



u3a learn,
laugh,
live
Tynedale

September 2026 Newsletter

Monthly Meeting at the Mart, 2pm, 1st September 2026

North East Inventions by Amanda Hepburn

So proud of my city Newcastle that it was, and is, a hub of inventions. Even writing this talk it still surprises me what we were the first to invent. From ships to bridges, from drinks to sausage rolls, from lights to medical breakthroughs. All North East firsts, and interesting stories of how they were developed

Amanda's early experience as an actress and singer gave her the confidence to perform, so tour guiding — and storytelling — felt like a natural next step.

Amanda began guiding on Catherine Cookson tours in South Tyneside, then worked in the Victoria Tunnel and with the National Trust. She later became a Newcastle City Guide and completed the professional exams to qualify as a Blue Badge Tourist Guide for the North East. Amanda now leads walking tours, coach tours, visits to historic sites, and occasionally manages tours elsewhere in Britain.

Stay afterwards for a chat with free tea and coffee

Chair's Report

Well, here we are in September following the glorious summer, at least for us in the Northeast although our thoughts go to those in the south of the UK who have suffered through a summer of unparalleled heat - not least those who are trying to make a living off the land. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the heat waves will have broken and normality can return.



Photo by Alicia Cresswell –
the Walled Garden at
Wallington.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome any new members especially those from Great Whittington and Matfen who are forming a new group of ex-WI members. We wish them well in this new undertaking.

There will be a new members coffee morning meeting organised by John Dark in October. John will email all new members and those who have not had an opportunity to attend since joining Tynedale u3a.

I know our Program Secretary Ian Diggory has organised a full calendar of monthly meetings at Hexham Mart, the details of which he will announce.

For myself, I am looking forward to the next six months before I step down as Chair at the March AGM. It has been my pleasure and my privilege to act as Chair of Tynedale u3a for the last two and a half years, but all good things must come to an end. So, if any of you out there in u3a land have an interest in helping to guide our beautiful

organisation through to the next decade and would like to know more please don't hesitate to get in touch electronically https://tynedale.u3asite.uk/u3a-contact-form/?contact_id=35783 or in person at our monthly meeting at the Mart or at a group meeting.

Barrie Mellars, Chair



Tynedale u3a Summer Party at Hexham Race Course.

Many thanks to the u3a's Barrie and Gill Mellars, Andrew Rigg and Sarah Richard for organising such a great afternoon, and to the staff at Hexham Race Course.

Tynedale u3a Membership Renewal



It's that time of year again, and your membership renewal is due on September 1st, 2026

There will be a series of reminders over the weeks and months to come

The easiest way to do this is through the membership page on the website

<https://tynedale.u3asite.uk/membership/#renewals>

There is an online form which, when completed, and you push 'submit' is automatically delivered to the u3a. The form does not allow payment, which needs to be done separately.

If there have been no changes to your contact details, such as address and phone number, you can simply fill in the basic information.

One important difference this year is that we need a current statement about Gift Aid, so this is now a mandatory question on the online form – you cannot submit the form until that section is complete.

The basic renewal subscription is **£14.00** per person.

Please make a separate payment for each person so we can collect the correct Gift Aid.

If you wish to receive the national u3a magazine, Third Age Matters, the postage has increased to £4.00, so the subscription is **£18.00**

For Bank Transfer -

Pay to 'Tynedale u3a': Sort code: 20-40-09, Account: 60601209.

For renewals, the 'reference' is your membership number and surname. (The 'reference' makes it much easier for us to know who the money came from, if there is more than one member with the same name).

If sending a paper form and a cheque, please don't forget to make it out to "Tynedale u3a".

Understanding Gift Aid (full article in July 2026 Newsletter)

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 two payments of £14 were made from the joint account Tynedale u3a can currently claim Gift Aid on both £14 subscriptions.

Kate Stephenson, Treasurer

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 Friday October 9th, 2026. 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 in early September. If you don't get one and would like to come along, please get in touch with the Membership Secretary on https://tynedale.u3asite.uk/u3a-contact-form/?contact_id=35784

John Dark, Membership Secretary

Photos pretty please!

When I put the Newsletter together, I use plenty of images to make it more engaging—after all, every picture tells a story.

I'd love you to send me your photos, so I have a good selection to use on the front page and throughout the Newsletter.

I don't promise to use every image you [send me](#)— but I'll use as many as I can.

Di Downie, Newsletter Editor



Hexham
Abbey
by Tim
O'Brien

PS I can only use copyright-free images because the Newsletter is published on the website.

Geoscience – proposal for a new group

During our lifetime advances in engineering, science and technology have revolutionised the way we look at the Earth. For example, it is no longer necessary to extract a fossil from the source rock in order to reveal its morphology in fine detail. Isotope analysis is changing our perception of cosmic events, paleoclimate, the origin and age of sediments and fine detail of magmatic events and ore body formation. Satellites are making it possible to monitor world events in real time, from the motion of continental plates to the



pulsation of magma chambers under volcanos.

We are proposing a new group to investigate the way in which modern technology is changing our view of the earth. It is anticipated that the scope would be broader than the 'geo' in geology.

If you are interested in contributing to such a group let me know argent2010@btinternet.com and I will work with Steve Rozario to sort out the usual issues (venue, day etc.) and a programme for at least the first 6 months based on

contributions from members.



Colin Argent

And now for a new location-based group....

GWM Friendship Group

Great Whittington and Matfen Friendship Group

We are a group which aims to promote social interaction and combat isolation for people living in a rural area. We meet on the first Tuesday of each month from 7.30pm in either Matfen or Great Whittington village hall for a talk, a craft session, a quiz, or other shared activity. In between, we meet for lunches, walks, a book group, and visits to places of interest, organised by individuals in the group. We are open to new ideas for activities and welcome [interest](#) from potential new members.



We ask for a small annual sub of £16 to help cover the costs of hall hire, speakers, and so on.

Convenors: Jean Conteh 07815 416904, Sue Nicolson 07500 198781

Showtime! June film at The Forum

Tuner (Director: Daniel Roher)

As the film was only on general release from May 29, we caught it while it was still fresh. A crime thriller directed by Daniel Roher and written by him and Robert Ramsey, it starred British actor Leo Woodall as well as cinematic icons Dustin Hoffman and Jean Reno. It follows Niki White, once a gifted musician but who has developed hyperacusis - a hearing condition that gives him heightened sensitivity to sound. Consequently, Niki can no longer play the piano and must always wear ear protection against loud noises. He is the apprentice of New York City piano tuner Harry Horowitz, a friend of his late father. When Harry (Hoffman) forgets the combination of his safe, Niki discovers he has a talent for safe-cracking. Harry then becomes ill and racks up a huge medical debt, and Niki becomes embroiled with a criminal group with his new-found skill which allows him to earn the money to pay Harry's expenses.

Intermingled with these developments is the growing love affair between Niki and Ruthie, a student pianist and composer. As their relationship develops, Niki gives her a watch he has



stolen during a safe-cracking job. The watch, however, has a history of its own, as a love token that survived the Holocaust. The watch now becomes a significant player; while given with love, ironically it now threatens to ruin Niki's relationship with Ruthie, as it is evidence of his criminality. How it all ends I leave you to discover for yourselves, but it is well worth a watch – if you will pardon the pun!

I am indebted to Barbara Johnson who recognised the close parallels with 'The Pianist,' a 2002 Roman Polanski film based on the autobiography of Holocaust survivor Władysław Szpilman. Both characters were brilliant musicians separated from the art they excel at – by war in the 2002 film and by a hearing

condition in this version. Both films end with a brilliant piano recital. The Tuner has modern levels of physical violence but parallels the systematic violence of Nazism.

Apart from a riveting and superbly interwoven plot, we also could almost feel the deafness Niki was experiencing during the film. Indeed, deafness was a main character throughout. We never lose sympathy for Niki, even though he is basically a criminal, because of his reasons for the thefts and because underneath the action is an underlying theme of the huge disparity between the lives of the rich and those of the poor.

Steve Gleadhill

Environment Group

Recovery Through Reintroduction: Restoring Nature in the UK

At the June meeting of the Environment Group, members heard a presentation on how species reintroductions are helping to restore damaged ecosystems across the UK.

The talk explored the concept of ecological restoration through the reintroduction of native species that have disappeared from parts of Britain. While species introductions have a long history in the UK—rabbits, carp and fallow deer were all brought here centuries ago—modern conservation reintroductions are carefully planned, science-based projects designed to benefit entire ecosystems rather than individual species alone.

Several inspiring case studies demonstrated the diversity of reintroduction efforts. The remarkable recovery of the Lady's-slipper Orchid, once thought extinct in Britain, showed how painstaking conservation work and a detailed understanding of ecological relationships can bring a species back from the brink. In 2024, conservationists discovered a newly established wild plant, providing encouraging evidence that the reintroduction programme is beginning to succeed.



The reintroduction of the Chequered Skipper butterfly to Rockingham Forest highlighted the importance of habitat management. By restoring woodland rides and open glades, conservationists have not only helped the butterfly return but also improved conditions for many other insects and plants.

Among vertebrates, the successful return of the Pool Frog to Norfolk wetlands demonstrates how habitat restoration can benefit entire wetland communities. The reintroduction of White-tailed Eagles to Scotland, after their extinction in the early twentieth century, has restored an important apex predator while also generating significant eco-tourism income for local communities.



Particular attention was given to the Eurasian Beaver, now recognised as one of Britain's most important "ecosystem engineers". Beaver dams create wetlands, improve water quality, increase biodiversity and help reduce flood risk. While local challenges remain, experience suggests that these can be managed through careful planning and community engagement.

Looking to the future, the presentation examined proposals to reintroduce species such as the Eurasian Lynx to Kielder Forest and Golden Eagle to various sites in England. Advocates argue that these species could help restore ecological balance, increase biodiversity and create new opportunities for nature-based tourism.

The overall message was clear: successful reintroductions can play an important role in restoring biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, but long-term success depends on rigorous science, careful monitoring and the support of local communities.

Guy Norfolk

Northern Rocks

The members of Northern Rocks have had a busy summer and have gone international.

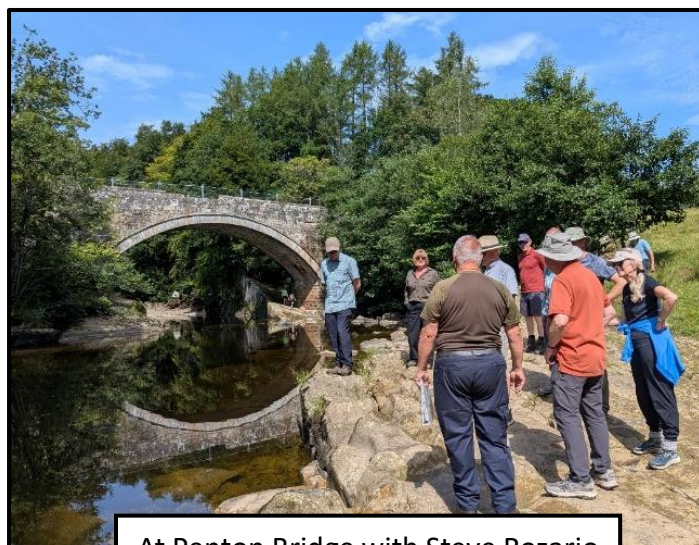


Folded rocks at Saltpan Rocks

We have had two visits over the border, just. The first was to north of Berwick to look at the rock formations at Berwick beach. At low tide we were able to see the Ladies Skerres Dome which appear as concentric circles at low tide. We were also able to view the different layers in the cliff wall. We then travelled south of Berwick to see some limestone pavement at Saltpan

rocks at Cocklawburn. The high point of the day was seeing and being photographed beside a spectacular area of folded limestone that features on the cover of Ian Jackson's book. Incredible to think that rock can be bent in such a dramatic way. Many thanks to Amanda for organising this trip

Our trip in August took us to just north of the border at Penton Bridge on the Liddle Water river. Here we were led by Steve Rozario along the riverbanks looking at some amazing rock formations and fossils. We examined the different beds of limestone at the bridge, tilting at different angles in a small area. Further downstream we carefully made our way down to the riverbank to view an anticline and found different fossils embedded in the rock. A brilliant day in brilliant weather. Not usual for Northern Rocks outings.



At Penton Bridge with Steve Rozario

Well done, Steve!

John Drydon, Convenor

Landscape Group

An excellent turnout of 19 people ventured forth in July for a packed day exploring the landscapes of the Esk Valley. There are many rivers called Esk, or a variant of that (Exe, Axe, Usk and Ouse all share the same root), so to be specific, we were following the Border Esk, which flows from its sources deep in the hills east of Moffat past Langholm and through the Debateable Lands to the Solway near Carlisle. Starting in the heart of the Debateable Lands the group visited Gilnockie Tower, the ancestral home of the Armstrong clan in the days of the Border Reivers, then travelled via Thomas Telford's birthplace and Westerkirk parish library to the Romano-British settlement at Boonies.



Equipped with comprehensive maps and information sheets provided by Sarah and Andrew the group continued up the Esk



Valley, to a complex of three Iron Age forts high in the ancient hills around Castle O'er. Here we visited Bailiehill Iron Age fort, which remained occupied into the Roman



period, passed Castle O'er fort and an ancient enclosure, and also had a short visit to Bessie's Hill fort before heading to the "Hub" community café at Eskdalemuir. At the Hub we were royally treated to lunch in a separate room with table service, and the café is thoroughly recommended to anyone travelling this way.



After lunch we continued to the Samye Ling Tibetan Monastery, a gloriously peaceful, if strangely incongruous complex of temples, prayer wheels, statues and landscaped gardens deep in the forests of the Upper Esk valley. The group spent some time exploring here, or sitting in quiet contemplation in the temple, before heading home. Sarah and Andrew were commended by the group for organising a highly memorable trip.

Steve Rozario

Photos -top to bottom- Climbing up to Bailiehill fort; Gilnockie Tower; Sarah explains the farmstead at Boonies; Lunch in the Hub; Samye Ling Tibetan Monastery.

Events Visit Report

Chillingham Castle and Wild Cattle

Twenty-one members enjoyed the trip to Chillingham Castle on August 15th. The weather stayed fine and no one got lost.



We all departed from Hexham at 9.00 am in time to assemble at the Castle for our tour at 11.00am. Our guide was most informative and showed us around pointing out the fascinating history of the Grey (latterly Tankerville then Wakefield) family from the 12th century. The castle was packed with a collection of austere, interesting, macabre, valuable, historical, and memorable paraphernalia collected by the owners.



Many famous historical figures have stayed at the Castle over the years – King James I of England (James VI of Scotland) stayed at the castle in 16th century on his way to London to be crowned following the death of Elizabeth I.

Charles I stayed at the Castle prior to his death. Edward I (Longshanks or “The Hammer of the Scots”) stayed here too in the early 13th century on his way north to meet William Wallace.

After lunch in the café we had an hour or so to enjoy the formal gardens designed by Capability Brown, lakes, and nearby St Peter’s church with the 15th century tomb of Sir Ralph Grey who held the Castle against 150,000 Scots.



We then set off in a large trailer to see the cattle. The wild herd of around 130 White cattle have been isolated here probably since the 12th century. There is no human interference whatsoever except to bury the dead animals – no veterinary assistance, no culling (although they were once hunted for trophies) and no management. Charles Darwin took a particular interest in the herd due to its unique genetic integrity. We viewed the cattle from fairly close up before setting off for home at around 5pm.

Andrew Rigg, Events Secretary



Hadrian's Wall Group

Roman Religion on the Frontier

For our field trips in June and July, the Hadrian's Wall Group took a deeper dive into Roman Religion on the Northern Roman Frontier. Led by Catherine Perkins who is working on a PhD on Roman Religion at Durham University, we explored the 'imported' Roman religions to the area, the incorporation of local deities and the growth of the Mithraic cult among the military who were stationed on or near the Wall.



The Temple of Mithras at Brocolitia



How to read a Roman altar at Chester's Museum

We missed our usual Cafe/pub lunch in favour of a picnic on the sites, so as to remain immersed in the subject well into the afternoon.

Carole Soulsby, Convenor

The North South Divide

In terms of my geographic identity, I was born an effete Southerner but since my early years, my cultural identity has been a Northerner. I loved discussions on this issue I still enjoy Peter Tinniswood's Uncle Mort's North Country and South Country on BBC Radio 4Extra. So, it was wonderful to hear more informative and nuanced arguments on the topic on BBC Radio 4's *AntiSocial* programme <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002z66n>.

I had never realised how the issue dates back to the Iron Age with the Romans reinforcing the divide by focusing their farming south of the River Trent. Amid the discussions on culture, geology and history, Northumberland got a mention as a very individual county. So, lots of explanations but more questions to research.



Mike Foster

2026 Events September and October

September 18th, 2026 - 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.



Chelsea teapot – about 1760

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

Rington's Tea Factory - 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.

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)

*https://tynedale.u3asite.uk/u3a-contact-form/?contact_id=35785

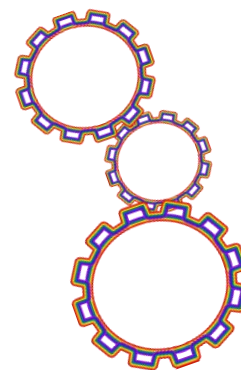
Highlights from North East Region u3a Events Calendar

20/10/26 click here [u3a tour of Laing Gallery - Pre-Raphaelites - Art and Poetry](#) for details

Ushaw Event 2027 Festival of Fun, Music, and Learning at Ushaw Historic House will be on Wednesday 19 May 2027. Members needed to contribute! Could you, or a group, present a workshop or activity? Ideas include history, geography, crafts, genealogy, photography, calligraphy, music, singing, a walk from Ushaw, carpet bowls, dance, ceramics and more. For information, please contact Cecilia Coulson cecu3a@gmail.com.

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.



Living in the Matfen and Great Whittington area? There is a new Tynedale u3a group in your area with lots of different activities – see page 5 and [the website](#).

Would you like to be the **new Chair of Tynedale u3a**? Barrie's term ends in March 2027. If you're interested, please contact Barrie via Tynedale u3a [website](#) or on 07831 255520.

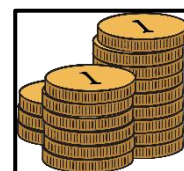


Beacon Data Breach – Tynedale u3a uses a data/admin system called Beacon that is NOT related to the Beacon CRM system that has been hacked. All our members' data is safe.

There is a vacancy for a **Treasurer's Assistant** to help the current Treasurer initially with Group Finances and familiarisation with Tynedale u3a finances prior to taking over the Treasurer's role in March 27.

If you are interested, please contact Kate Stephenson,

email: https://tynedale.u3asite.uk/u3a-contact-form/?contact_id=35789



Are you a **new member of Tynedale u3a**? See page 4 about the Coffee Morning on 9th October!

The University of Cambridge will excavate at **Aldborough Roman Site** in September 2026 near where remarkable mosaics have been found. Excavation tours will run on Sundays 6, 13 and 20 September, bookable via the English Heritage [website](#); drop-ins are welcome for self-led visits. Entry is free, with donations welcome.



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

01/09/2026	North East Inventions	Amanda Hepburn
18/09/2026	Harrogate Flower Show	book via Andrew Rigg
06/10/2026	Newcastle Castle	Mick Wilkes
09/10/2026	New Members' Coffee Morning	Prior's Hall Hexham Abbey
?/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

New Members

We have 7 new members

Tony Pearson
Rani Pearson
John Dresser
Diana Dickinson
Jane Killmister
Robert Patterson
Anne Saxon

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



Published and printed by
Tynedale u3a

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