



u3a learn,
laugh,
live
Tynedale

May 2026

Newsletter

Monthly Meeting at the Mart, 2pm, 5th May 2026

[Barry Mead](#)

[Happy days digging up Northumberland's Past](#)

Barry Mead is a local archaeologist whose commitment to archaeology and passion for community projects has spanned over 50 years. He has been involved in a large number of archaeological projects across Northumberland, including restoration of a 15th century Pele tower in Cresswell which was opened to the public as a community event space in 2021.

Barry's talk will about his life as a community archaeologist excavating some remarkable sites in our beautiful & historic county.

Barry's work has been recognized with numerous awards including CBA's Community Archaeologist of the Year in 2018 and the National Lottery's 25th Birthday Local Legend Award in 2019. In 2026 Barry was awarded an MBE for services to heritage and archaeology.

Stay afterwards for a chat with free tea and coffee

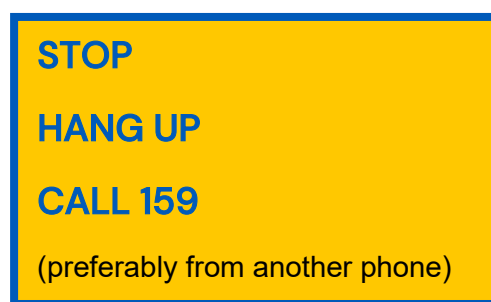
Chair's Report

With the weather beginning to change for the better (although it is raining as I write this!) we can start to look forward to the group trips out and about amongst the sights and sounds of our wonderful county. We can also start booking for our annual Garden Party to be held again at Hexham Racecourse. Booking will once more be via the TryBooking website which has served us well. You will by this time have received your directions to the website but just in case you have lost them in the welter of emails we all receive, here is the link: [Summer Garden Party](#)

Coincidentally with the changing of the seasons, a number of groups are planning field trips including the Landscape group which is off to Northumberlandia. Andrew Rigg has arranged other trips (p10) including the Harrogate Flower Show and a possible visit to Chillingham Castle (date to be announced).

The May monthly meeting will include a talk by Barry Mead, the community archeologist entitled "Digging up Northumberland's Past". Unfortunately, I have an appointment with our splendid health services so I won't be at the meeting, but I will leave you in the very capable hands of Steve Rozario.

This month's newsletter contains an article (p9) from our new newsletter editor Di Downie on the perils of internet scams which I recommend everyone to read. Last year Ability Net gave a talk to some 100+ members on identifying and avoiding scams and the speaker left us with a valuable piece of advice for dealing with any call of which you may be suspicious:



The number is a priority freephone number which takes you to an organisation which has been set up by all the major banks to provide quick and reliable access to someone to help keep your account secure. I have tried it and it works very well.

Lastly - all stay safe from the thieves and vagabonds who haunt the internet.

Barrie Mellars, Chair

Growing Groups

Italian post beginners

Ami l'Italia? Ti piace il cibo? Ti piace la lingua?

Love Italy? Love the food? Love the language?



Or maybe you just want to
exercise your mind.

The Italian post Beginners group
could be just for you.

Vieni e unisciti a noi.

Come and join us.

We are a friendly, relaxed bunch who meet on a Tuesday between 11am and 12:15pm in the
snug at the County Hotel in Hexham.

Find out if the Italians genuinely say, “Mamma mia!”

We use a variety of shared resources and aim to keep it
fun and functional with the emphasis on being able to
hold a simple conversation, order a meal or organise a trip
when in Italy. But mainly just to be able to talk to the locals
without sounding too much like a tourist!

We have spaces available so please email [Cathy](#) if you
would like to join us and have a go.

A presto.



Veronica Harding

Proposal to form a Tynedale U3A Industrial Archaeology Group

In his seminal two volume set 'Industrial Archaeology of North East England', published more than fifty years ago, the author Frank Atkinson tried to draw our attention to the many disappearing and abandoned industrial sites – some now lost forever due to progress and the drive for regeneration. Frank Atkinson was a professional museum curator and archivist, and he well understood the need to make written records. His second volume in the set records hundreds of industrial sites in our Region. Formalised surveying, recording and publishing was the established way of archaeology, and he applied it to abandoned constructions of the Industrial Age with professional rigor and skill. If Frank had worked in the Modern 'Information' age, professional rigor and skill would still be needed, but the current methods of collecting, recording and publishing information, and the level of amateur support and interest would have made him very happy.



The stone arches that were once part of the Dukesfield Mill lead ore processing complex just to the south of Hexham

There are now hundreds of amateur 'Frank Atkinsons' who painstakingly and skilfully collect Industrial Archaeology information about their own local environment – based in some cases on their family and community recollections and understanding of what happened and how things worked. Groups have been formed up and down the Region and Country to collect and publish this information and ultimately put it where the whole world can access it - on the Internet. The role of the amateur is now key in identifying and recording small and sometimes, remote Industrial Archaeology sites and structures.

We all now have the means at our fingertips to conduct extensive Industrial Archaeology investigations. Of course, it is also good to include a visit to an area or site of interest, if it is still available and safe for public viewing. Many sites are accessible with preservation work done and interpretation boards provided. Some whole larger sites have been given Museum status and are public attractions. Major museums have moved onto their site interesting buildings and structures obtained from abandoned sites many miles away in an effort to re-create whole communities and industrial complexes.

Researching and heritage site visiting is in my view best done as an activity within a group - so that social benefits from discussion and group learning are obtained. What is more, if that social intercourse can involve visiting places where coffee, cakes and pub lunches can be found, as well as seeing interesting industrial heritage, it ticks many of the boxes in my idea of a pleasant day at the office.

I would be glad to hear from other Tynedale u3a members if they would like to consider forming an [Industrial Archaeology](#) group – probably with a view to having regular meetings from Autumn 2026 onwards. An initial meeting over a coffee in one of our local places would be a good way to start the ball rolling.....

Adrian Woolley

arwoolley@hotmail.co.uk

Writing Together- new group

Have you always meant to finish that novel... poetry collection... memoir – or simply wanted to make a start -- but never seem to find the time? This proposed group might be for you! It will put aside the time for you to write regularly, alongside others, for one or two hours a week. It will also provide a forum where you can share your ideas and support others in developing theirs, whatever the type of writing project. Then, in time, it might give members



the opportunity to review and comment on each other's work. Above all, you will come away each week with more words on the page than when you arrived, and a sense of achievement from the progress you have made.

If you're interested in this idea, please contact Liz Barnes using the link below. Dates/times of meetings and venue to be confirmed.

https://tynedale.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/writing-together/



Liz Barnes

Group Reports

Hadrian's Wall Group

The Hadrian's Wall Group's first field trip of the year in April, took us to two remote Cumbrian Roman forts.

At Bewcastle, we had local artist, author, and podcaster Mark Richards, orientating us on this rather unusual hexagonal shaped fort.

Afterwards local vicar of Bewcastle Church, Rob Brown, gave us an intriguing deep dive into the meanings and symbolism of the famous Anglian Cross in the Churchyard.

After lunch, Brampton Old Church and Roman Fort was our next stop with a walk and talk on the fort platform and a rare glimpse into this lovely little church and graveyard.



Splendiferous!

Carole Soulsby (Convenor)



Wildlife Group

Hexham Heaven for Swifts

Last November the Wildlife Group were joined by Matthew Greening who came to speak to us about volunteer work to keep swifts in the skies over Hexham each summer.

We learnt first about these amazing birds which evolved during the time of the dinosaurs some 60 million years ago. Living up to 30 years swifts spend most of their time on the wing. Our swifts migrate between Europe and central Africa, landing only very briefly each year to lay eggs and feed their young. They may fly 2 miles high and up to 500 miles to collect maybe thousands of insects into a bolus during any one journey for their hungry young.



UK Swift Populations have declined by over 50% in recent decades, due in great part to loss of nesting sites and the great fall in insect numbers. Changes in building design along with measures to seal and insulate older homes have resulted in a significant loss of the cavities that provide nesting spaces for these birds which are faithful both to their partners and nesting sites.

To help the swifts here volunteers for Hexham Swift Heaven project have supplied over 75 nest boxes and can give advice on nest box sites on houses and other suitable buildings. They also check our local swift population by monitoring known nesting sites as well as counting and mapping the birds in their regular and characteristic dusk flights known as Screaming Parties.



Matthew referred to the national recording system known as Swiftmapper which anyone can use.

<https://www.swiftmapper.org.uk>

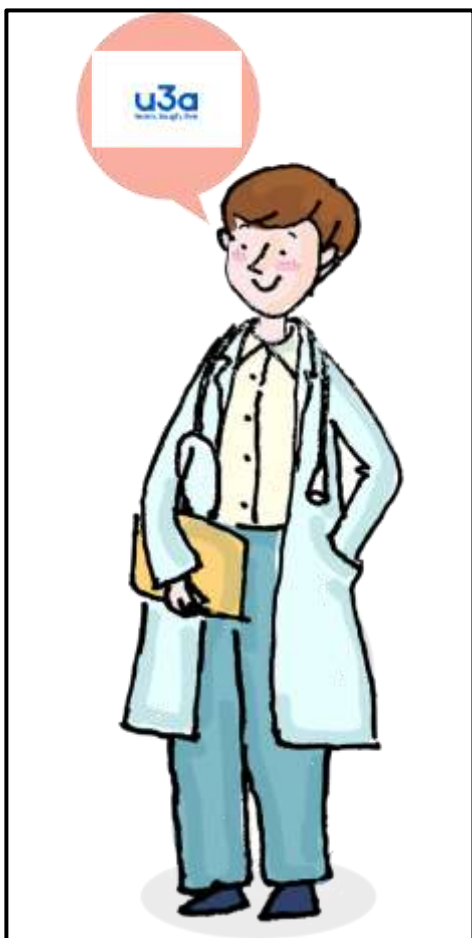
If you are interesting in getting involved, perhaps by having a swift box on your home or by joining the small group of surveyors for a pleasant summer evening of swift watching then please get in touch with Matthew at

hexhamnature@transitiontyndale.co.uk

Jenny Loring

Putting the World to Right

A dozen years or so ago, patients started going to their GPs and after listening to their needs, the medic prescribed joining the u3a. The u3a thus formally became a very helpful part of the UK's Social Capital alongside churches, political parties, schools and trade unions.



It was a little ironic then when the Putting the World Right group discussed the changing face of social capital and our various people networks. Pub going and membership of traditional political parties are experiencing big upheavals as the Cost-of-Living crisis impacts most of us. But there was also the question of time demands plus the pressures in the workplace are too knacker for many. I found it surprising that the scam factories that are after our cash seemed to have learned their techniques from the PTA committees at our schools. These worthy people assume that just because they have no problem finding £100 for this or that, all parents will want to cough up to pay for what's this month's priority is at the school.

However, we concluded that Britain's social capital may be in flux, but it seems for many of us, we can invest in others and draw out emotional capital when we need it.

Mike Foster, PTWR 1 Facilitator

Editor's note

The u3a has over 400,000 members in the UK, in over 1000 branches.

About 13 million people in the UK are age 65 years or older.



Learning to live in the internet age...

Scams in the United Kingdom—key facts



The Third Age Trust has issued a renewed warning* regarding scams that exploit Trustees' identity data sourced from the Charity Commission website.

This raises the question of the current scale of scamming fraud within the United Kingdom. How likely am I to experience a scam?

In early 2025, the Global Anti-Scams Alliance (GASA) conducted research involving 2,000 UK adults. The findings were published in the [State of Scams in the UK 2025 Report](#), which examined both the incidence of scams and recommended preventative measures. According to the report, 20% of respondents had encountered a scam, with the average financial loss estimated at £878.60 per scam.



Scams constitute a substantial revenue stream for international and UK based organised crime, with estimates placing their value at £9.7 billion annually in the UK alone. As financial institutions have strengthened their security protocols, scammers increasingly target individuals rather than systems. Traditionally reliant on psychological manipulation, today's conmen utilise artificial intelligence and digital platforms to enhance their tactics and rewards.

The majority of scams are perpetrated via email, telephone, text messages, or social media, typically presenting unusually favourable offers or attempting to instil a sense of urgency.

Recommended preventative strategies include:

- Searching for reviews on other websites
- Checking if payment can be made using credit card, PayPal, or other refundable payment methods.
- Asking friends or family for their opinion or experience.
- Contacting the person or company directly to confirm authenticity.



Also, take a look at the government [Stop Think Fraud website](#)

Di Downie

*From the [Third Age Trust](#) newsletter

"Charity fraud investigation

We have been contacted by Surrey and Sussex police about a serious fraud they're investigating which is targeting people associated with charities for older people.

It seems fraudsters are using information available on the Charity Commission website to contact people. They have then been persuading them there is an issue with their bank account. One couple has already been defrauded out of a significant amount of money.

Please flag this with your members so they are aware. Banks and the police will never ask you to move money. Read about spotting fraud on the government [Stop Think Fraud website](#)."

2026 EVENTS from May to September

- May 6th Marley Cote Farm visit to see the robotic milking machines. Sorry this trip is full.
- June 10th Eggar site visit for a tour of the factory. This trip is also full, with a reserve list.
- July 1st Garden Party at the Racecourse. Book your tickets here [Summer Garden Party](#).
- Rington's Tea Factory and Chillingham Castle visits are being planned during the summer.
- September 18th All day visit to the Harrogate Flower Festival at Newby Hall in Yorkshire.



George III and Queen Charlotte (caricatured), dressed as a farmer and farmer's wife, stand together watching with astonishment two geese sucking the udders of a cow.

© The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\) licence](#).

Unfortunately, I will be in London, but Margaret Wall and Marjorie Marram have kindly offered to coordinate on the day. I will arrange a bus trip if interested parties could let me know (1) of their definite interest in the visit and (2) whether or not they want the coach. I am at present getting quotes for the bus, and it looks around £18 per person if we fill a 50-seater.

Names and questions to [me](#) please. (events2riggtu3a@gmail.com)

Entry price on top of the bus fare will be about £25 but the prebooked tickets are not yet available.

Finally, apologies for those u3a members who don't want to be kept in touch of Events via the Beacon System. It really is the only way to distribute information but if you don't want to read about it, please just delete the message.

Andrew Rigg (u3a Events Secretary)

New Members Coffee Morning

All members who have joined in the past year but have not been to one of our Coffee Mornings, will invited to come along on May 13th. It will be held in the Prior's Hall at Hexham Abbey, starting at 10.30am.

There are brief presentations from various committee members about how the u3a works. But it is mainly an opportunity to meet other new members and particularly, to let us on the committee know what you want out of Tynedale u3a.



Invitations will be going out shortly. If you don't get one and would like to come along, please get in touch with the Membership Secretary on tyneu3amemsec1@gmail.com

John Dark

Summer Garden Party

Tickets now available

(<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/events/landing/108184>)



Broadening your horizons



The heritage steam South Tynedale Railway at Alston are looking for volunteers – there is an open day at 1.30pm on 3rd May 2026 for anyone who is interested, at Alston railway station (CA9 3JB).

[South Tynedale Railway Volunteers](#)

[email for South Tynedale Railway](#)

Noticeboard

Online contacts for the u3a locally, regionally and nationally.

Tynedale u3a
[website here](#) for your local u3a information.

Tynedale u3a
[Facebook page](#) for regular local updates (you don't need to be a member of Facebook to see what's happening).

Northumbria Region u3a – includes online groups and occasional visits



For online highlights of the latest **u3a Matters Magazine** click [here](#).

Dates for your diary

05/05/2026	Monthly Meeting @Mart	Digging up Northumberland's Past by Barry Mead
06/05/2026	Marley Cote Farm	FULL
13/05/2026	New Members Coffee	Prior's Hall, Hexham Abbey
02/06/2026	Monthly Meeting @Mart	Strawberry Fields Forever by Dave Milne
10/06/2026	Egger Factory Visit	FULL with reserve list
01/07/2026	Summer Garden Party	Hexham Racecourse -tickets now available
07/07/2026	Monthly Meeting @Mart	The Kremlin's Geordie Master Spy by David Saunders
01/08/2026	Monthly Meeting @Mart	no meeting
18/09/2026	Harrogate Flower Show	Newby Hall and Gardens

New Members

Susan Mills
Jane Helen Darbyshire-Walker
Peter Walton
Liz Murphy
Aidan Murphy
Claudio Di Lullo
Carole Belgian
Alwyn Potts

We now have 638 members

Please send your contributions for the June Newsletter to Di Downie at tyneu3aneditor@gmail.com by May 19th 2026.



Printed and published by Tynedale u3a

Your Committee

Chair	Barrie Mellars	078312 55520	chairtu3a@gmail.com
Vice Chair/Membership Sec	John Dark	014346 02584	tyneu3amemsec1@gmail.com
Treasurer	Kate Stephenson	074705 76385	tu3atra2@gmail.com
Business Secretary	Roger Hancock	074786 54919	tyneu3absec@gmail.com
Events Secretary	Andrew Rigg	079300 05008	events2riggtu3a@gmail.com
Group Liaison Secretary	Steve Rozario		tyneu3agroupliaison@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor	Di Downie	077433 14201	tyneu3aneditor@gmail.com
Programme Secretary	Ian Diggory	078765 91183	tyneu3anewprogsec@gmail.com
Website and Beacon	Michael Brockway	078757 38557	mjb.TyndaleU3a@proton.me