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Monthly Meeting

5th November 2024 at 2:00 pm

at the Mart

‘The Rocks at the Edge of the Empire’

Given by Ian Jackson

This talk will explore the way the rocks and landscape of northern England shaped the Roman occupation. It will reveal how the landscape the Romans first encountered came to be and how rocks influenced decisions about their frontier defences and route-lines. The talk will outline the challenges faced by their commanders, surveyors, craftsmen and quartermasters as they negotiated the terrain and exploited and traded the resources our natural environment offered - from sandstone and limestone, to coal, lead, iron, copper, pigments, clay, water and more. For the Romans an understanding of the landscape was not just desirable, it was essential – their day-to-day lives and the resilience of the infrastructure of the Empire depended on it. Lastly, the talk will examine how geology and archaeology connect - and sometimes don't - and will interpret the history of the Roman frontier from a geological perspective.

Ian Jackson was born in Carlisle and did his degree in geology and geography at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Ian is a Chartered Geologist and Fellow of the Geological Society. He spent 18 years surveying the geology of parts of the north of England for the British Geological Survey. Later he was responsible for national and international programmes that produced the first UK, European and global digital geological maps and made them web accessible. Ian retired from the position of BGS Operations Director in 2011 and lives halfway along the Wall, in the middle of a Roman camp, near Bardon Mill. In addition to many scientific maps, articles and reports, he is the author of three popular books about the rocks of Northumberland, Cumbria and Durham.

*If you miss the Monthly Meeting you will be able to view the talk
with the video link that will be emailed to all members*

Communicating on Social Media

Whether it's X, Facebook or YouTube, the language used by young people to communicate is different from the way older people interact. I've used email for over 40 years and love it, as do not only older people but professionals. On the other hand younger people and those on dating sites will be much more casual and use images and abbreviations. Apparently, Jimmy Young on Radio 2 was 40 years ahead of his time when he used BFN for Bye for Now as he pioneered the use of abbreviations. The 2020s is bringing the abbreviations form on to social media. 30 minutes of excellence at the <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0023gmv>

Mike Foster

Photographs of the Aurora Borealis by Jenny Loring

Blues & purples result from reactions with Nitrogen at different altitudes, green & red Oxygen at low & high level respectively. Sorry for phone shake, trying to hold steady for 2-3secs at 3°C!



Help Solve the Mystery



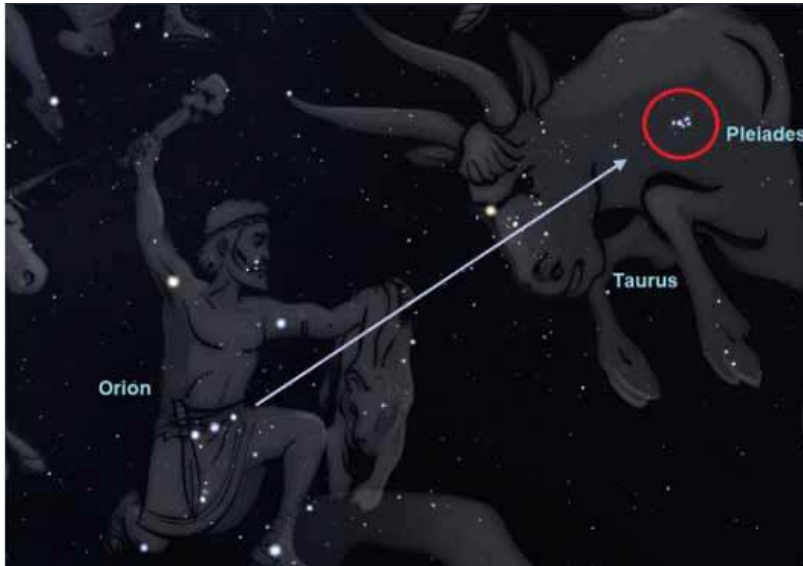
Although Tynedale u3a has over 600 members, not one person has volunteered for the position of either Publicity Officer or Events Secretary. Given the depth of life and work experience present in the membership this reticence is a complete mystery. Listening to the robust banter in groups and at the monthly meetings our members do not seem to be 'shrinking violets'!

So, don't leave it to Mr Holmes and please help solve this intriguing problem and come and discuss the positions with Barrie or any committee member. Despite appearances, the committee is really very friendly and supportive.

November Star Gazing

No star chart this month as time and a busy schedule have beaten me but here are some of the notable sky events this month.

November is a particularly good time to see the Pleiades. This star cluster can be easily located using the stars in Orion's belt as a pointer:



Situated in the constellation Taurus it seems to consist of seven stars and is often referred to as the Seven Sisters. In reality these are only six bright stars easily seen by eye the seventh being of variable brightness. One of the distinguishing features of the Pleiades stars is their striking blue colour. This is due to the stars' properties, primarily their high temperatures. There are actually over 1000 stars in the cluster. They are winter stars in the northern hemisphere and are at their best at this time of the year.

These stars are relatively young in the scheme of the Universe, with an estimated age of around 100 million years - meaning the dinosaurs were around before the Pleiades. Due to their intensity and high temperatures, the Pleiades aren't built to last: they will burn out relatively quickly, with life spans of only a few hundred million years.

They can best be found looking north east between the 5th and 11th of this month.

Also this month the planets Jupiter, Saturn and Mars are clearly visible.

Looking south-east, the gas giant Jupiter is currently the brightest object in our night skies.

Saturn is almost directly south as darkness falls, considerably fainter than in recent months as the distance between it and Earth grows again, but still outshining the stars around it.

On the evening of 11 November the 80% illuminated Moon will have a close encounter with Mars. November sees the return of the Taurids and Leonids meteor showers.

The **Taurids** meteor is a 'slow' (17 miles/sec) shower and is expected to peak around 12-13

November, as Earth passes through the fragments of rock and ice left behind from Comet Encke, a 3 mile wide object that orbits the sun every 3 years. The **Leonids** meteor shower peaks around 17-18 November when the fragments of Comet Tempel-Tuttle enter Earth's atmosphere at over 45 miles per second.

Good star gazing! Barrie Mellars

My thanks to the Royal Museums Greenwich for the stunning photographs.

Discovery Award – Bronze

Despite not managing to find other people in Tynedale u3a who enjoy this sort of challenge I completed the Bronze level and was awarded my certificate at a residential in Norwich.

For the Bronze I planned a trip to Southampton, a city I had not visited before and learned about its history. My particular interest was the impact of the Titanic disaster.

- * Recreational Pursuit: I completed the Isaac Tea Trail. I had been out of practice doing longish walks.
- * Hobby/Interest: I took up researching the history of my home.
- * Service in the Community: I managed the 40 year anniversary celebrations for our u3a.

If you read the above and think it isn't very challenging or it is too challenging that is okay because you have to identify a personal challenge, and we are all different. I am now about to embark on the Silver award.

If you are interested in learning more about the Discovery Award, please get in touch with me or Elizabeth Beardsley. Elizabeth has been my support and mentor.

Wendy Dale w.dale381@btinternet.com

Time to Have Your Say

We potentially have 600 plus speakers for our January monthly meeting. Yes, January's speakers will be drawn from you – Tynedale's very own interesting u3a members.

I'm looking for 4 or 5 speakers who will each present for 10 to 15 minutes on a topic of their choosing. It can be humorous, informative, anecdotal or simply thought provoking.

I offer the following suggestions, but they are by no means definitive.

Formative years: The majority of us were brought up in the fifties and sixties, a time of significant social change in Britain. Tell us about where and how you grew up. Hopefully life was not all homework and school. Who were your pals? Did you keep in touch? What happened to them? Did you play in a group? How did you entertain yourself (youth club trips, scout camps, etc.)? Who remembers Round the Horne or Bonanza? Play us clips from your favourite radio, TV programmes, pop groups. Share the influences that made you the person you became.

Holiday jobs. There was no gap year for us. You went from school into a job or in some cases on to higher education. As a students you often supplemented your grant by taking a holiday job that was not related to your studies - labouring on building sites, delivering the Xmas post, working in hospitality, factory jobs, etc. My experience (4 years a binman) was that you met people and ways of life you were unlikely to encounter again. Tell us about your holiday job experiences.

