

Newsletter

Hartlepool & District u3a
Issue 105, February 2026



Comments from the Chair

Before our last meeting there was some concern that we might not get a very good turnout because the first Friday of the month fell on the 2nd. We were worried that following on after Christmas and New Year's Eve many of you might feel the need for some peace and quiet. We need not have worried because over 50 of us attended and we listened to a fascinating and highly entertaining talk from David Hastings from RNLI. The time flew by which is a sign of how good a speaker David is. I actually booked him in February last year. He is that popular!

We have another very popular speaker coming to our next general meeting on February 6th when our local historian, Frances Wilson, will be telling us all about what happened to some of the children in Hartlepool in WW2. I can thoroughly recommend this talk as I have already heard it, as I belong to another group where she was the guest speaker. It was fascinating for me because I only came to Hartlepool in 2014 and knew nothing about this subject. I am looking forward to hearing this talk again!

January seemed to zip along at a great pace and apart from a very cold snap we seem to have come off lightly so far. I don't know about you but my main concern in these wintry months is icy pavements and roads. I find I am more cautious these days and have to take more care than I used to. I was telling this to a young friend of mine and joked that I shuffled along like an old man. He gave me a strange look. Can't think why.

Take care everybody

Roger

A Winter's Tale

Brenda Regan

January 1947. I was four and just learning about society and life at school. I had started school the previous September aged four and a half and loved learning. At the time mothers didn't pick up children after school, except for a week or so after they first started. So I walked home from school each day by myself, or sometimes with my brother when he got out of junior school and had to cross a main road to reach our street. At home I played with friends, indoors or in the street and I loved the simple life I led.

Then it began, the icy winter weather I had never experienced before. The snow fell day after day, until the pavements and street were bathed in white. People came out of their houses with brooms and shovels to clear the snow from the pavement and pile it high by the kerb. The street became deeper in snow. Each day I trudged home from school in my wellingtons, carefully walking on the treacherously slippery pavements.

The snow continued on and off for the next two months. There were few cars around so none had to drive on the compacted snow in the road. The coal lorry negotiated its way carefully along the back streets, to deliver a load of coal to each house through a small door in the back wall.

The children living in the street were delighted to see the snow start. We played snowball fights and made slides, often falling over.

At night it was very cold in the house, as there was only one fire which was lit in the living room. My mother, brother and I lived with granny, while my father was a soldier in the 2nd World War. In the evening, before going to bed, my mother lit the gas fire in the kitchen and opened the door for warmth. My brother and I had hot milky cocoa before bed. Then it was a quick scramble up the stairs to bed to jump under the blankets to keep warm.

As the snow continued to fall some days, and never melt, the children started to build an igloo in the road. We all helped to compact the snow into large bricks and gradually build up the walls and roof. We made a small entrance door in the front, and we would crawl inside and sit on an old piece of canvas until we became too cold to stay.

In March the temperatures rose and the snow began to melt. Our igloo slowly collapsed to make a heap of snow. The children were very sorry to see it disappear. And now we walked home from school through puddles of slush until finally they disappeared down the drains. We were glad to be warm again as Spring began, and we recommenced our street games with marbles and balls and hoops and tops with whips.

I don't remember another harsh winter like that until 1963, when I was at University and living in a bedsit, with only a tiny gas fire in the corner of the room to give out a small amount of heat. But that's another winter's tale!

Poetry Corner: Wintery Day on the Headland

Wind howls down chimney
Windowpanes rattle
Dark clouds gathering
Biding their time
Temperature dropping
Venture forth
Open front door
Hit by icy blast
Courtesy no doubt
Of playful
Weather god
Step out
Into wintry world
Where life continues
Tenaciously.
Inadvertently
Scatter feeding sparrows
Which retreat rapidly
But silently
Into nearby hedgerow
No admonishment
Mumble an apology anyway
Herring gulls fly overhead
Having fun
Squawking
Swooping
Diving



Nonchalant eiders
Ride the waves
Which crash wildly
Into and over
The inert breakwater
Trees swaying gracefully
Keeping time
Rhythmically
Return home
Scatter feeding sparrows
Again
Mumble an apology
Again
Retreat inside
Close door
Rejuvenated

Roger Say



Eider Ducks at the Headland. © Barry Liddle

Chinese New Year

Barry Liddle

Not every country in the world celebrates New Year at midnight on 31st December/1 January. Many cultures celebrate New Year according to their own calendars.

