Both but not necessarily with the same meal.

Cash or Card

Cash for taxis, newspapers and incidentals, otherwise card.

Whisky or Gin & Tonic?

Two fingers of a nice malt thank you.

Night Owl or Lark?

Definitely Lark

White or Brown Bread?

There is a place for both.

The Flintstones or Noggin the Nog

I'm with Fred and Wilma

Ketchup or Brown Sauce?

Brown Sauce, ketchup only with fishcakes.

Morris Minor or Ford Anglia

I have fond memories of days out in my uncle's Morris Minor.

Tripe & Onions or Liver & Onions

The latter with rich gravy and mashed potato.

Darts or Snooker

I'm a 147 rather than a 180 man.

Sherry or Cocktail.

Glass of Sherry every time.

Social Media or No Social Media

E-mails is as close as I get to social media

Avocado on Toast or Beans on Toast.

Both, but not together

Mods or Rockers?

When asked in the school playground I said Mods

Crossword Puzzles or Sudoku?

Crossword.

Indian Takeaway or Chinese Takeaway?

Neither I don't order takeaways.

Bath or shower?

Shower is the future.

Brunch or Afternoon Tea?

Afternoon Tea.

Regular Exercise or No Exercise?

Does getting out of an armchair count?

Banana Split or Knickerbocker Glory?

Knickerbocker Glory

Is your glass half full or half empty?

Sadly, it is nearly always half empty

I you would like to have a go at 'Pondering Life's Little Choices', then e-mail the Newsletter Editor for further information.

A Sting in the Tale

Better late than never
Said the spider to the bee
The latter responded swiftly
On this I cannot agree
I would very much prefer
You freed me from this web
For if you do not do so
I might well end up stone dead
Well that rather was the idea
Retorted the spider in a huff
I am getting rather hungry
And have waited long enough
The bee said after some thought
Be careful what you wish for
For what you do not realise
Your idea has a fatal flaw
Now the spider looked worried
Well what have I done wrong?
If I were to tell you that
Your life it would prolong
However if you let me free
You praises I will sing
But if you keep me tied up here
Beware my fatal sting
The spider looked astounded
And said you speak the truth
Immediately saw his error
And let that clever bee loose

Roger Say

Who Am I

Answer on Page 17

1. I was born Terence Edward Parsons on 1 December 1930.
2. I was a professional singer for 30 years, during which I sold 23 million records worldwide.
3. After I died in 1985 Frank Sinatra said that if he had to choose 3 of the finest male vocalists, I would be one of them.
4. During National Service I was a Tank Driving Instructor in Hong Kong.
5. Returning to civilian life I worked as a Bus Driver for London Transport.
6. As my singing career developed, I represented the UK in the 1964 Eurovision Song Contest with 'I Love the Little Things'.
7. I had UK top 10 hits with 'Portrait of My Love', 'My Kind of Girl', 'Softly As I leave You' and several others.
8. One of my biggest hits was a cover version of the Beatles song 'Yesterday'.
9. I became known as 'The Man with the Golden Voice'.

Who am I?

Compiled by Barry Liddle

British Popular Music Quiz

Compiled by Barry Liddle

Q1 'The Animals' were formed in which City?

- a) London
- b) Newcastle
- c) Liverpool

Q2 Which Group had hit records with 'Waterloo Sunset' and 'Sunny Afternoon'?

- a) The Dave Clark Five
- b) The Hollies
- c) The Kinks

Q3 Which famous singer was born in Tiger Bay, Cardiff?

- a) Cerys Matthews
- b) Katherine Jenkins
- c) Shirley Bassey

Q4 Ziggy Stardust was the alter ego of:

- a) David Bowie
- b) Alex Harvey
- c) Alvin Stardust

Q5 Between 1960 and 1962 the Beatles had several residencies in the red-light district of a German City. Can you name the city?

- a) Berlin
- b) Hamburg
- c) Stuttgart

Q6 Who wrote the music and lyrics for 'Tommy' the first rock opera?

- a) Richard Ashcroft
- b) Elton John
- c) Pete Townshend

Q7 The singer-songwriter Yusuf Islam is better known by his stage name:

- a) George Michael
- b) Labi Siffre
- c) Cat Stevens

Q8 Who is best known for recording: ('Is This the Way to) Amarillo'

- a) Tony Christie
- b) Elton John
- d) Matt Monro

Q9 Who won the European Song Contest in 1969 with 'Boom Bang-a-Bang'?

- a) Bucks Fizz
- b) Brotherhood of Man
- c) Lulu

Q10 I had 20 piano instrumentals in the UK Singles Chart between 1957 and 1963, including two number one hits. Who am I?

- a) Bill Bailey
- b) Russ Conway
- c) Ben Mills

Q11 Which clarinettist is best known for the instrumental hit 'Stranger on the Shore'?

- a) John Barns
- b) Acker Bilk
- c) John Dankworth

Q12 'Anyone Who Had a Heart' was the UK's biggest-selling single by a female artist in the 1960s. Who was the artist?

- a) Cilla Black
- b) Kathy Kirby
- c) Dusty Springfield

Q13 Sometimes called the British Bob Dylan, I had many hit records including 'Mellow Yellow' and 'Hurdy Gurdy'. Who am I?

- a) Donovan
- b) John Martyn
- c) Ralf McTell

Q14 The hit song 'Three Lions' was released to mark England's Football Team's participation in the 1996 European Championship. The music was written by the Lightning Seeds. But which two comedians wrote the lyrics?

- a) David Baddiel and Frank Skinner
- b) Jasper Carrot and Bill Bailey
- c) French and Saunders

Q15 Which group had success with the guitar based instrumental 'Albatross'?

- a) Pink Floyd
- b) Fleetwood Mac
- c) Deep Purple

Q16 Which group had a smash hit with the song 'Wonderwall' in the 1990s?

- a) Blur
- b) Oasis
- c) Pulp

Q17 Which former 'Heavy Metal' singer adopted the title of 'Prince of Darkness'?

- a) Ozzy Osborne
- b) Robert Plant
- c) Axl Rose

Q18 Which girl group had a hit with the lyrics "Yo. I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want".

- a) Girls Aloud
- b) Spice Girls
- c) Sugababes

Q19 Who released the acclaimed album 'Back to Black' which spawned 5 hit singles in the 2000s?

- a) Adele
- b) Duffy
- c) Amy Winehouse

Q20 I hold the record (with Elvis Presley) as the only act to make the UK singles charts in all of its first six decades (1950s- 2000s). Who am I?

- a) Barry Gibb
- b) Tom Jones
- c) Cliff Richard

Answers on Page 17

Directory

Committee Members for 2025/26

Chair, Speaker Finder & Web Admin.

Roger Say

Vice Chair–

Paul Eustace

Business Secretary –

Wendy Borthwick

Treasurer –

Cliff Cordiner

Membership Secretary –

Andrea Reid

Beacon Admin.

Pauline Williamson

Group Co-ordinators

Pauline Williamson & Helen Eustace.

Minutes Secretary

Paul Eustace

Committee –

Keith Alder.

Interest Group Leaders

Archaeology/History Group: Chris McLoughlin.

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

Backgammon Group Ann Gardiner

Bridge: Phil Jefferies.

Chess Group: Roger Say.

Coffee & Chat Jacky Armstrong

Creative Writing Group: Roger Say.

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

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

Walking Group: Keith Alder

Roles of Non- Committee Members

Newsletter Editor-

Barry Liddle

Answer to Who AM I?

Mat Monro

Quiz Answers

Q1 b) Newcastle; **Q2** c) The Kinks; **Q3** c) Shirley Bassey; **Q4** a) David Bowie; **Q5** b) Hamburg; **Q6** c) Pete Townshend; **Q7** c) Cat Stevens; **Q8** a) Tony Christie; **Q9** c) Lulu; **Q10** b) Russ Conway; **Q11** b) Acker Bilk; **Q12** a) Cilla Black; **Q13** a) Donovan **Q14** a) David Baddiel and Frank Skinner; **Q15** b) Fleetwood Mac; **Q16** b) Oasis; **Q17** a) Ozzy Osborne; **Q18** b) Spice Girls; **Q19** c) Amy Winehouse; **Q20** c) Cliff Richard.

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 October 2025.

Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor