



u3a learn,
laugh,
live
Tynedale

June 2026

Newsletter

Monthly Meeting at the Mart, 2pm, 2nd June 2026

Let me take you down – The Beatles and Strawberry Fields

Members of a certain age will remember this song from the Beatles. This talk is a trip through the development of the Beatles music and this song in particular. Although Strawberry Fields existed as a Barnardo's Children's Home, the local children would climb in and play – hence the phrase that nothing is real there. When asked where it was, John Lennon replied that it was wherever you want it to be – your childhood memories of make-believe.

Speaker: David Milne

David was a graduate mathematician who spent much of his career providing mathematical support to a broad range of research activities at British Gas' Engineering Research Station (ERS) in Killingworth. He became head of the I.T. division and gained an M.B.A. with his thesis investigating potential applications of the internet, then still in its infancy, in the gas industry. He subsequently joined the Science, Engineering and Mathematical Training Association in London as Corporate Systems Development Manager.

In 2005, David retired, with his wife, to Ambleside to run a successful Guest House and holiday letting business. He has returned to his roots and now lives in Washington. In addition to his mathematical background, David is an accomplished musician. He played his guitar at ERS Christmas concerts and is still regularly called upon to entertain a variety of audiences with his guitar playing.

Chairs Report

Busy month with preparations in full spate for the Summer Party (I hope you have your [tickets](#); they are going fast), a new members meeting and an invitation to represent Tynedale u3a at Langley Castle's 40th Anniversary celebrations.

Owing to the exigencies of the NHS I was unable to be present at the Monthly Meeting so I would like to thank Ian Diggory for standing in so well and John Shackleton who took over the video duties. In fact, he did it so well he has been volunteered to do the job on a regular basis. So, thank you John. I will still be involved in the production and distribution side.

As you can see, I attended the 40th year celebrations of Langley Castle on behalf of all our splendid members who freely give of their time in helping to ensure the smooth running of Tynedale u3a.



I was pleased to see our previous Chair Wendy Dale who was attending on behalf of the Haltwhistle Walking Festival.

This medieval castle, built in 1350 by Sir Thomas de Lucy, has walls seven feet thick but no foundations, a design intended to prevent enemies from tunnelling their way in.

It was uninhabited between 1405 and the late 19th century due to a fire that destroyed the roof, a punishment for then-owner Henry Percy's rebellion against King Henry IV. The castle's original staircase, which runs clockwise, was also a defensive feature, making it difficult for right-handed attackers to wield a sword effectively.

In 1705, Langley Castle passed to the natural grandson of Charles II, James Radcliffe, who was a Jacobite. James led an army in 1715, was captured in 1716, then beheaded at the Tower of London, becoming the last Englishman to be executed on Tower Hill.

The castle has a rich ghostly history, allegedly being haunted by a Grey Lady, who was once believed to be Maud de Lucy. On March 17, 1986, the castle was purchased by American MIT professor, Dr Stuart Madnick.

We were welcomed by Dr Madnick. His staff showed all the attendees round to various parts before we were treated to an exhibition of Northumberland Clog Dancing. This is not something I have come across before, but it was excellently done by the three ladies concerned. Visitors were also invited to abseil down from the roof, something I politely declined. Many things I will do for Tynedale u3a but I'm afraid my rock-climbing years are sadly long behind me!



I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the Summer Party and I can reassure those who came last year and struggled to chat over the musical entertainment that the music this year will be pre-recorded and played at a background level probably outside, weather permitting.

Barrie Mellars, Chair Tynedale u3a

GROUP NEWS

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL)

Want to learn a new language? Well, how about something different from Italian, Spanish, or French?



Hands showing the sign language alphabet. Coloured line engraving.

Credit: Wellcome Library, London. Wellcome Images
images@wellcome.ac.uk
<http://wellcomeimages.org>

We are looking for new recruits to join our small band of devotees in pursuing this unique form of communication. Those of you who have been on the Northern trains recently or at Newcastle Central Station will have noticed that they too have 'adopted' BSL to tell people about their scheduled destinations. And you may have spotted some TV programmes have a signer in the bottom corner. Now you can find out what they are doing.

Don't be put off by the fact we have been going for some months. We would start at the beginning to re-learn the different letters and numbers. And you will have support from those of us who have already had some experience of BSL over the last few months.

Nor is our intention to methodically go through the BSL course from start to finish (unless you wanted to) but rather take a more informal approach by focussing on specific themes and conversations in the same way you might learn the most useful parts of a new foreign language if you were going on

holiday.

If you have experience of BSL and would like to share your knowledge, I'd love to hear from you.

If you are interested in learning this fascinating language, email me at steve.gleadhill@gmail.com or ring me on 0758 131 3318.

Steve Gleadhill, Convenor

Being a Convenor

Have you thought about being a convenor? Ever wondered what you do, how you do it and why you should do it? I asked a few of our recently retired convenors to share their thoughts.

Here is what recently retired convenor Susan Turnbull has to say.

‘Hello Everyone

I would like to share my experience of being a Convenor with you all. I was the convenor for the Tai Chi group for many years and more recently for the BSL group. Basically, it is a case of keeping in touch with the group members and letting them know what is happening. I set up a contact group in my email but having everyone in a WhatsApp group works very well too; it means you can write the message once and send it to everyone in one go.



The Convenor is also the contact for anyone who wants to join the group or just get information about how it works.

I have found it very rewarding and I have made lots of friends, many of whom I bump into on other occasions, not just at the u3a. I see so many people benefit from the social connections made when like-minded people get together, that I feel I am ‘doing my bit’.

Anyone thinking of becoming a Convenor should not worry that they are ‘thrown in at the

Gold ring, bezel in form of 2 hands holding a crowned heart ([Claddagh ring](#)); maker's mark inside. 18th century

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deep end’ or left to their own devices because there is always help at hand from Steve, the Convenors’ secretary, and all the committee members. I have also found that the group members themselves are very supportive and willing to lend a hand when needed.

So, give it a go and I’m sure you won’t regret it.

Best Wishes, Susan Turnbull’

New Groups – from Steve Rozario

Congratulations to Adrian and Liz for the successful launch of their new groups. If you have an idea for a group and would be happy to convene it, please contact [Steve Rozario](#) the Group Liaison Secretary.



Events Visit

Marley Cote Farm Visit

Marley Cote Farm, Slaley, is a dairy farm producing high-quality milk from a herd of 120 Ayrshire cows.

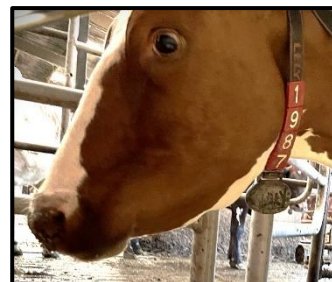
We visited at 6.00 pm, a typical milking time on most dairy farms, but at Marley Cote the cows are milked around the clock by two



robotic milking machines.

These large machines have a feeding station at one end and

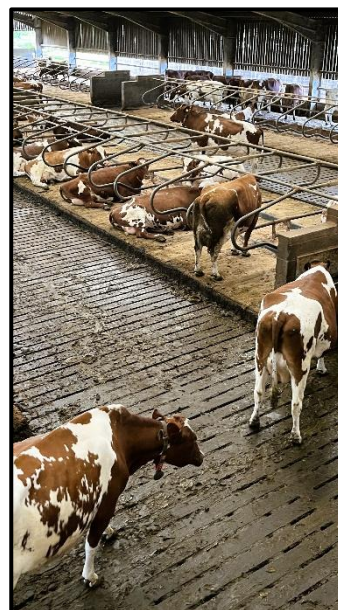
the milking unit at the other. The cows enter voluntarily, usually three times a day. Each cow is identified by its collar, and a computer uses the data to provide the correct feed and guide the milking unit onto the teats with the help of brushes and lasers.



The cows are fed, weighed and their health monitored automatically. A rotating brush provides relief to the parts they can't reach, and their beds are rubber lined!

Although the technology is impressive, the real expertise lies with the hard-working family who run the farm.

David Baynes runs the business and his son, Richard, is the herd manager. The family has bred pedigree Dairy Shorthorns and Ayrshires since 1932. Their herd of high-quality cows has won prizes at major shows and achieved top sale prices. Richard's dedication to the livestock and his skill as a breeder were especially impressive. Son Paul bottles and markets the milk. Around two thirds is sold direct to coffee shops and small stores. Together with their father, who is apparently skilled at completing grant applications, they make an excellent team.



We ended the evening with a very good meal at the Rose and Crown in Slaley, a community-owned pub.

Thank you to twenty-five u3a members who visited and generously donated £120 to Marley Cote Farm's chosen charity – Air Ambulance. An excellent gesture - thank you. And, from the group, thanks to Andrew and Tynedale u3a for organising the visit.

Andrew Rigg and Bill Walton

Hadrian's Wall Group

May Field Trip Visit to Roman Aldborough and York

Just when you thought you knew of and had seen all of the major Roman site remains in



Northern Britain, you are gob smacked to find the most wonderful hidden gem ever in the sleepy village of Aldborough, north of York. We were truly star struck!

Aldborough (left) sits on Dere Street, a Roman road that

heads off to 'Scotland' from York, built in the late CE 70's. What is lesser known is its significance as a 'civitas', a self-governing community, forming the administrative foundation of local government in provinces based on tribal territories. In Aldborough's case, it became the 'capitol' of the Brigantes under the name of Isurium Brigantum.

Under the guardianship of English Heritage, this site is cared for and beloved by ['The Friends of Roman Aldborough'](#) and worth every bit of the effort to visit. The Friends conduct tours every Sunday and some Fridays, and there will be excavations taking place in September (see below).



Carole Soulsby, Convenor

Excavations at Aldborough

The University of Cambridge will be excavating at Aldborough Roman Site in September 2026 close to area where amazing mosaics (see left) have been found in the past.



Tours of the excavations will be given on Sunday 6th, 13th and 20th September.

These can be booked via the English Heritage website (<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/aldborough-roman-site/>) but the site will also be open for drop ins for those who want a self-led tour.

Entry to the site is free, but donations are welcome to support this site.

The Environment Group

We have missed a few editions of the newsletter recently however we have been meeting and learning about a range of topics.

January We considered chocolate and its impact on the environment which led us to consider Fair Trade, a topic we will return to.



February We looked at noise pollution (see below). We also visited the FareShare warehouse in Westerhope and some of us helped with the sorting and packing.

March Richard Bentley reviewed the impact of footwear on the environment which led to deeper discussions about fashion. I went home and repaired the sandals I was about to replace.

April We were joined by members from the landscape group and heard from Paul Barratt about the Rothbury project. He was an enthusiastic speaker and some of us will be joining him in Lordenshaw later in the year.

Noise Pollution and the Environment

Selena Norfolk gave a talk to the February meeting of the Environment Group about Noise pollution and the environment. The talk covered the increasing evidence linking chronic exposure to noise with an adverse impact on the health of humans, including raised risks of cardiovascular disease and poor mental health, and the adverse impacts on mammal, bird, insect and in particular marine life on communication, reproduction, predator avoidance and sound location.

In 2019 the World Health Organisation produced new guidelines and limits for noise exposure from roads, railways and planes. Applying these thresholds to Europe suggest one person in five is exposed to harmful transport noise levels, with road traffic noise being the most widespread source of transport noise: - 92 million people affected by roads, 18 million affected by rail traffic and 2.6 million by aircraft noise. It is also estimated that half a million children in Europe experience reading difficulties and about 63,000 experience behavioral issues due to transport noise. A recent study in England found 40% of adults were exposed to high levels of road traffic noise and 5% to airplane noise.



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The impacts on health of noise pollution in Europe are estimated to be 18 premature deaths per 100,000 population- similar to lead poisoning. Some noise reduction standards exist for marine environments but there are no noise standards for terrestrial nature reserves or parks.

The talk concluded that there is increasing evidence of the adverse impacts on health of noise pollution, that these are widespread and that both recognition and mitigation are needed.

Wendy Dale, Convenor

New Members Coffee Morning, May 13th 2026

We had a very successful event in the Prior's room at Hexham Abbey in the middle of May. A group of people who had just joined in the last year came to hear all about the Tynedale u3a. We also had some prospective members join us, including a group from the Matfen and Great Whittington WI.

Barrie Mellars, the chair, gave a beautiful presentation, describing everything we do. Then Ian Diggory gave a bit more detail about the monthly meetings and Steve Rozario about the Groups. We sat and talked to the separate tables, to people who had lots of questions – the conversation was still going on when they needed the room back at midday! Everyone agreed it was a very worthwhile event.

We plan to hold another event like this in the early autumn, when members who have joined in the past year and not been to one of these events will be invited.



John Dark, Membership Secretary

THERE'S MORE TO THE u3a THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.....

Have you recently explored the National u3a website at www.u3a.org.uk? It can be especially useful if you are on a waiting list or are unable to physically attend a local group.

Under the heading 'What we do', look for **EVENTS**. These are talks or workshops, often one-offs, that are held on Zoom. You need to book a slot in advance but it is straightforward to do so. The talks are free.

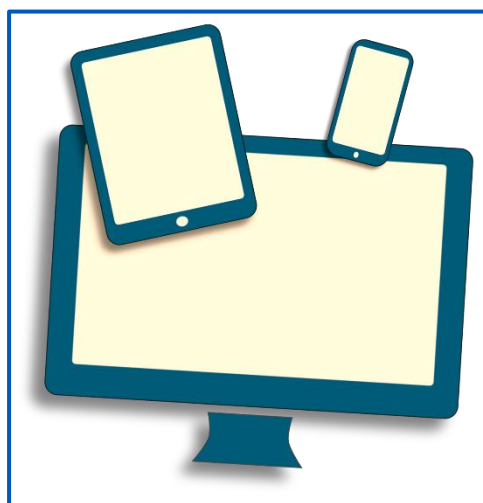
Then at the appointed time and date, sit back and enjoy in your own home or with friends.

Examples of talks coming up are:

Food Technology (June 3rd), An ABC of Victorian Painting (June 11th), Pascals Triangle (June 19th), Wessex vs The Vikings (June 25th), Watercolours with Tony (July 6th), Artemisia the artist (July 9th)

Have you spotted the [INTEREST GROUPS ONLINE](https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/learning/interest-groups-online) or IGOs? (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/learning/interest-groups-online>)

These are national interest groups available online as extras to local groups and perhaps covering different subjects. You pay £12 to join and then can access any of the groups. Note that some have waiting lists. They are run like local groups with a convenor.



Examples of IGOs are: Agatha Christie, Chess, Dutch/Flemish Conversation, Electric Folk Rock, Military History, Pen Pals, Recorders Intermediate, Railways, Neville Shute novels, Modern Greek.

Just looking through the list may give you inspiration for a new group for Tynedale...Zentangle? Irish Music? Opera Appreciation? Just mention your interest to [Steve Rozario](#), Group Liaison Secretary who can offer you help with how to start a new group.

Anonymous Tynedale u3a member

WANTED



Two u3a members who are curating an exhibition at The Sill in September are looking for an old rucksack or day pack-the older the better! Please phone Sue 01434 604787 if you have one to spare. Thank you.

2026 Events from June to September

- June 10th Eggar site visit for a tour of the factory. This trip is full, with a reserve list.
- July 1st Garden Party at the Racecourse. Book your tickets here [Summer Garden Party](#).
- August 15th (Saturday) Visit to Chillingham Castle and the very special herd of cattle that live there. The cost will be £16 for entry to the castle, including a £3 fee per head for our guide. Optional afternoon visit to the cattle at £10 each. Transport by car. Contact [me](#) * to book.



North front of Chillingham Castle, Northumberland, England, from the carriage drive

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<<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via
Wikimedia Commons

- Rington's Tea Factory is being planned during the summer. Only 8 expressions of interest so far. Use it or lose it!! Please let [me](#) * know if you would like to come.
- September 18th All day visit to the Harrogate Flower Festival at Newby Hall in Yorkshire.

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.

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.

*events2riggtu3a@gmail.com

Andrew Rigg (u3a Events Secretary)



[Tickets now available](https://www.trybooking.com/uk/GEAY)

<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/GEAY>

[Correction and Apology](#)

[Italian post beginners](#)

I'm very sorry that the link in May's Newsletter to Cathy, this group's Convenor, was broken.

For those of you who want to contact Cathy, please use this email link -

thecathybooth@gmail.com

or contact her via the Tynedale u3a Groups Page as Italian Enquiry on tynedale.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/italian-beginners-conversation/

Di Downie, Editor



Do you know someone who could use a little help with technology?

The **Rural Digital Inclusion** project is working across Northumberland to help people build confidence with everyday digital tasks — from sending emails and booking GP appointments to video calls or staying safe online.

We run friendly, informal sessions in village halls and community venues, and we'd love to bring one to a location that works for **Tynedale U3A** members or people you know. If your street, village or community group includes people who feel left behind by technology, we can help — just get in touch and we'll see what we can arrange.

We're also looking for more **Digital Champion** volunteers - local people who give a little time to sit alongside others and help with simple everyday digital tasks. You don't need to be an expert. If you're comfortable using a smartphone, tablet or laptop, you've already got the skills. What matters most is patience and enjoying a good conversation. If you're curious, you're very welcome to come along to one of our existing sessions and see for yourself before making any commitment.



Digital Checklist

Just some of the essential skills we can help with:

Stay in touch + stay safe

- ☐ Connect to Wi-Fi
- ☐ Send / receive emails, photos
- ☐ Text, WhatsApp & video-call
- ☐ Save and back up files
- ☐ Spot suspicious emails & scams

Manage online payments

- ☐ Shopping accounts
- ☐ Pay bills or parking online
- ☐ Bus/train tickets & check times

Be aware of

- ☐ Cheaper tariffs
- ☐ The digital switch

Health & Wellbeing

- ☐ Book GP appointments online
- ☐ Connect devices e.g. hearing aids

Hobbies & leisure

- ☐ Play games, access tutorials
- ☐ Find information, book activities



To find out more about hosting a session or becoming a **Digital Champion**, please contact **Marc Johnson**, Community Development Officer, CAN: marcjohanson@ca-north.org.uk | 07477 961096

You can also find our current sessions here:

www.ca-north.org.uk/news/rural-digital-inclusion-spring-2026

The project is a partnership between iNorthumberland (Northumberland County Council), Community Action Northumberland (CAN) and the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE), part of Newcastle University. It is supported by Commsworld alongside the rollout of full-fibre broadband across the county.

This article was submitted by Hermina Ely from Rural Digital Inclusion

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

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
15/08/2026	Chillingham Castle trip	book via Andrew Rigg
18/09/2026	Harrogate Flower Show	Newby Hall and Gardens -Book via Andrew Rigg

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

New Members

Hilary Feeney
Mary Nancie Forsyth-Potsig
Robert Perry
We now have 639 members

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