Chinese New Year is celebrated over 15 days and starts a few weeks after our own New Year. The dates change each year because they are based on the lunar calendar. In 2026 the celebrations will take place between 17th February and 3rd of March.

During New Year, homes are decorated with the colour red (to scare away monsters and bad luck) and children & unmarried adults receive red envelopes as a symbol of good luck. Firecrackers are a feature of New Year which typically ends with the Lantern Festival.

A family reunion dinner is a major part of the New Year celebrations and on the first day of New Year many people avoid showering, sweeping or getting a haircut so as not to 'wash away' good luck.

Each New Year in China is associated with an animal from the 12-year Chinese zodiac cycle. The cycle consists of rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. Each year is represented by one animal and the Chinese believe that the personality of people born in that year are influenced by the animal. The year of the Dragon is seen by many to be the most popular year to be born, whilst the Goat and Snake are least popular.

The Chinese New Year animal for 2026 is the Horse, specifically the Fire Horse, and is associated with qualities like passion, energy and determination.

There are significant regional variations in how New Year is celebrated in China, particularly between the north and south, in terms of food, decorations and specific customs

Chinese New Year, also known as Lunar New Year, is celebrated around the world and particularly in Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam and South Korea, as well as in Chinese communities in large cities such as Sydney and New York.

In Britain, Chinese New Year is celebrated in London and big regional cities such as Birmingham and Manchester. The celebrations in London's Chinatown include parades, lion and dragon dances and live performances. Many restaurants and Chinese Festivals offer traditional dishes such as dumplings for wealth and longevity noodles for a long life.



Pondering Life's Little Choices

Liz Milbourn

Co-Leader of our 'Gardens and Gardening Group'

Full English or Cereal & Toast? Cereal, but no toast. A full English is strictly an on-holiday event.

Holiday Abroad or Staycation? Both. Abroad in the winter, summers in the UK, although I can come to regret that, especially if it rains all week!

Dog or Cat? Never had a cat. I had a dog once, over 70 years ago. Only ever had goldfish since.

Christmas Day or Boxing Day? Not much of a fan of either these days. Christmas was much better when the children were small and I was younger and more tolerant.

Wine or Beer? Mostly lager. The occasional red wine, well it is good for you!

Beatles or Rolling Stones? Neither. Give me the Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, Pink Floyd or Dire Straits, anyway.

Meat or Lentils? Meat, but I only eat Chicken. Lentils are banned for health-and-safety reasons.

Doctor Who or Star Trek? Used to watch both, these days it's neither.

Cappuccino or Espresso? Cappuccino. Life's intense enough already.

Night In or Night Out? Night in. I don't have the energy.

Coronation Street or EastEnders? Haven't watched either for decades and feel no sense of loss.

Football or Rugby? Neither. I have never played or watched football or rugby, although I did catch a bit of Women's football during the World Cup.

Cheese & Onion or Salt & Vinegar Crisps? Neither, it's plain crisps only.

Shopping or Anything Else? Anything Else. Literally anything!

Garlic or No Garlic? I like Garlic. Garlic does not like me.

Pudding or Cheese & Biscuits? Usually neither. I know —I'm boring.

Cash or Card? Card. Cash is something people lose down the side of the sofa.

Whisky or Gin & Tonic? Definitely gin and tonic, particularly rhubarb or sloe gin. Whisky should only be used for stripping paint or removing industrial grease.

Night Owl or Lark? Neither. I'm more of a permanently tired pigeon.

White or Brown Bread? Brown bread. White bread tastes like edible packing material.

The Flintstones or Noggin the Nog? Possibly watched one of them. Possibly not. Can't remember.

Ketchup or Brown Sauce? Both have their place — but a bacon sandwich without ketchup is just wrong.

Morris Minor or Ford Anglia? I've had both of them once. For the last 40 years I've stuck to Citroën or Toyotas.

Tripe & Onions or Liver & Onions? Never eaten tripe. I haven't had any liver for years. No plans to change.

Darts or Snooker? I played a bit of darts in my youth. Never snooker. Don't watch either.

Sherry or Cocktail? An occasional cocktail. I thought sherry only existed to soak sponge fingers for trifles.

Social Media or No Social Media? I couldn't manage life without it. Sadly.

Avocado on Toast or Beans on Toast? Rarely either. The toast is okay, but for me, beans and avocados are both health hazards.

Mods or Rockers? Can't remember.

Crossword Puzzles or Sudoku? I only try easy crosswords. Sudoku and I have never hit it off.

Indian Takeaway or Chinese Takeaway? Indian. MSG in Chinese meals used to give me migraines, I don't want to risk it again.

Strictly Come Dancing or Bangers and Cash? Never watched either.

Salad Cream or Mayonnaise? Mayonnaise.

Regular Exercise or No Exercise? I try to keep active, but the weather very much dictates.

Is your glass half full or half empty? It all depends on the number of aches and pains I've got at the time.

Notice Board

Dates for Your Diary.

Helen Eustace
Group Co-ordinator

January 23rd, 2026, Natural History Group. Burn Valley. Meet at 10.00am near the zebra crossing on Baden Street for the Big Garden Bird Watch. Bring binoculars if you have them.

January 26th, 2026. I.T. Group (formerly known as Computer Group)
Between 1pm and 3pm. Please note that this group will now be held at the People Centre rather than the Newcastle Building Society due to demand and the size of the room. Bring your laptops, tablets mobile phones etc. with you. Free tea and coffee. For more details contact Jan Jenner

January 27th, 2026. Tuesday Book Club
2pm at the Central Hub, York Road. New readers always welcome. This month's book is Jamaica Inn by Daphne du Maurier. For further information contact Mary Waldymer

February Garden Group
February's visit will be to the Tudor Croft garden in Guisborough to see the snowdrops.
The date will be confirmed once the official dates have been released from Tudor Croft.
The cost for entry to the garden will be £10 and we will book a minibus to get there and back if we get enough people. Transport cost to be confirmed.

Continued next page.....

Hambletonian

Immediately outside Sir John Halls Walled Garden at Wynyard Hall is a low mound topped by a wire sculpture marking the burial place of Hambletonian- arguably the most famous racehorse of the Georgian period.



Ray Eliston took this photograph of Hambletonian on a recent crisp winter's afternoon. However, noticing that the sun was setting, he waited and changed position to capture that perfect moment when the sun was shining directly through the wire sculpture.



© Ray Elliston

February 2nd, 2026, Coffee and Chat

10.30am at the Golden Lion, Dunston Road.

February 2nd, 2026 Photography Group formerly known as Camera Club.

Newcastle Building Society York Road, 2pm. Bring your camera or mobile phone along with your questions and problems Free tea and coffee.

For more details contact Jan Jenner

February 6th, 2026 General meeting

2pm. A talk by Frances Wilson

February 11th Art Appreciation Group

Visit to Sunderland Glass Centre.

Leaving from the Golden Lion Car Park at 09.45am and returning from the Glass Centre at 2pm.

February 11th, 2026 Luncheon Club

Hardwicke Hall Manor Hotel, Blackhall Colliery, TS27 4PA. Further details to follow. If anyone is happy to car share then that would be great.

For further details contact Jacky Armstrong

25th February, 2026 Stroll and Chat Group.

We will do the Headland again and meet at the Borough Hall at 11am. Afterwards we will go to Mary Rowntrees. For further information contact Helen Eustace.

March 11th Art Appreciation Group

Peoples Centre 09.45am. This will be a group discussion about war artists

April 2nd Natural History

Saltholme. Meet in the entrance of the visitor's centre at 1.30pm to see what migrant birds have arrived and then finish off with a 'cuppa'.

Continued next page.....

The Luncheon Group

The Luncheon Group thoroughly enjoyed their Christmas Lunch at the Indoor Bowls Centre on 19th December. The food was excellent and the company relaxed and friendly. Hopefully we will be doing it again next Christmas.

In the meantime, due to requests, I have booked lunch at Hardwicke Hall Manor Hotel at Blackhall on Wednesday 11th February 2026 at 12 noon.

Some members have difficulty getting there. Here is a suggestion. If anyone has a seat in their car, could they please take another passenger. I propose that £3 is given towards the driver's costs. We used to do that when I was in a Book Club and it worked out well. No fuss, no ceremony, just leave it in the car. The driver can then decide what to do with it or give it to charity. The other alternative is to share a taxi.

I will also make some enquiries about Afternoon Tea at the Dutch Garden Centre for a date in April. I have heard that their Afternoon Tea is very good.

Jacky Armstrong

May 7th Natural History (and Garden Group). Trip to the Botanic Gardens in Durham. This will be a joint visit with the Gardening Group. Time and cost to follow.

June 4th Natural History Group Headland. Meet in the carpark of the Borough Hall at 1.30pm to have a stroll along the front to see what plants and birds are there. Then refreshments at Mary Rowntrees.

August 6th. Natural History Spion Kop Cemetery, Headland. Park outside of the Cemetery and meet at the main entrance at 1.30pm to see what wildflowers and birds there are.

Down Memory Lane



Gardening Group@ Billingham Beck 2018 © Barry Liddle



Professional musicians entertaining members at the January 2018 monthly meeting.

© Barry Liddle



Selected u3a Newsletters 2019 © Barry Liddle



Patchwork and Quilting Group 2016

© Barry Liddle



Reading Group 2018 © Barry Liddle



TREES FOR CITIES & U3A QUIZ

CAN YOU NAME THESE TREES BASED ON THEIR FEATURES ?

One point for their common name and one point for their Latin name



HOW MANY OF THE FOLLOWING
TREES CAN BE FOUND IN
HARTLEPOOL?

(One point if you get within 10)

Silver Birch

Sycamore

Horse Chestnut

Indian Horse Chestnut

7.



Answers on Page 13

A Bit of Everything Quiz

Compiled by Barry Liddle

Q1 What is the chemical formula for water?

- a) HO
- b) H₂O
- c) W₂O

Q2 Which England Cricketer has scored the most runs in Test matches?

- a) Geoffrey Boycott
- b) W. G. Grace
- c) Joe Root

Q3 What is Beef Tartare?

- a) Fried steak, served with a butter sauce containing capers and cornichons.
- b) Beef that is cooked rare then thinly sliced and covered with an onion sauce.
- c) Raw beef finely chopped or minced, seasoned, and served with a raw egg yolk.

Q4 What is a Mackem?

- a) A type of casual shoe
- b) A person from Sunderland or Wearside in the north-east of England
- c) A skilled glass blower

Q5 Which author wrote 'The Lord of the Rings'?

- a) C. S. Lewis
- b) William Golding
- c) J.R.R. Tolkien

Q6 Who designed the steamship SS Great Britain, the world's first great ocean liner?

- a) Isambard Kingdom Brunel
- b) George Stephenson
- c) Robert Stephenson

Q7 Complete the sentence: 'A stich in time

- a) Saves Eleven
- b) Saves Lives
- c) Saves Nine

Q8 If you were given a glass of Fino. What would you be drinking?

- a) A fortified White Port
- b) A pale crisp Sherry
- c) A popular brand of Greek Ouzo

Q9 When did India gain independence from British Rule?

- a) August 15th, 1947
- b) August 15th, 1948
- c) August 14th, 1952

Q10 Which British comedian's catchphrase was "Hello, my darlings!"

- a) Charlie Drake
- b) Tommy Trinder
- c) Harry Worth

Q11 Where was the main assembly line for all British-built Concordes?

- a) Dagenham, Essex
- b) Filton, Bristol
- c) Longbridge, Birmingham

Q 12 Colman's mustard is now produced in Burton-upon-Trent and Germany. But for many years its main production centre was:

- a) Ipswich
- b) Norwich
- c) Rye

Q13 What is a Gasket?

- a) A key component of a car's wiring harness.
- b) A key moving part within the cylinder head of an engine
- c) A seal that fills the gap between two mating surfaces within an engine.

Q14 What is the colour of Octopus Blood?

- a) Blue
- b) Green
- c) Red

Q15 Where is Stonehenge located?

- a) Gloucestershire
- b) Somerset
- c) Wiltshire

Q16 What was the name of Shackleton's ship, that was crushed and sunk by pack ice in the Weddell Sea in 1915?

- a) Endeavour
- b) Endurance
- c) Perseverance

Q17 In British radio and television what does the letters BBC stand for?

- a) British Broadcasting Communications
- b) British Broadcasting Company
- c) British Broadcasting Corporation.

Q18 Which country in the world has the most islands?

- a) Australia
- b) Norway
- c) Sweden

Q19 In Rugby Union, how many points is a 'try' worth?

- a) 1 point
- b) 3 points
- c) 5 points

Q20 What is a Sopwith Camel?

- a) A British World War 1 single seater biplane
- b) A British World War 2 armoured car
- c) A British World War 2 Jeep adapted for desert warfare.

Answers on Page 14



Headland
in Winter
Sunshine

© Barry Liddle



TREES FOR CITIES & U3A QUIZ

ANSWER SHEET



1. HOLLY
(*ILEX AQUIFOLIUM*)



2. HORSE CHESTNUT
(*AESCULUS HIPPOCASTANUM*)



3. COMMON LIME
(*TILIA X EUROPAEA*)



4. SILVER BIRCH
(*BETULA PENDULA*)



5. ASH
(*FRAXINUS EXCELSIOR*)



6. SYCAMORE
(*ACER PSEUDOPLATANUS*)

HOW MANY OF THE FOLLOWING TREES CAN BE FOUND IN HARTLEPOOL?

Silver Birch 237

Sycamore 2720

Horse Chestnut 110

Indian Horse Chestnut 1



7. LONDON PLANE
(*PLATANUS X HISPANICA*)

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,

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.

Backgammon Group Ann Gardiner

Bridge: Phil Jefferies.

Chess Group: Roger Say.

Coffee & Chat Jacky Armstrong

Creative Writing Group: Roger Say.

Events: see notice board

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

Fun with Fabrics: Ann Say

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

I.T. Group: Jan Jenner

Lawn Bowls: Ray Elliston.

Music: Vacant

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

Photography Group: Jan Jenner

Play Reading: Carol Currie

Poetry: Margaret Chappell

Quiz Team: John Campbell.

Reading Group: Andrea Reid

Shibashi Exercise Group: Marjorie Reynolds.

Stroll and Chat: Helen Eustace

Tuesday Book Club: Mary Waldmeyer

Walking Group: Keith Alder

Quiz Answers

Q1 b) H₂O; **Q2** c) Joe Root; **Q3** c) Raw beef finely chopped or minced, seasoned, and served with a raw egg yolk; **Q4** b) A person from Sunderland or Wearside in the north-east of England; **Q5** c) J.R.R. Tolkien; **Q6** a) Isambard Kingdom Brunel; **Q7** c) Saves Nine; **Q8** b) A pale crisp Sherry; **Q9** a) August 15th, 1947; **Q10** a) Charlie Drake; **Q11** b) Filton, Bristol; **Q12** b) Norwich; **Q13** c) A seal that fills the gap between two mating surfaces within an engine; **Q14** a) Blue; **Q15** c) Wiltshire; **Q16** b) Endurance; **Q17** c) British Broadcasting Corporation; **Q18** c) Sweden; **Q19** c) 5 points; **Q20** a) A British World War 1 single seater biplane.

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 February 2026.

Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor