



**u3a** learn,  
laugh,  
live  
Tynedale

## July 2026 Newsletter

Monthly Meeting at the Mart, 2pm, 7th July 2026

### [The Kremlin's Geordie Master Spy: Rudolf Abel \(1903–71\)](#)

[by David Saunders](#)

Lots of people have seen Steven Spielberg's 2015 blockbuster *Bridge of Spies*, but the film didn't say much about where its central character came from or what he had been doing before his arrest in New York in 1957. This talk spells out Abel's family background, the eighteen years of his life that he spent growing up on Tyneside, what he did in Russia between arriving there in 1921 and leaving for America in 1949, what he achieved as a spy, how he spent the last years of his life when he was back in Russia, and why he is remembered with pride in Russia today.

David Saunders retired from Newcastle University as Professor of the History of the Russian Empire in 2017. His two main books are about Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but quite by chance he learned in 1983 that Rudolf Abel, the Soviet spy in Steven Spielberg's film *Bridge of Spies*, was born to Russian immigrants in Newcastle in 1903. This talk will detail what he has learned about Abel since that discovery.

Stay afterwards for a chat with free tea and coffee

## Understanding Gift Aid

For taxpayers Tynedale u3a can annually claim currently 25% of the £14 subscription fee, that is £3.50 per annum per subscription from [Gift Aid](#). This means that if 100 people sign up for Gift Aid, Tynedale u3a could reclaim £350.

There are some rules though:

Gift Aid is only available for the person paying the subscription.

For example: If A Smith paid £28 for themselves and another, Tynedale u3a can only claim Gift Aid on £14.

If a single £28 payment is made from a joint account Tynedale u3a will currently only claim Gift Aid on £14. If two payments of £14 were made from the joint account Tynedale u3a will currently claim Gift Aid on both £14 subscriptions.

If a member has gained a benefit such as a subsidised party fee the Gift Aid will be reduced by the benefit gained the subsidised amount.

Please do not let this stop you signing up for Gift Aid as in many cases Gift Aid is signed up for 'Today and in the future' and the benefit may only be for the current year.

If your tax circumstances change Tynedale u3a should be informed.



At renewal time each year please complete the online renewal form with the Gift Aid questions answered, this will keep one's Gift Aid status up to date.

Kate Stephenson, Treasurer

## Assistant Treasurer Call Out

My tenure as treasurer will come to an end in March 2027, and as Tynedale u3a cannot operate without a Treasurer I felt it was time to put out the call for a volunteer.

Creating the role of Assistant Treasurer will allow a gradual transfer of duties so that the Assistant Treasurer would be ready to assume the role of Treasurer at the next Annual General Meeting.

If you are interested, please contact Kate Stephenson, email: [tu3atra2@gmail.com](mailto:tu3atra2@gmail.com)



Electrum coin from Lydia about 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE – one of the earliest coins  
© The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\) licence](#)

## LAST FEW TICKETS AVAILABLE



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

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

## The Playing Music Group takes the stage at the u3a Ushaw Historic House festival event

On 12 May, the Tynedale u3a Playing Music group took part in the Regional u3a 'Festival of Fun, Music and Learning' at Ushaw Historic House, in the Durham countryside a few miles west of Durham City. Until 2011, Ushaw was a Roman Catholic seminary and Durham University hall of residence, and it also once housed a large Catholic boys' boarding school. Its 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century buildings include consecrated chapels, large conference rooms and a tiered theatre. The main chapel is especially decorative and contains a three-manual church organ.



Ushaw now hosts educational and conference events, with accommodation available for longer stays. For this one-day festival, the u3a regional organisation hired the main building, including its conference rooms, theatre and chapels. More than a dozen u3a branches from across the Northern Region took part, with groups and speakers from Cumbria, Yorkshire, Berwickshire, Northumberland and Durham offering workshops, talks and

musical performances.

The Playing Music group represented Tynedale u3a with four performances. In the morning theatre session, a septet played jazz and swing standards including 'Georgia on my Mind', 'The Girl from Ipanema', 'All Blues' and 'Manha de Carnival'. This was followed by a blues and rock trio performing 'Key to the Highway', 'Johnny B Goode' and 'La Bamba'. In the afternoon, two members gave mini-recitals in the Main Chapel: Bob Pullen played classical piano favourites, and Warwick Eden performed Bach organ works, including Toccata and Fugue in D minor (BWV 565).



The [Playing Music](#) group currently meets twice a month, although it will probably take a summer break in July and August. Musicians of all genres are welcome to join when meetings resume. For more information, contact Adrian below.

Adrian Woolley, Convenor   Email: [arwoolley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:arwoolley@hotmail.co.uk)

Photos from top to bottom - The Septet in action at Ushaw, The Blues/Rock trio in action at Ushaw, Bob Pullen practicing before his performance, Warwick Eden practising before his performance

## Showtime! May film at the Forum NT Live

### The Playboy of the Western World (Director: Caitríona McLaughlin)

The Playboy of the Western World, an ironic title, is a significant and influential play from the Irish cannon by JM Synge. Unlike when it was first performed in 1907 at the Abbey Theatre Dublin, riots were sparked by Irish nationalist's outrage at the play's portrayal of women, language and themes that clashed with the societal ideals of Irish womanhood and the nationalists romanticized view of Irish life.

The play is set in rural County Mayo. We have Éanna Hardwicke as Christy Mahon, embodying the mythic character of the stranger. When he comes into Flaherty's tavern everything changes for the village. As he tells his story of committing patricide, Pegeen, the combative barmaid, becomes enamoured with this newly emboldened young man, filled with the excitement of the new and unexpected. So much so that she throws off her prospective husband. All the girls of the neighbourhood including Widow Quin flock to see this dangerous, flamboyant hero, who breaks the accepted norms of their society. The audience is able to see the shallow person that Christy is, intoxicated by being the centre of attention. Nicola Coughlan, as Pegeen, and Siobhán McSweeney, as Widow Quin, hold our attention as two women who are desperate to have something more than what the small impoverished village can provide, to break away from the roles that the rural society dictates for them.



In the second half of the play, while Christy is winning a horse race and being hailed a hero, his lies and deceit are uncovered. The village and Pegeen turn against him. Finally, Pegeen, having sent Christy away, falls down crying in despair at the dead life that the future now holds for her. Widow Quin too is drained of hope.

The staging of the play reflects its roots in Irish folklore. The performance was in the original scripted Hiberno-English dialect; this took some acclimatisation. Annunciation in the drunk scenes could have been clearer. Some members of the audience left at the interval of this screening. But the central performances were powerful and the overall effect was unsettling and edgy.

Kate Stephenson

## Landscape Group Report

On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 15 members of the Landscape group ventured out to the Penrith area to visit two Neolithic sites - Long Meg and her Daughters, the third largest stone circle in England, and Mayburgh Henge, a massive circular earthwork. This was part of theme of “Lost Landscapes” that the group has been exploring – what did the landscape look like in the Neolithic. Proceedings commenced, as is traditional, with a good pub lunch at the Shepherds Inn in Langwathby, promptly served and with everyone getting the right meal. Ross expressed disappointment that there was no “Neolithic Stew” on the menu. Archaeological investigations have discovered culinary delights like eel, wrasse, grass snake, mouse, shrew, hare, frog and toad in Neolithic cooking pots, so the absence of “Neolithic Stew” from the menu was probably a blessing.



Long Meg and her Daughters

After lunch we went to Long Meg and her Daughters, in glorious weather, to explore the circle. Stone circles, henges and other monuments were the main permanent structures built by Neolithic peoples. As Steve explained, they practiced *swidden* agriculture or “slash and burn” – cutting a clearing in the forest, drying and burning the vegetation, then farming the area for a short period (perhaps just a few years) until the soil was exhausted. They would then move on to a new clearing, allowing the forest to regenerate behind them. They did not build permanent villages. The forest in Cumbria is likely to have been extensive, with scattered clearings grazed by wild animals. Stone axes were vital to this way of life. The Neolithic peoples of Britain are believed to have come from Anatolia, modern day Turkey, displacing the previous

Mesolithic hunter/gatherer population. Stone circles and henges were perhaps used as seasonal meeting places for the farmers to come together and congregate. Long Meg has probable links to the winter solstice.



Mayburgh Henge

There is evidence from crop marks and excavations of an earlier henge at Long Meg, but

as this is no longer visible the group drove on to Mayburgh, a large henge which deserves to be better known. Discussions were held on the effort required to build Mayburgh, and its positioning in relation to likely Neolithic transport routes (rivers). Its modern position, between the M6 and A66, with the West Coast mainline nearby, contrasts with the likely peace and quiet of Neolithic times. There are hints of an Irish connection at both monuments – carvings at Long Meg are a style known as “Irish Passage Grave” and Mayburgh Henge lacks the internal ditch normally found in UK henges, but which is similar to henge construction in Ireland.

Steve Rozario, with photos by Richard Steel.

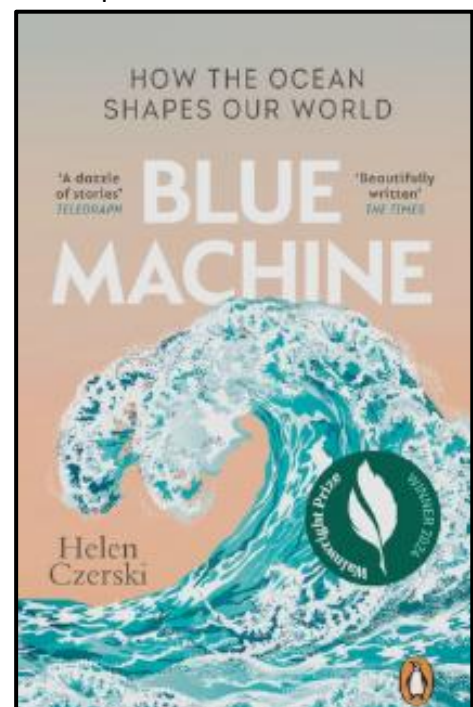
## The Environment Group

The Environment Group met on May 19th to discuss the book ‘Blue Machine’, written by Helen Czerski, published in 2023 and now available as a 400-page paperback. Helen Czerski is a professional physicist and oceanographer as well as being a science presenter for the BBC and her book is all about the oceans. She seems to have chosen the title to reflect the fact that although the sea is obviously not mechanical, it is not static and homogeneous but dynamic and multilayered, using energy from the sun to create physical, chemical and biological diversity spread between the many different layers of the water. In the process the sea acts as a carbon sink. Simply put, carbon dioxide in the atmosphere dissolves in the sea where the carbon is incorporated into the tissues of living creatures, including the shells of crustaceans, which eventually die and form part of the growing sediment on the sea floor.

Unfortunately, the burning of fossil fuels now produces more carbon dioxide in Earth’s atmosphere than the oceans can remove, and this has become a major cause of global warming which also causes warming of the sea. This in turn reduces the ability of the sea to absorb carbon dioxide.

This is only a brief summary of one subject in this book which is full of stimulating information presented in a most accessible way for the non-scientist. It is highly recommended.

Richard Bentley



## Events Trip to Egger Factory

20 members both enjoyed and found very interesting the trip to Egger on the 10th of June. We had a very informative description of the history of the plant, operational details, information on the raw materials (comprising 20% sawdust, 20% wood chips, 20% recycled timber and 40% timber in the round, mainly from Kielder Forest), and finally their various product types.

The tour lasted for well over two hours and we saw, at close quarters, the production machinery. Almost all the energy required for the plant is produced on site using waste wood as the fuel. Around one thousand lorry movements per twenty-four hours are required to both supply wood products as materials and distribute the final product for sale. Incredibly over forty miles of kitchen worktop are produced every day of the year.

We had a Guide throughout the whole tour who was very informative. We saw very few people during the visit as the automation is extremely sophisticated. One man sat in the control centre monitoring all aspects of the production process on 36 computer screen!!!

Andrew Rigg, Events Secretary



u3a members – not workers!

## 2026 EVENTS from August to October

The trip to Egger on the 10th of June was very successful. I would refer you to the report and photograph on page 8 of this newsletter.

- August 15<sup>th</sup> (Saturday) Don't forget the trip to Chillingham Castle in northern Northumberland. There are still a few spaces available. The cost will be £16 for entry to castle, including a £3 fee per head for our guide. Optional afternoon visit to the cattle at £10 each. Transport by car. Let me know if you'd like to go please contact [me](mailto:me) \* to book.
- September 18<sup>th</sup> All day visit to the Harrogate Flower Festival in Yorkshire. There are still a few tickets available (please refer to previous newsletters for details). The venue is Newby Hall just off the A1 which is itself an excellent venue.
- October - I am still waiting for confirmation of a date in October for the trip to Rington's tea factory. Please let me know if you are interested.

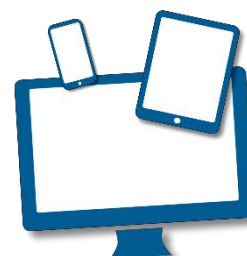


\*[events2riggtu3a@gmail.com](mailto:events2riggtu3a@gmail.com)

Andrew Rigg (u3a Events Secretary)

## June's Monthly Meeting at the Mart – why there was no online recording available this month.

David Milne gave a splendid talk, 'Let me take you down – The Beatles and Strawberry Fields', illustrated with images and audio clips of the Beatles. Unfortunately, copyright restrictions mean it could not be made available for later viewing. Many apologies for any disappointment that this has caused.



Barrie Mellars, Chair

## Helping by Participating in Research

The researcher writes-

*My name is Shannon Edwards and I am a Trainee Clinical Psychologist on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy) programme at the University of Leicester.*

*I am currently conducting doctoral research exploring the experiences of adults aged 65 and over who have been affected by fraud or deception by someone they knew or trusted, such as a partner, family member, friend, or professional. This research aims to improve understanding of how these experiences affect older adults, inform clinical practice, and support the development of services and safeguarding strategies.*

*Participation involves a confidential interview lasting up to 75 minutes, which can be conducted in person (East Midlands) or online via Microsoft Teams.*

*All identifiable information will be removed to protect participants' identities.*

*All participants will receive a £20 Love2Shop voucher as a thank you for their time.*

The poster is from the University of Leicester and is titled "RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED". It asks if participants are aged 65 or over and if they have experienced fraud by someone they know or trust. It states the researcher's goal is to understand how older adults experience and respond to fraud. The poster is divided into sections: "What's Involved" (listing interview duration, location options, environment, and confidentiality), "Can You Take Part?" (listing eligibility criteria), "Why Your Voice Matters" (listing research aims), and "Interested in Participating?" (providing contact information for Shannon Edwards). A circular badge on the right says "As a thank you for your time, you will receive a £20 Love2Shop voucher!". The footer includes the University of Leicester logo and mentions the DClinPsy Programme and Doctoral Research.

**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER** RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

**Are you aged 65 or over?**  
**Have you experienced fraud by someone you know or trust?**

*We want to hear your story.*

I am conducting doctoral research at the University of Leicester to understand how older adults experience and respond to fraud by people they know or trust. This research aims to move beyond simple narratives to understand the complexity of your experiences.

**What's Involved**

- A confidential interview lasting up to 75 minutes
- Choose between in-person (East Midlands), online via Microsoft Teams, or by email
- Share your experiences in a safe, supportive environment
- Your identity will be protected, with all identifiable information removed

**Can You Take Part?**

- You are aged 65 or over
- You have experienced fraud or deception by someone you know or knew (partner, family, friend, or professional)
- Any investigation into the fraud has been completed
- You can speak and understand English fluently
- You are willing to share your experience

**Why Your Voice Matters**

- Improve understanding of how fraud affects older adults
- Inform psychological theory and clinical practice
- Support service development & safeguarding strategies

**Interested in Participating?**  
Contact: Shannon Edwards  
Trainee Clinical Psychologist  
DClinPsy Programme - University of Leicester  
se220@leicester.ac.uk

*As a thank you for your time, you will receive a £20 Love2Shop voucher!*

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Leicester Research Ethics Committee: 5268

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER • DClinPsy PROGRAMME • DOCTORAL RESEARCH

To find out more about this research contact Shannon by [email](mailto:se220@leicester.ac.uk) (se220@leicester.ac.uk)

Di Downie

**STOP**

**HANG UP**

**CALL 159**

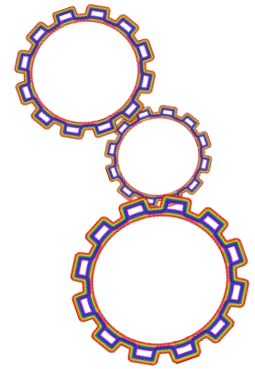
(preferably from another phone)

The government Stop! Think Fraud [website](#) also contains information and advice.

There was an article on Fraud and Scams in the Tynedale u3a [May Newsletter](#).

## End Pieces

This page includes notices, reminders, and information which I hope will be of interest to fellow u3a members. Please feel free to submit any items you think may interest others.



### BEACH ACCESS NORTH EAST (BANE)

<https://beachaccessnortheast.org>

Free beach wheelchair equipment (e.g. Wheeliez Rollator for off-road terrain) loan at various beaches (e.g. Bamburgh, Beadnell) for children and adults with limited mobility. Need to fill in form to become a free member and book equipment with 24 hours notice.

Submitted by Connecta Queen

### Learn British Sign Language (BSL)

**Try something new—learn BSL.** BSL is a unique and practical way to communicate. You may already have seen it on Northern trains, at Newcastle Central Station, or on TV.

No experience needed. We'll start with the basics, including letters and numbers, and you'll have support from members who have already begun learning.

Our sessions are relaxed and practical, focusing on useful themes and everyday conversation rather than a rigid course structure.

Already know some BSL? We'd love you to share your skills and experience with the [BSL group](#). If you'd like to learn this fascinating language, email me at [steve.gleadhill@gmail.com](mailto:steve.gleadhill@gmail.com) or call 0758 131 3318.

Steve Gleadhill, Convenor

### u3a North East Region Creative Writing Competition with Prizes

All u3a North East Region members may enter; creative writing group membership is not required. Submit a short story of up to 1,500 words and/or a poem of up to 16 lines on the theme of **'Happiness'**.

Entries must be received by noon on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2026. Entry is free.

Rules and regulations can be found by clicking this link: [Happiness](#) or by contacting [Celia Coulson](#), lead of the Northumbria Creative Writers.

### Wanted – Trustee for the Third Age Trust Board

If you're interested [sign up](#) for an online briefing session on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2026. More details [on the u3a website](#) about the skills needed. Nominations open 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2026.

# Noticeboard

## Dates for your diary

Online  
contacts  
for the u3a  
locally,  
regionally  
and  
nationally.

|            |                                          |                                                    |
|------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 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 |
| 04/08/2026 | Monthly Meeting @Mart                    | no meeting                                         |
| 15/05/2026 | Chillingham Castle trip                  | book via Andrew Rigg                               |
| 01/09/2026 | North East Inventions                    | Amanda Hepburn                                     |
| 18/09/2026 | Harrogate Flower Show                    | Newby Hall and Gardens -Book via Andrew Rigg       |
| 06/10/2026 | Newcastle Castle                         | Mick Wilkes                                        |
| ?/10/2026  | Rington's Tea Factory                    | book via Andrew Rigg                               |
| 03/11/2026 | Sleep and Dreams                         | Bob Pullen                                         |
| 01/12/2026 | Geology of Carlisle to Newcastle Railway | Ian Jackson                                        |

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](#).

Please send your contributions  
for the September Newsletter  
to Di at

[tyneu3aneditor@gmail.com](mailto:tyneu3aneditor@gmail.com)  
by August 19<sup>th</sup> 2026.

There is no Newsletter in  
August.



Published and Printed by Tynedale u3a

## New Members

Ann Lloyd  
Christopher Lloyd  
Jay Howard  
Tina Burgess  
Wes Burgess  
Alison Aldred

**We now have  
645 members**

## Your Committee

|                           |                  |              |                                                                                  |
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| Treasurer                 | Kate Stephenson  | 074705 76385 | <a href="mailto:tu3atra2@gmail.com">tu3atra2@gmail.com</a>                       |
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