

Newsletter

Hartlepool & District u3a

Issue 106, March 2026



Comments from the Chair

Thanks everybody for an excellent turnout to hear our popular local historian, Frances Wilson, who gave us a fascinating talk about the evacuation of children from Hartlepool at the start of WW2. I had actually heard the talk a few weeks previously but still thoroughly enjoyed it. Our speaker this month is Andy Hampson from Cleveland Police who will be telling us all about ways to keep ourselves safe from being defrauded. It is really important for us to keep up to date with different ways criminals are trying to scam us.

We are one of the smallest u3as in the country along with Middlesbrough u3a. Despite this we have plenty of members prepared to volunteer, and this is much appreciated. We have a committee of nine now and we spend a lot of time in trying to improve the running of our u3a and we are always looking for the best possible practice. This included updating our procedures and policies at regular intervals. At the moment we are working on our Health and Safety policy and so we will be introducing new procedures at the start of each meeting. These will be particularly important not just for new members but all of us. We will point out the fire doors and toilet facilities, and the evacuation procedure in case of a fire. We are completing a risk assessment plan and will discuss this, along with potential fire exit routes with the church.

All our procedures and policies can be seen online on our website under 'Governance.' When we complete our updates, a hard copy will be available at our monthly meetings.

By the time you read this meteorological spring will already have started but you will have to wait until the 20th of March if you want to go by the spring equinox and the astronomical calendar.

Meanwhile, Take care
Roger

The Joys of Spring

Barry Liddle



Spring Arrives in March in my Garden
During the Covid Years. (c) Barry Liddle

Introduction. In a good year, fingers crossed, the 'joys of spring' are first experienced by Hartlepudlians in March, with the introduction of warmer weather, spring flowers like daffodils & primroses and vibrant bird songs. The period from March also brings increased energy, longer daylight hours and greater opportunities for outdoor activities, offering a refreshing and optimistic shift from the cold winter months.

The Joys of Spring

1 Nature's Awakening: from March we see daffodils and primroses appear in gardens, parks and woodlands. March is also the start of the 'greening' phase as trees emerge from winter dormancy and pink and white blossom flourishes in our domestic gardens, public parks and in many of our tree lined streets.



March Blossom in my garden. (c) Barry Liddle



Hardwick Park, (c) Barry Liddle

2 Physical & Mental Boost: In March (whilst Hartlepool United are usually fighting relegation) the town experiences a significant increase in sunshine (averaging 109 hours up from 70 in February) and the sun is strong enough to trigger essential health benefits such as Vitamin D production in the skin. As the days also lengthen, starting on average in Hartlepool at 10 hours and 46 minutes, more exposure to sunlight can help to reverse the physical and mental sluggishness caused by the dull winter months (and the performance of Hartlepool United).

Source Google

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3 Outdoor Activities: Warmer drier days encourage walking, gardening and spending time in nature. Our u3a Gardening and Natural History Groups will be taking full advantage of these improving conditions when planning their spring programmes.

4 Symbolism of New Beginnings:

Spring represents hope, growth and a fresh start.



Down Memory Lane -Dog Walking Group

Conclusion: u3a members who embrace these seasonal developments and are happy, lively and optimistic can be said to be:

'Full of the Joys of Spring'.



Crocuses at Greatham. (c) Barry Liddle

Benefits of Lifelong Learning

Jacky Armstrong

When I saw the headline in my morning newspaper "Lifelong learning can cut the risk of Alzheimer's by 40%, study says", I thought I need to know how, so read on. I will be quoting from the article in the i newspaper by Jane Kirby. After all, why do the research when someone else has already done it!

The article opens with

"activities like reading, writing and learning languages can cut the risk".

It went through different stages in life. Mid-life looked at income, library membership and visiting museums. Then on to Later-life enrichment activities from around the age of 80 which included reading, writing and playing games.

So where can WE go to lower the risk of cognitive impairment? The u3a of course. You can join any group to help ward off cognitive impairment, not to mention the extra quality of the u3a, socialising.

I kept on reading my newspaper.

Then further on in the paper on page 36, Professor John Tregoning reports on his study on ways "to research and trying out ways to slow ageing." He writes

"Social isolation is worse for you than smoking 15 cigarettes a day. So social connectivity is key. The lifestyle I'd recommend to everyone is being connected to other people through something you enjoy. And if it involves exercise or cognition so much the better."

Prof Tregoning concludes

"There's a study about how people in a hospital ward who could see trees recovered two days or so faster than people who couldn't see any" (I hope N Tees hospital is reading this) "and you can do exercise - get outside every day, go to the park, go wherever there are green spaces and ideally do it with someone else."

Well, what have we got here in OUR u3a. Reading groups, quiz group, walking groups, exercise groups, garden group, coffee and chat and many more. All these groups will keep our mind active and we can make new friends.

So, let's do ourselves a favour and join in. They may stave off Alzheimer's for meand for you.

Editor's Note: "I knew there was a reason why I joined the u3a!"

Anyone for a Swim in the North Sea?

Barry Liddle

With March marking the beginning of Spring and the onset of warmer weather, is it time for u3a members to consider taking a refreshing swim in Hartlepool's North Sea?



(c) Barry Liddle

Well, if you are currently sat at home with the central heating set as high as you can afford then the answer is probably no, and as you might expect, the scientific data supports your decision. Hartlepool's average sea temperature for March is only 5°C with the peak summer month of August, a less than inviting 14°C–16°C.

Average Hartlepool Sea Temperatures by Month. (Source Google)

- January: 3°C–4°C
- February: 3°C (lowest, often 3°C–8°C)
- March: 5°C
- April: 7°C
- May: 9°C
- June: 12°C
- July: 14°C–15°C
- August: 14°C–16°C (peak)
- September: 13°C
- October: 10°C
- November: 7°C–10°C
- December: 5°C

So, if you are tempted by a March swim then you must be doing it for one or more of the following reasons: 1) you are a good Samaritan doing it for a charitable cause; 2) you are someone with masochistic tendencies; 3) you are in possession of a 'Death Wish'; 4) you possess the most insulated Wetsuit known to man; or 5) you have a 'Bucket List' wish to swim the channel in March. Whichever of these reasons apply, I would still recommend that you adopt the old adage: *'Discretion is the better part of valour'* and keep your swimming costume well and truly hidden, that is until your summer vacation to the Greek Islands.

Average Greek Islands Sea Temperatures for Selected Month. (Source Google)

- January to March: 14°C -16°C
- July to August 24°C -27°C (Peak)

PS - For those of you (like me) who were brought up on the old Fahrenheit scale, here are a few comparisons to enable you to interpret the previous tables:

5°C = 41°F; 10°C = 50°F; 15°C = 59°F; 20°C = 68 °F; 25°C = 77 °F; 30°C = 86 °F.

A Memorable Journey

Martin Green



(c) Martin Green

Brenda Regan's article in last month's Newsletter about the winter of 1947 brought to mind my own snowy experience, not of 1947, but of that other winter of 1963, and one of those days in my life that I will never forget.

Being evidently a couple of years behind Brenda I was just applying for a university place in 1963 and had been invited for an interview in the January for a place at Birmingham. Setting off from Hull early in the morning with

both some trepidation and expectation, I didn't know what adventure the day was to bring. There was a good covering of snow as my parents saw me off on the bus to catch a Sheffield bound train from Hull's Paragon station. Arrival at Sheffield was a little late but to my relief my connecting train (a York to Bristol train I believe) was also running late. Departure however was further delayed by snow blocked points and as we progressed somewhat cautiously through Chesterfield and Derby arrival at Birmingham was now about 1.15pm, over an hour late. With an appointment at 1.30, and still to find the bus out to Edgbaston, things were not looking very promising. So, I found a phone box (no mobiles back then) and give the admissions people a ring. 'Just come down' they said, 'we have totally given up on any sort of schedule'.

So having duly arrived and been interviewed (I was subsequently offered a place) there was disappointingly no time for a proper tour of the department as I had to be back in the city centre for my 4pm train home, I might as well have taken the tour though as on arrival at New Street, which unlike today's depressing underground like platforms was an equally depressing giant smoke filled cavern, I ascertained that the 4pm wasn't now expected until around 5.30. So time to indulge in a classic BR cheese sandwich. Eventual arrival in Sheffield was two hours late, where I was advised that there were no more trains to Hull that evening, so stay aboard and continue to York where the last train home from there would be held to connect.

To my relief that connection was held and I arrived back in Hull something like three and a half hours later than planned, and of course, too late for the last bus home. Another phone box call home to my now worried parents (remember no mobiles to call from the train) and instructions to get a taxi which they would pay for. That you might think would bring this story to a satisfactory end. You would be wrong. About a mile from home the taxi skidded on the frozen ice and snow and crashed into a garden wall. No one was hurt but I finished the journey trudging through the snow on foot in the early hours of the morning. The taxi driver never did get paid!

Editor's Note: *if you have had a 'memorable journey' (good or bad) then please send me an account if it for the Newsletter.*

Member's Notice Board

Interest Groups, Dates for Your Diary- Helen Eustace

February 24th, 2026 - Tuesday Book Club. We meet upstairs at 2pm in the Central Hub, York Road. New readers always welcome. This month's book is Precipice by Robert Harris. For further information contact Mary Waldymer

25th February, 2026 - Stroll and Chat. The Headland. We will meet at the Borough Hall car park at 11am. Afterwards we will go to Mary Rowntrees. Dogs are welcome. For further information contact Helen Eustace.

March 2nd, 2026 - Coffee and Chat. 10.30am at the Golden Lion, Dunston Road. All welcome

March 2nd, 2026 - Photography Group Newcastle Building Society at 2pm. Free tea and coffee. Come along with your cameras and phones. For more info contact Jan Jenner

March 6th, 2026 - 2pm. Friday General Meeting. St. Josephs Church Hall. Today's speaker will be Andy Hampson from the police who will be keeping us up to date with how to keep safe from being scammed.

March 10th, 2026 - Garden Group. Visit to Green Lane Nursery for coffee/lunch. We will either car share or get a minibus depending on numbers. An opportunity to visit the farm shop and to pick up your spring bedding plants. For further details contact Liz Milbourn or Helen Eustace.

March 11th, 2026 - Art Appreciation. Peoples Centre 09.45am. This will be a group discussion about war artists.

March 24th, 2026 - Tuesday Book Club. We meet upstairs at 2pm in the Central Hub, York Road. New readers always welcome. This month's book is Raising Hare by Chloe Dalton. For further information contact Mary Waldymer

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'.

April 10th, 2026 - General Meeting. St. Josephs Church Hall at 2pm. Please note the change of date as this is not the first Friday in the month as usual, as the first Friday falls on Good Friday.

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. 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 there are. 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.

Calling all Gardeners.

Here's a handy way to save 25% on the time it takes you to mow the lawn and do your bit for the planet at the same time. All you have to do is pop down to Tesco and buy a packet of Meadow Garden seeds for the very reasonable price of £3, or 2 for £5. You can then stop mowing a quarter of your lawn and plant the seeds instead. This can be done in April or May, depending on the weather. You will be rewarded with your very own wildflower meadow, resplendent with colour and pollinators, where you can enjoy a cup of tea (or a G&T) in the time you have saved on garden chores.

Cheers!

Phil Jefferies

Calling All Classical Music Lovers

Wendy Borthwick is seeking to organise an outing to the Fire Station Venue in Sunderland on Sunday 10th May at 3 pm. The concert features Antonin Dvorak's *Serenade for the Winds* and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Serenade No. 10 'Gran Partita'*.

- Tickets cost £27 (no information yet on concessions) and are selling quickly.
- Wendy is hoping to reserve up to 14 seats.
- Please contact Wendy as soon as possible so she can confirm reservations (her e-mail address is in the Beacon e-mail she sent recently to all members)
- Transport is by coach and will cost in the region of £10-12 (depending on numbers).



This photograph of an oil rig being dismantled on a cold wet February day was taken by **Ray Elliston**. The work is undertaken by Able UK operating out of Able Seaton Port (ASP). As many of you know, this local company specialises in the decommissioning, recycling and disposal of large offshore structures. In addition, the company is involved in the offshore wind sector.



Pondering Life's Little Choices

Chris McLoughlin

Leader of the Archaeology/History Group & former Committee Member and Secretary of Hartlepool u3a.

Full English or cereal & toast?

Full English but rigidly stick to toast or cereal.

Holiday abroad or Staycation?

Either, as long as it includes a bit of history exploring.

Dog or Cat?

Never owned a pet, probably dog.

Christmas Day or Boxing Day?

Christmas Day, seeing family.

Wine or Beer?

Wine first choice but do like a beer.

Beatles or Rolling Stones?

Beatles, "saw" them at City Hall when they first burst on the scene, once John Lennon said "Hiya" the girls started screaming and drowned out the sound.

Meat or Lentils?

Meat eater, steak and chips.

Dr Who or Star Trek?

Dr Who.

Cappuccino or Espresso?

Tea please, milk in first.

Night in or Night Out?

Night in these days, something on the telly and always have a book to read.

Coronation Street or Eastenders?

Mrs Dale's Diary. (I'm rather worried about Jim).

Football or Rugby?

Rugby every time, but I always keep an eye on Football, great to see the pro Football clubs promoting the N East.

Cheese & Onion or Salt & Vinegar crisps?

Salt & Vinegar.

Shopping or Anything Else?

Anything else, please!

Garlic or No Garlic?

No Garlic.

