

In this issue

Monthly Meeting at the Mart
Monthly Meeting January 2025?
The Third Age Trust
Unsettling Settled Facts
Astrological Events This Month
Group News and Visits
New Members Warm Welcome
Monthly Meetings Topics and Speakers



Monthly Meeting *and* Christmas Party at the Mart 3rd December 2024 at 1:30 pm

This event has proved very popular and is now fully booked with a waiting list so, on this occasion, the monthly meeting has had to become 'ticket holders only' as we have reached the capacity of the room. Our apologies for any disappointment.



*For Ticket Holders
Doors open at 1:30 pm, Party Food is at 2:00 pm and Colin's talk is at 3:00 pm*

The December talk will be given by Colin Argent, you may remember him as the self-styled 'Group Fixer'. The PTSD resulting from this role is now well enough controlled for him to appear in public.

A final title for this talk was not formally agreed, but the newsletter entry bills the talk as 'Origins of Christmas Traditions' which is near enough. Some aspects of Christmas, such as fixing Christmas go back 2,000 years. For much of that period the nature and duration of Christmas (the twelve days) developed in a society where the agricultural year was prominent. Industrialisation changed everything.

Much of what we view as a 'traditional Christmas' evolved during the Victorian and early post post-Victorian period when new ideas and fads could be promoted through newspapers and printed publications.

The talk will review the progressive development of the Christmas celebrations through the ages, including current trends toward a somewhat dystopian view of Christmases to come.

For those of you concerned about the excesses of Christmas, Colin will provide an 'over indulgence yardstick', established by King John, that should ease your conscience when tucking into the second, large helping of Christmas pudding.

*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*

Monthly Meeting January 2025?

I am disappointed to have only received two offers from members to speak at our January monthly meeting.

I don't put this lack of response down to shyness on the part of members, rather I suspect you all lead such busy lives that contributing to our monthly meeting is very low down on your "to do" list.

I refuse to believe that amongst our 600 plus members there is not a wealth of anecdotal, humorous, informative, thought provoking and uplifting material that can be distilled into a 10 to 15 minute presentation.

In the October newsletter I suggested your formative years, holiday jobs, career events or u3a experiences as possible topics, but the choice is yours.

Help avoid January's monthly meeting being the shortest on record and email me a brief outline of your presentation topic: diggoryian@gmail.com

I can help with any presentation material if required.



The Third Age Trust

At its AGM the Third Age Trust approved the Fit for the Future resolution and the creation of a new u3a Council to provide a voice for u3a's. A smaller Board of Trustees will focus on governance of the Trust.

Nominations for the roles of Third Age Trust Council Representative and Board Trustee are now open. If you are interested in the roles further details can be found at the link below.

<https://mailchi.mp/u3a/nominations-open-for-u3a-council-and-board?e=d159dc2852>

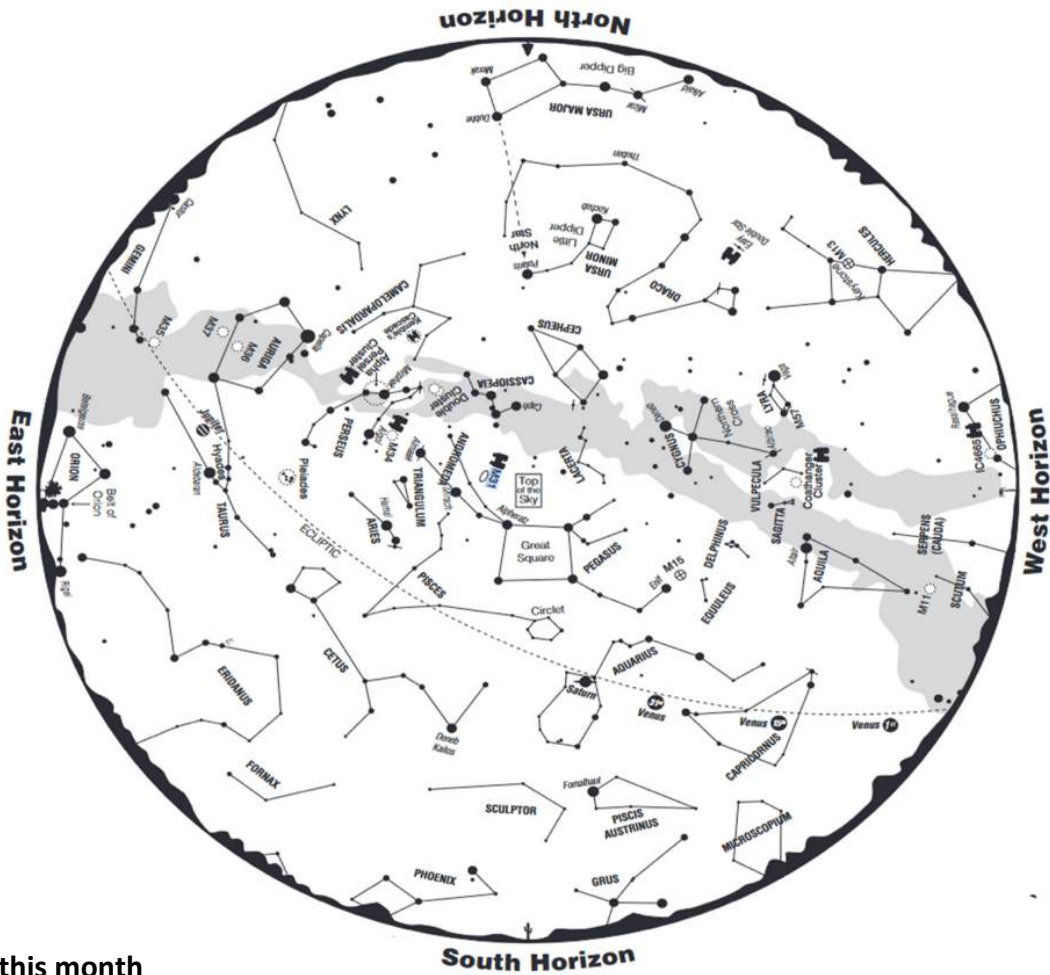
Unsettling Settled Facts

One of the roles of a historian is to unsettle settled facts so perhaps a warning is needed that this may take you to the edge of your comfort zone. Sadly, disinformation did not start with the US president elect but dates back over millennia. So for me, it was great to hear Start the Week on BBC Radio 4 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0024w7d> on the subject of *Sex and Christianity*. I'm now in my post-prostatectomy chapter of my life and it would have been great to have heard this programme and read the books back before I started my carnal knowledge practical studies.

I'm not bi or gay but it was surprising to hear that there is no condemnation of same sex relationships in the New Testament. The Methodists and Church of Scotland appreciate this and allow same sex marriages in their churches. The CofE, Catholic and other sects though still have not come to terms with this. Similarly, pronouncements condemning masturbation are only of recent origin though we must acknowledge they have given us a rich source of jokes without any comeuppance.

So well worth investing the time listening to this, but regrettably I don't think disinformation is going to go away soon.

Mike Foster



Astrological Events this month

The winter solstice for the Northern Hemisphere, which is the exact point when the Northern Hemisphere is orientated away from the Sun, will be at 3:27am GMT on 22 December. At this moment the Sun will be directly above the Tropic of Capricorn, in the Southern Hemisphere. You won't notice anything special happening at this time, but this will be our shortest day of the year, with only 7 hours, 49 minutes and 42 seconds of daylight.

The Geminids meteors continue to dominate the months celestial events and on the 14th there will be no moon for the entire night, ideal conditions for star gazing.

One constellation high in the sky at this time of year is Gemini. This constellation is associated with Castor and Pollux, who were twin brothers in Greek and Roman mythology. In the stories they were twins but only half brothers, with Castor having the king of Sparta as his father, but Pollux being a son of Zeus. The brightest stars in the constellation are named after the twins.

Did you know that you can see the Christmas Tree Cluster this month?

While a large telescope or long exposure photography is needed to see the nebula, this cluster of around 600 stars is visible with the naked eye, and a great sight through binoculars. It sits half-way between bright stars Betelgeuse and Procyon and lies almost 2,500 light years away.

Credit: European Southern Observatory (ESO).



See you all in the New Year, happy star gazing.

Group News and Visits

Kielderhead Wildwood

Tina Taylor, Wild Kielder Project Officer joined the November meeting of the Environment group to share her exciting project. It was a fascinating opportunity to learn about plans for resilience and biodiversity.

The project area is 5 miles north of Kielder village and is one of the remotest from human habitation places in England. It consists of 102 hectares of extensive, tree-less moorland and huge twentieth-century forestry plantations. It conveys an impression of wildness and, until recently, was seldom visited except by forest workers and the occasional rambler or naturalist. Even though the area is already wild and remote, it is the focus of an ambitious project to further enhance these qualities. They are currently undertaking massive research to inform a 10 year plan for 2026 that will address:

- Peatland
- Hydrology
- Herbivory
- Historic Environment
- Recreation and tourism.

Wendy Dale



Conservation in Ontario

The Wildlife group had an extra meeting in October and invited the Environment group to join them to learn about the Couchiching conservancy in Ontario. The talk had a particular reference to frog monitoring. Shirley Moorman is a volunteer with the Conservancy and she talked about her experiences of frog monitoring. We learned that there are 10 varieties of frog with very distinct calls. Some of the monitoring takes place at night, which is not for the faint hearted.

Wendy Dale



The Region came to Hexham

Fourteen u3a's from the region were represented at an event organised at Hexham Abbey on November 7th. The focus of the event was the Threads of Creation exhibition, but the day also included a sandwich lunch, an organ recital and a guided tour of the Abbey. It was also a great opportunity to meet people from other u3a's.



It was good to host the event as the feedback has been very positive. Some of the visitors had not visited Hexham before and one lady said the last time she had been to Hexham Abbey was on a school trip.

I am grateful for the support from the Abbey and from Sue Loader who helped on the day.

Wendy Dale

Group News and Visits

Wildlife Group – A Visit from Spiderman

Our group meeting was the first of the season to be held back in the County and despite problems with technology and cables, members were engrossed by a fascinating presentation about spiders given by our local 'spiderman' Fran Garciaahdez.

Spiders are Arachnids, have eight legs, spinnerets and mouth parts with fangs. Their head and thorax are fused so they appear to have only a head and abdomen.

Many people do not like or are even scared of spiders but Fran is full of passion for these creatures. From an early age when he watched spiders on his father's tomato plants, he has studied these fascinating creatures and his enthusiasm was catching.

I think we all knew that spiders produce silk from spinnerets, usually 3, but each spinneret has many spigots, each of which is connected to one silk gland. These can produce different types of silk and a silk 'line' can be made of 10, 20 or even 50 strands of silk twisted together and a given weight of spider silk is five times as strong as the same weight of steel. The different silks can be used to line burrows and underground chambers, to build traps, to make an amazing assortment of webs, for wrapping prey and making egg sacs among other things. Some spiders carry their babies in a nursery sac on top of or under their abdomen or in their jaws. The mother might give her spiderlings droplets of water or move the sac so it catches the warmth of the sun. Venom injected into prey from their fangs is now known in some circumstances to have antimicrobial and analgesic properties that may be of medicinal use.

The type of web made or the number and pattern of their eyes can help identify a spider. It can be an ambusher or a chaser. It may use sight or vibrations to detect its prey. Fascinating information came thick and fast and Fran's enthusiasm was catching. I have started several conversations since with, 'Did you know.....?'

Many thanks to Fran and to Wendy for inviting him to talk to our group.

Jenny Loring



Group News and Visits

Walking with Dogs Group

The group had a most enjoyable walk at Corbridge, with lots of ball chasing and swimming (the dogs that is, not the owners). The morning was rounded off, as usual, with welcome hot drinks, treats and chats (owners not dogs)



SPACE GROUP MEETING

Space Group does not do site visits so we rely on our speakers to take us ‘to infinity and beyond’ (Buzz Lightyear).

Members may be accused of having their ‘heads in the clouds’ but in reality our talks often take us way beyond Earth’s atmosphere. November was no different, with John Dark updating us on the Voyager spacecraft launched in 1977. At 25 billion kilometres, these are mankind’s most remote objects and are now in interstellar space. They carry a gold disc with information about humans in case aliens were to intercept them. One of the items is a version of the song ‘Roll over Beethoven’ and there is a rumour that aliens have already spotted a Voyager and sent us a message which has been translated as ‘send us more Chuck Berry’.

For a long time Black Holes were not considered to be real – even Einstein was dubious about their existence and it’s his theory that predicted them!

We now know they do exist but our current Black Hole theory leads to two things that make mathematicians and physicists very nervous - singularities and infinities. There are alternative theories of Black Holes and Steve Rozario introduced us to one such theory - the exotic world of Gravastars. I think it fair to say that the jury is still out on these objects, but needless to say we would welcome your views.

Ian Diggory

Your committee

Chair

Barrie Mellars - 07831255520

chairtu3a@gmail.com

Business Secretary

Ann Atkinson - 07813 487064

tyneu3absec@gmail.com

Treasurer

Kate Stephenson - 07470 576385

tu3atra2@gmail.com

Membership Secretary

John Dark - 01434 602584

tyneu3amemsec1@gmail.com

Programme Secretary

Ian Diggory - 07876 591183

tyneu3anewprogsec@gmail.com

Groups Liaison Secretary

Michael Brockway - 07875738557

mjb.TyndaleU3a@proton.me

Publicity Officer

Vacant - **DON'T BE SHY please volunteer**

Beacon Administrator & Website Manager

Lesley Parsons - 07588178570

tyneu3abeacon@gmail.com

Events Secretary

Vacant - **BRING JOY and please volunteer**

Newsletter Editor

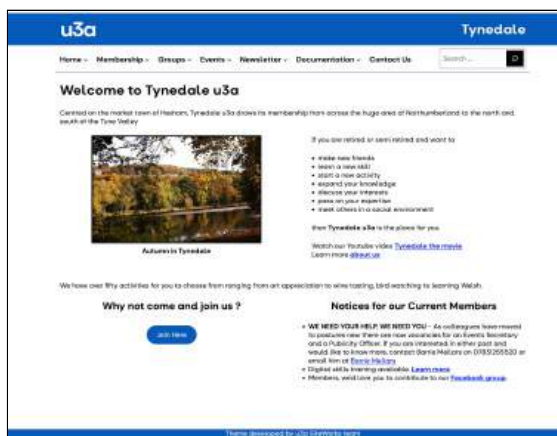
Tim O'Brien - 07540404430

tyneu3anleditor@gmail.com

Membership

609 Members 13 Associates

<https://tyndale.u3asite.uk/>



A VERY WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Frances Speak
Liz Bartrop
Graham Dimmock
Christine Blance
Roy Holton

Seren Shaw
Derek Bartrop
Maeve Selby
Bridget Holton
James McMullan

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 19th December

Forthcoming Monthly Meetings Topics and Speakers

3 December 2024

Origins of Xmas Traditions
given by Colin Argent

7 January 2025

Contributions by Members

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.



Follow us on Facebook