Career: Serendipity plays a huge role in our lives so very few people actually plan a career. How did you get into your career. Where did it take you? Perhaps you had lots of different jobs? Do you have interesting/amusing anecdotes from your career that you would like to share? At least one of our u3a members had to make a hasty retreat across the desert from a business meeting in Iraq just before the US sent a cruise missile up the main street in Baghdad – not an everyday event but not uncommon for this person!

Retirement: It eventually catches up with us all but the u3a is there to keep our brains active. Tell us about your experiences of u3a. Tynedale u3a has been going 40 years. Can anyone regale us with tales from those early days?

If you are willing to contribute please email me a brief outline of your topic to: tyneu3anewprogsec@gmail.com
I can help with any presentation material if required.

Ian Diggory

Group News and Visits

Book Group 4 Author Event

We had a very successful meeting on 24th October when over 50 u3a members came along to the Great Hall at the Abbey to hear Henrietta Heald give a talk on two of her books.

Henrietta's interest in the North East began when she went to Durham University and was further stimulated later when her daughter came to Newcastle University. She became interested in William Armstrong and discovered that not much had been written about him, despite his having been such a hugely influential inventor, engineer and scientist. Hence she decided to write his biography, which is now in its 4th edition.

We heard about hopes to restore the Banqueting Hall in Jesmond Dene, which is now in a bad state of disrepair. It was given by Armstrong (along with the Dene) to the people of Newcastle in 1883, to be used for arts, science, literature or education. It is on The Victorian Society's Top Ten Endangered Buildings list for 2024.

The Parsons family are generally much less well known than William Armstrong. Charles Parsons was a brilliant engineer and responsible for the development of the Steam Turbine. You can see his steamship 'Turbinia' in the Discovery Museum. His wife, Katherine and his daughter Rachel were both engineers. Rachel became the first woman to read Mechanical Sciences at Cambridge University, but as a woman was not awarded a degree. After WWI when most working women were expected to return to their homes, Rachel became a founder and first president of the Women's Engineering Society. This was the world's first professional organisation dedicated to the campaign for women's rights.

In later life Rachel Parsons gave up engineering and moved to Newmarket where she had a stud farm. She came to a rather unfortunate end, which you can read about in Henrietta's book 'Magnificent Women and their Revolutionary machines'. This gives not only Rachel's story but also that of other key figures in the history of women engineers and tells of their struggles and successes.

We are grateful to Henrietta for coming up from Islington to Hexham to talk to us, and our thanks to all who attended. Julia Madgwick



Wildlife Group: Chillingham Cattle September Visit

There were 19 of us who travelled north to see the Chillingham Wild Cattle. It was a glorious day. Most of us had lunch in the castle beforehand. There was a short introduction at the reception area with a brief video about the history of the breed before we boarded a land-rover and passenger trailer to be taken out to the parkland. The short trip took us further from civilisation and led to an area that was fenced. We found ourselves looking through a belt of trees to a herd of cattle grazing nearby. After dipping our feet and walking sticks in the disinfectant mat to protect the cattle from any infections etc we were in the parkland. The setting itself was impressive, a natural amphitheatre in the lee of a coastal sandstone ridge, spreading out to the edge of the River Till floodplain in the shadow of the Cheviot Hills. There were around 30 of the 130 strong population grazing below us. Our ranger guide kept one eye on the cattle for changes in behaviour, as she talked about the history and genetics of this herd, isolated for centuries and left entirely to their own devices, untouched by humans until buried on the land when they die. The cattle wandered around seemingly unaware of our presence. As we were watching there was a brief but non-aggressive confrontation between two of the bulls who then resumed grazing. We left feeling privileged to have been so close to this rare breed.

Wendy Dale

Group News and Visits

Cryptic Crossword Group Goes National!

Sharp-eyed readers of the Autumn issue of u3a Matters will have already noticed our very own crossword among the puzzles on the 'braingames' page (81).

Established in December 2022, the 'Cryptic Crossword Beginners and Improvers' group has gone from strength to strength, with a second group being established at the beginning of this year in response to increased demand.

Such was the original group's rate of progress that in August 2023 we started the process of composing our own puzzle. Using the same grid, each of the seven group members produced a complete solution. From these, with remarkable unanimity, we chose the one we liked best. Then came the difficult part – composing the clues. This, we discovered, is definitely a skilled art form. Each of us took five or six answers for which to provide the clues. Over the following few months we discussed and refined these, to the point last April when we felt ready to submit the puzzle for publication. We were not refused, and in August a message arrived telling us that we would soon be in print. And there we are!

Key to the success of both groups is the fact that we are totally non-competitive. Sharing skills and insights means that even the most nervous and inexperienced beginners have made rapid progress. But we would all agree that there is always more to learn. Currently each group has one vacant space, so if you are interested, take a look on the groups page for details of the convenors and meeting times.

Sadly, it's not possible to receive feedback from those across the nation who have had a go at our puzzle. We wonder how many have spotted the really clever bit – the concealed message around the perimeter.

Moving on, recent meetings have seen both groups attempting vintage puzzles discovered in newspapers lining drawers – one from 1984, the other from 1949! Styles have changed, and coping with clues composed so long ago was far from straightforward. But we cracked them!

Chris Simmons

Environment Group

Holy shit!

In October the environment group found they were discussing a subject that we hadn't touched before! Wendy introduced it following a film she saw at the Forum cinema during their green week.



The film Holy Shit, directed by Rubén Abruña suggests that as humans we want to remove ourselves from the matter, we are expelling by flushing and forgetting. In so doing we are removing a significant element of the chain of food consumption and production. He questions the belief that a flush toilet is a key feature of civilised society.

Wendy also introduced an American book of the same name by Gene Logsdon who is concerned with the same issues but is concerned not only with humans but farm animals and pets. He believes that we need to learn to manage manure to save mankind. We need to capture the nitrogen and nutrients in faeces as they are valuable resources. He argues for smaller farming units for food production and against intense farming for intense living.

The group identified a few areas that they could come back to.

Wendy Dale

Group News and Visits

Hadrians Wall Group



When the Romans advanced north over the Cheviots, the distinctive outline of the three peaks of the Eildon stood out in the landscape and they headed straight for them.

Here, at the 'place of the three hills', or 'Trimontium' in Latin, they began to construct a fort to be used as a base for the conquest of the surrounding area.

In September the group visited this important site in Newstead just outside of Melrose. After a time in the splendid museum and a very interesting finds handling session, we headed out on a guided walk of the fort

site. Little remains that is visible, but the context of its position and its sheer size of a settlement was truly awe inspiring.

Carole Souselby Co-Convenor



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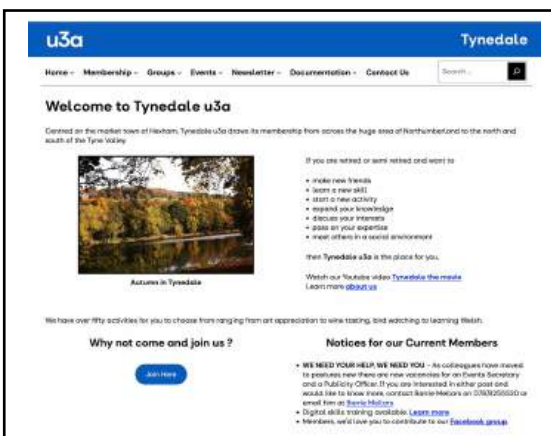
Vacant - **Please do volunteer**

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Membership

603 Members
13 Associates



A VERY WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mary Burgess	Henry Povey
Jenny Morgan	Patricia Armstrong
Stephen Fry	Mary Macklon
Michael Genner	Naomi Blackburn
Judith McKenzie-Hewitt	Alison Spacey
Michael Kearney	Kathleen Robertson
Ian Salkey	Ria Knol
Thomas Stoddart	Pamela Stoddart
Helen Hollyoak	

Next issue of the newsletter

We very much welcome written contributions and photos from groups and individual members.

Please send your contributions to the newsletter editor, Tim O'Brien, at tyneu3anleditor@gmail.com
Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.....
The December Newsletter deadline is 21st November

Forthcoming Monthly Meetings Topics and Speakers

5 November 2024
The Rocks at the Edge of the Empire
given by Ian Jackson

3 December 2024
Origins of Xmas Traditions
given by Colin Argent

We do hope you have enjoyed this edition of the Newsletter
Please join us on the **Tynedale u3a Facebook** page to keep up to date with information on events, interesting comments from members and engaging photos.