Pudding or Cheese & Biscuits?

Cheese & Biscuits, - Wensleydale, Cheddar, or Stilton (with Port) & Jacobs Cream Crackers.

Cash or Card?

Cash, easier to control.

Whisky or Gin & Tonic?

Whisky, Grain not Malt

Night Owl or Lark?

Definitely lark.

White or Brown Bread?

White please.

The Flintstones or Noggin the Nog?

Noggin the Nog (not forgetting Nogbad the Bad!)

Ketchup or Brown Sauce?

Brown for me, even on panacketty.

Morris Minor or Ford Anglia?

Morris Minor. always thought there was something smart about the Moggy Minor Estate.

Tripe & Onions or Liver & Onions?

Liver & Onions for me, my mother was a fan of tripe with vinegar!

Darts or Snooker?

Darts preferred, bigger target.

Sherry or Cocktail?

Sherry (Dry Sack).

Social Media or No Social Media?

No social media.

Avocado on Toast or Beans on Toast?

Beans on toast especially cheese beano's.

Mods or Rockers?

I'm more towards Chris Barber/Dave Brubeck scene.

Crossword Puzzles or Sudoku?

"Angry comment joined in mysteries (9,7)"!

Indian Takeaway or Chinese Takeaway?

Chinese (takeaway).

Strictly Come Dancing or Bangers and Cash?

Neither one I'm afraid.

Salad Cream or Mayonnaise?

Salad Cream.

Regular Exercise or No Exercise?

Regular exercise, walk each day even if it is only to the Newsagent.

Is your glass half full or half empty?

Half full.

Miscellaneous

A new regular column from Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor.

90th Anniversary of the Supermarine Spitfire

On 5th March 2026, it will be exactly 90 years since the maiden flight of the prototype Supermarine Spitfire (K5054). The flight took place at 4.35pm on March 5th, 1936, at the Eastleigh Aerodrome (now Southampton Airport), piloted by Vickers Chief Test Pilot Joseph 'Mut' Summers. The flight lasted 8 minutes and the pilot is reputed to have said 'I don't want anything touched', or words to that effect, due to its promising performance.

Sources Google, Wikipedia, History Today website

Word of the Month

Portmanteau

Portmanteau can be defined as a large travelling bag, typically made from stiff leather and opening into two equal parts. However, there is a far more interesting definition:

Portmanteaus are made-up words that blend the meaning or sounds of two others, for example:

Smog = (smoke + fog)

Podcast = (iPod + broadcast)

Blog = (web + log)

Motel = (motor + hotel)

Sitcom = (situation + comedy)

Labradoodle = (labrador + poodle)

Netflix = (internet + flicks)

Chillax = (chill + relax)

Can you think of any more examples?

Send them to me and I'll include them in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Who am I?

1. I was born in the Bronx to an immigrant Russian family on 26 December 1939.
2. I relocated to Los Angeles as a teenager and co-founded the 'Teddy Bears' in 1958, writing the chart-topping single 'To Know Him is to Love Him'.
3. With my colleague Lester Still, I established Philles records, becoming the youngest US record label owner.
4. I exercised unprecedented artistic control over recordings.
5. My studio band 'The Wrecking Crew' became famous within the record industry.
6. I was considered the first music producer *auteur*, and in the 1960s became famous for my 'Wall of Sound' production style.

Answer on page 15

Wordplay and Numbers

Did you know, **Forty** is the only number in English with its letters in alphabetical order.

As Michael Caine is reputed to have said, 'Not a Lot of People Know That'.

Poetry Corner

Looking back on Friday 13th

Friday the 13th holds no fears for me
I'm made of sterner stuff you see
It sends shivers down many folks' spine
But rest assured, not through mine
The date will not bring you any bad luck
Simply ignore it, have some pluck
Walk under a ladder without a care
See a black cat do not beware
Break a mirror throw some salt
Bring your superstitions to a halt.
Friday the 13th is just another day
So buck up keep your fears at bay
Live the day without a care
Be the day dry, wet or fair
Sally forth into the street
It'll be fine don't get cold feet
Just left the house, see a car
Slipped on some ice, oh no . . . Agh. . .
Writing this from the hospital ward
Be not concerned I won't get bored
Though my eyes look slightly dewy
To Friday the 13th I still say phooey!

Roger Say

Spring Has Sprung

A Hellebore in my front north
facing garden in late February

Margaret Boddy



The Japanese Love of Cherry Blossom

The arrival of tree blossom in March is welcomed in the UK, but in Japan there is a profound love for cherry blossom (*Sakura*). For the Japanese, this sentiment stems from the fleeting beauty of cherry blossom, which they see as representing the transient nature of life and also the arrival of spring. There is an old tradition in Japan of *Hanami* (which translates as flower viewing) which brings people together for picnics under blooming trees.

