

Newsletter

Hartlepool & District u3a

Issue 112, September 2026

u3a learn,
laugh,
live



I'm Spartacus. Photograph © Ray Elliston

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Comments from the Chair



Have just returned from a trip to Broadstairs in Kent to celebrate my brother's 60th wedding anniversary and my sister-in-law's 80th birthday. Apart from family there were a lot of their friends present, some of whom we met for the first time. When we told them we lived in Hartlepool it was usually met with a look of puzzlement as they struggled to work out where it was!

Everybody's interest perked up however when I told them about our amazing u3a and the huge range of interest groups and activities that we offer our members. I hope I did not overdo my praise as we don't need any more pesky southerners coming up here! I deliberately did not mention the great weather we have had over the last few

weeks while they were sweltering in 36C+. Some things need remaining a well-kept secret.

Summer is almost over and we will be getting ready for our next general meeting when our guest speaker will be Clive Fennessy from Sedgefield u3a who will be informing and entertaining us with the history of 'The Panama Canal Story'. His talk goes from the first idea of an isthmus canal to its eventual opening in 1914. The following month we will welcome Margaret Bozic who will be telling us all about the 'Lit and Phil Newcastle'. I can thoroughly recommend this talk as I have heard her speak on a similar subject and she is a really good speaker.

I hope you have all had a great summer and I look forward to seeing you all on Friday 4th September at 2pm.

Meanwhile,

Take care

Roger

Gardening Group: Summer Visits

Liz Milbourn

In July the Garden Group visited '*Raby Castle Gardens and Deer Park*' which is located near Staindrop in County Durham. The stunning five-acre gardens have recently been remodelled, and Raby Castle itself is one of the most impressive intact castles in the North of England — well worth a visit, even if wandering around gardens isn't really your thing!

In August, we joined forces with the Art Appreciation Group for a visit to *Kiplin Hall and Gardens*, near Richmond. We enjoyed the historic house, museum and scenic grounds, including the walled garden, which provides fresh produce for the delicious food served in the new café.

Here are a few photographs as a memory of our visit to Kiplin Hall.

Photos: Paul Eustace and Margaret Boddy



Obituary

-Geoff Law-



Geoff Law (third from left in dark blue jacket) at a Gardening Group visit to Durham University Botanic Gardens 2019.

Geoff Law, a longstanding member of our u3a, died recently at James Cook Hospital.

A service of thanksgiving and celebration of his life will be held at Oxford Road Baptist Church on Wednesday August 26th at 10am.

Our condolences go to his wife Sandy (also a longstanding member of our u3a) his family and friends.

Geoff was a keen and knowledgeable gardener and wrote several articles for this Newsletter and was an active member of the original Gardening Group. He was also a volunteer gardener. His other passion was travel; he and Sandy would be away several times a year visiting new places and having adventures both at home and abroad.

He will be sadly missed.

Interest Groups: Programme of Events

Helen Eustace

September 4th, General Meeting 2pm

Our speaker this month will be Clive Fennesey who will talk about the building of the Panama Canal.

September 7th, Coffee and Chat 10.30am

The Golden Lion, Dunston Road, All welcome. For further information contact Jacky Armstrong

September 8th, Poetry Group, People's Centre between 2pm and 4pm.

Over the next couple of months, we will be looking at the friendship and poetry between William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, starting with Wordsworth in September. For more information contact Margaret Chappell.

September 10th, Archaeology and History

'A tour around the Lonsdales' A talk by John Heckles on the work of sculptor Roy Lonsdale.

September 11th, Creative Writing Group. 2pm in the Arts Centre Café.

For more information contact Roger Say

September 13th, Sunday, Art Appreciation

Bus Trip to Staithes Art Festival. For further information contact Irene Archer or Andrea Reid.

September 14th, Backgammon, Citizens Advice Bureau at 2pm.

Come along to play a game of backgammon. New members welcome. For more information contact Anne Gardiner

September 16th, Quiz Group, People's Centre at 2pm.

For further details contact John Campbell. New members always welcome.

September 21st, Play Reading. People's Centre, Raby Road between 1pm and 3pm

New members always welcome. For further information contact Carol Currie.

September 22nd, Tuesday Book Club

New members welcome. For further information contact Mary Waldmeyer.

September 23rd, Garden Group.

A minibus is booked but we will see which garden still looks good in September and details will be circulated soon. For more information contact Liz Milbourn or Helen Eustace.

September 30th Stroll and Chat.

Change of date for this month to the 5th Wednesday rather than the 4th. Meet 11am

October 2nd, General Meeting 2pm

Our speaker this month will be Margaret Bozic on the 'lit and Phil' Newcastle.

October 5th, Coffee and Chat 10.30am, The Golden Lion, Dunston Road.

All welcome. For further information contact Jacky Armstrong

October 8th Archaeology and History

A talk is being arranged with Bernard Hope. Details to follow.

October 9th, Creative Writing Group. 2pm in the Arts Centre Café.

For more information contact Roger Say

October 12th, Backgammon, Citizens Advice Bureau at 2pm.

Come along to play a game of backgammon. New members welcome. For more information contact Anne Gardiner

October 13th, Poetry Group, People's Centre between 2pm and 4pm.

In October we shall continue looking at the friendship and poetry between William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. For more information contact Margaret Chappell.

October 21st, Quiz Group, People's Centre at 2pm.

For further details contact John Campbell. New members always welcome

October 28th, Stroll and Chat

Details to follow

November 2nd, Coffee and Chat 10.30am. The Golden Lion, Dunston Road,

All welcome. For further information contact Jacky Armstrong

November 6th, General Meeting 2pm

Our speaker this month will be Philip Caine on 'Barrow to Baghdad and back again'.

November 9th, Backgammon, Citizens Advice Bureau at 2pm.

Come along to play a game of backgammon. New members welcome. For more information contact Anne Gardiner

November 12th, Archaeology and History

Margaret Bozic returns to give a talk on the crossing from Newcastle to Carlisle via trains, road, canal (?) Details nearer the time.

November 13th, Creative Writing Group. 2pm in the Arts Centre Café.

For more information contact Roger Say

November 18th, Quiz Group, People's Centre at 2pm.

For further details contact John Campbell. New members always welcome

November 25th, Stroll and Chat

Details to follow

December 4th, General Meeting 2pm

This will be our Christmas social meeting.

December 7th, Coffee and Chat 10.30am , The Golden Lion, Dunston Road.

All welcome. For further information contact Jacky Armstrong.

December 11th, Creative Writing Group.

2pm in the Arts Centre Café. For more information contact Roger Say

December 12th, Garden Group and open to all.

The garden group are going on the Lees Coach trip to the Alnwick Garden Winter Light Trail. A late afternoon excursion to the Alnwick Gardens. Not only can you see the lights in the Alnwick Garden but also see the lights in Lilidorei. It will cost approximately £35 and this will include both attractions. Pick up will be at Hartlepool Transport Interchange (next door to the railway station). For further information contact Helen Eustace or Liz Milbourn.

December 14th, Backgammon, Citizens Advice Bureau at 2pm.

Come along to play a game of backgammon. New members welcome. For more information contact Anne Gardiner

December 16th, Quiz Group , People's Centre at 2pm.

For further details contact John Campbell. New members always welcome

December 24th, Reading Group (Andrea's)

There will not be a Reading Group in December.



A spectacular
Sunset from my
bedroom window.

Martin Green

Brian was a criminal. Brian was an unsuccessful criminal who was not very well respected in the criminal underworld. Brian was not very bright: two swallows short of a summer was the common opinion. He was also a small - time snitch to supplement his meagre income from his nefarious activities. He would give snippets of information to the police which he had picked up from pubs where the criminal fraternity hung out although never of much interest as they invariably involved petty crimes. This was about to change.

Brian was approached in his local pub by the leader of a serious gang of criminals and offered a role in their next big job. Big Al, as he was known, asked Brian to take over the role as a driver for their next job as their regular get-away man was serving a stretch inside. Nobody turned down a request from Big Al so Brian reluctantly agreed.

The gang met at regular interviews to firm up the planned robbery of one of the biggest banks in the area. Big Al made sure Brian understood the plan: the date, the time, the bank and where he should park the car. They did two practice runs to make sure everything ran smoothly.

Brian realised that this was his big chance to be taken seriously by his police contact and so secretly met with his handler PC James Jones to spill the beans. The day of the planned robbery arrived. Brian drove his car to the designated spot ready to drive off at a moment's notice. Several unmarked police cars were strategically parked ready to pounce. The robbery was due to start at 2:30.

2.30 came and 2.30 went. 3:00 came and went as did 3.30 when the bank closed its doors. Soon after that the police went. Brian was in big trouble. He was arrested for wasting police time and put in a cell. He was later charged with perverting the course of justice and received a hefty sentence.

Meanwhile, back in the Dog and Whistle, Big Al and his gang were enjoying the successful robbery they had carried out at the local Co-op. They laughed about the way Brian had been set up. Big Al stood up and said: Remember the saying lads: 'The grass is always greener!'

Gardening Group: Forthcoming Events

Ushaw Flower Festival – Saturday 12th September

A visit to Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens, near Durham, for its Flower Festival and specialist plant sale. There will be nurseries offering rare and unusual plants to browse and buy.

The minibus is now full, and we have a waiting list for this trip.

Alnwick Garden Winter Light Trail – Saturday 12th December

The Garden Group will be joining the Lees Coaches trip to Alnwick Garden Winter Light Trail — a late-afternoon and evening excursion to The Alnwick Garden.

As well as enjoying the spectacular illuminations in the gardens, there will also be an opportunity to see the lights at Lilidorei.

The cost will be £33, including entry to both attractions, with pick-up in Hartlepool.

We have already booked tickets for those who have told us they would like to go. If anyone else is interested, please let **Helen or Liz** know and we will see if we can obtain additional tickets.

Miscellaneous

Barry Liddle

Who am I?

1. I was born in Kingston upon Hull in 1759.
2. At Cambridge University I became good friends with William Pitt the Younger (Britain's youngest Prime Minister.)
3. I was elected to Parliament in 1780
4. In 1785 I became an evangelical Christian and became focused on social reform.
5. I led a 20-year campaign to abolish the slave trade within the British Empire.

Answer on page 12

My Word of the Month

After several heatwaves this summer, my word of the month has to be:

Mafting.

Mafting is a word chiefly used here in the North East of England. It is used when it is oppressively hot, sweltering or stifling hot. The last time we had a summer like this would be 50 years ago, when I was student living in London.

However, wouldn't it be typically British if the day you read this definition of Mafting; it is actually raining heavily with thunder and lightning!

Source Wiktionary

The 1970's Revisited Quiz

Compiled by Barry Liddle

(Answers on page 12)

Q1 In what year was there an historic heatwave and severe drought in the UK?

- a) 1972
- b) 1974
- c) 1976

Q2 On August 9th, 1974, facing almost certain impeachment due to his involvement in the cover-up of a national scandal, USA President Nixon resigned from office. What was the scandal called?

- a) The Watergate Scandal
- b) The West Wing Scandal
- c) The Winchester Scandal

Q3 Steven Spielberg had a major hit in 1977 with a science fiction film called:

- a) Close Encounters of the First Kind
- b) Close Encounters of the Second Kind
- c) Close Encounters of the Third Kind

Q4 Which British Prime Minister introduced 'The Three-Day Week' to save electricity during the 1974 miner's strike and global oil crisis?

- a) James Callaghan
- b) Ted Heath
- c) Harold Wilson

Q5 Which North East football team became FA Cup winners in the 1972-73 season?

- a) Newcastle
- b) Middlesbrough
- c) Sunderland

Q6 The Film Rocky was released in 1976 and became a major hit for its writer and star – Sylvester Stallone? In which city was the film set and filmed?

- a) Chicago
- b) Pennsylvania
- c) Philadelphia

Q7 In 1976, the UK Government was forced to seek a massive loan of \$3.9 billion from the International Monetary Fund to rescue the pound and stabilise public finances. Who was the British Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time?

- a) James Callaghan**
- b) Denis Healey**
- c) Roy Jenkins**

Q8 In 1975 the average price of a pint of beer was?

- a) 20p-30p**
- b) 50 – 60p**
- c) 70p-80p**

Q9 Which one of these popular products from the 1970s is no longer on sale in the UK?

- a) Arctic Roll**
- b) Smash Instant Mash**
- c) Vesta Ready Meals**

Q10 Which country hosted the 1970 FIFA World Cup?

- a) Argentina**
- b) Mexico**
- c) West Germany**

Q11 Fawlty Towers was a very popular TV comedy. In which seaside town was the hotel supposed to be located?

- a) Bournemouth**
- b) Brighton**
- c) Torquay**

Q12 All the following were British heavyweight boxing champions in the 1970s except one. Who is the odd one out?

- a) Jack Bodell**
- b) Henry Cooper**
- c) Horace Notice**

Q13 Which British band released 'The Dark Side of the Moon' album in the 1970s?

- a) Deep Purple**
- b) Black Sabbath**
- c) Pink Floyd**

Q14 'The Wombles' was a children's TV show about eco-friendly creatures cleaning up:

- a) Clapham Common**
- b) Wandsworth Common**
- c) Wimbledon Common**

Q15 Who was Britain's premier shot-putter through the 1970s?

- a) Geoff Capes**
- b) Arthur Rowe**
- c) Jeff Teale**

Q16 Which popular 1970s British comedian used the catchphrase "What do you think of it so far?"

- a) Bruce Forsyth**
- b) Eric Morecambe**
- c) Eric Sykes**

Q17 Elton John's hit song 'Bennie and the Jets' was released on which album?

- a) Friends**
- b) Goodbye Yellow Brick Road**
- c) Tumbleweed Connection**

Q18 Which of the following actors played the role of Dr Who at some point in the 1970s?

- a) Colin Baker**
- b) Tom Baker**
- c) Peter Davison**

Q19 Who presented 'Just a Minute' a BBC 4 comedy panel game throughout the 1970s?

- a) Barry Cryer**
- b) Humphrey Lyttleton**
- c) Nicholas Parsons**

Q20 In 1971, The British & Irish Lions recorded their first and only Test Series win over the New Zealand All Blacks. Who captained the Lions?

- a) John Dawes**
- b) Mike Campbell-Lamerton**
- c) Willie John McBride**

Directory

Committee Members for 2026/27

Chair, Speaker Finder & Web Admin.

Roger Say

Vice Chair & Business Secretary

Paul Eustace

Treasurer –

Cliff Cordiner

Membership Secretary –

Pauline Williamson

Beacon Administrator.

Jan Jenner

Groups' Co-ordinator

Helen Eustace.

Minutes Secretary

To be arranged

Committee –

Wendy Borthwick, Andrea Reid

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? William Wilberforce

The 1970's Revisited Quiz Answers

Q1 c) 1976; **Q2** a) The Watergate Scandal; **Q3** c) Close Encounters of the Third Kind; **Q4** b) Ted Heath; **Q5** c) Sunderland; **Q6** c) Philadelphia; **Q7** b) Denis Healey; **Q8** a) 20p-30p; **Q9** c) Vesta Ready Meals; b) Mexico; **Q11** c) Torquay; **Q12** c) Horace Notice; **Q13** c) Pink Floyd; **Q14** c) Wimbledon Common; **Q15** a) Geoff Capes; **Q16** b) Eric Morecambe; **Q17** b) Goodbye Yellow Brick Road; **Q18** b) Tom Baker; c) Nicholas Parsons; **Q20** a) John Dawes.

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 September 2026.

Barry Liddle, Newsletter Editor