(A trivia fact for you - the badge on the shirt of Japan's national rugby union team features three cherry blossoms and the team's nickname is 'the Brave Blossoms').

Barry Liddle

The United States of America Quiz

Compiled by Barry Liddle

Q1 In contemporary American politics, what does MAGA stand for?

- a) Make America Go Again
- b) Make America Great Again
- c) Make America Grow Again

Q2 Elvis Presley, the 'King of Rock 'n' Roll,' lived in a mansion in Memphis. What was it called?

- a) Graceland
- b) Mount Vernon
- c) Neverland Ranch

Q3 Which American President is remembered for his inaugural call to service "*Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country*"?

- a) Dwight D. Eisenhower
- b) Franklin D. Roosevelt
- c) John F. Kennedy

Q4 Al Capone (1899-1947) was a notorious American gangster. In which city was he based?

- a) Chicago
- b) New York
- c) Pittsburgh

Q5 Who is Warren Buffett?

- a) Chair of the Federal Reserve
- b) Head of NASA
- c) Chairman of Berkshire Hathaway

Q6 In the 1950s, which American city was known as the 'Motor City'?

- a) Chicago
- b) Dallas
- c) Detroit.

Q7 The 'Apollo Program' landed men on the moon in the 1960s and 70s. What is the name of the current programme designed to return people to the moon?

- a) Adventure Program
- b) Artemis Program
- c) Atlantis program

Q8 The 'New York Knicks' play professional:

- a) American Football
- b) Baseball
- c) Basketball

Q9 What is Bruce Springsteen's usual backing band called?

- a) E Street Band
- b) The Band
- c) The Gabe Dixon Band

Q10 Name the author of the famous American novel 'Catcher in the Rye'.

- a) Ernest Hemingway
- b) Harper Lee
- c) J. D. Salinger

Q11 The 'America's Cup' is the world's oldest sporting trophy. In which sport is it contested?

- a) Archery
- b) Sailing (Yacht Racing)
- c) Golf

Q12 A colossal sculpture carved into the granite face of Mount Rushmore features:

- a) Four Native American Chiefs
- b) Four American Presidents
- c) Four Native American Animals

Q13 What the Americans call Zucchini, we call:

- a) Courgette
- b) Melon
- c) Squash

Q14 Which American Movie Star's real first name is 'Thomas', and real surname is 'Mapother IV'?

- a) Nicholas Cage
- b) Tom Cruise
- c) Tom Hanks

Q15 The American cocktail called a Martini, contains the following ingredients:

- a) Gin mixed with Vodka
- b) Gin or Vodka with Dry Vermouth
- c) Gin or Vodka with Dry White Wine

Q16 Which American City is often called 'The Big Easy'?

- a) Los Angeles
- b) New Orleans
- c) New York

Q17 What is the name of Americas' first and world's first, National Park?

- a) Grand Canyon
- b) Yellowstone
- c) Yosemite

Q18 Who did Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay) defeat to become for the first time, world heavyweight champion?

- a) Joe Frazier
- b) Floyd Patterson
- c) Sony Liston

Q19 All the following men commanded armies for the North in the American Civil War, except one, who was a General for the Confederates. Who is the odd one out?

- a) George McClellan
- b) Stonewall Jackson
- c) Ulysses S Grant
- d) William T. Sherman

Q20 Which American President introduced 'The New Deal to combat the impact of the Great Depression.

- a) Franklin D. Roosevelt
- b) Herbert Hoover
- c) Theodore Roosevelt

Answers on Page 15

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

Who AM I? Answer, Phil Spector

Quiz Answers

Q1 b) Make America Great Again; **Q2** a) Graceland; **Q3** c) John F. Kennedy; **Q4** a) Chicago ; **Q5** c) Chairman of Berkshire Hathaway; **Q6** c) Detroit; **Q7** b) Artemis Program; **Q8** c) Basketball; **Q9** a) E Street Band; **Q10** c) J. D. Salinger; **Q11** b) Sailing (Yacht Racing); **Q12** b) Four American Presidents; **Q13** a) Courgette; **Q14** b) Tom Cruise; **Q15** b) Gin or Vodka with Dry Vermouth; **Q16** b) New Orleans; **Q17** b) Yellowstone; **Q18** c) Sony Liston; **Q19** b) Stonewall Jackson; **Q20** a) Franklin D. Roosevelt.

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 March 2026.

Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor