

South Durham U3A

Active in Darlington, Cockerton and surrounding areas

<http://www.sdurhamu3a.org.uk/>

Monthly Newsletter – March 2020 – No 209

This Month's Meeting – Tuesday 10th March

Humanist – Carole Briggs – will talk about Celebrancy in general with some interesting stories.

Chair's Message

February may have been the wettest in recorded history but our U3A groups have still been busy as you can see from the reports below. Walking groups, Garden visits, Discoverers and Local History members have all been out and about this month, with plenty more events planned for March.

This month we shall be trialling a new signing in system at our meeting on 10th March. Members will be asked to sign themselves in – a system used by other groups. So please bear with us to see how it works.

The committee has received help from a member of the Regional group and finally put in our application for Charitable status. This is necessary as we have over £5,000 passing through our accounts every year. And finally, a couple of reminders:

- If you change your email, home address or contact number, will you please inform Membership Secretary Brenda Ellidge who can then inform all relevant people. If you wish you can personally inform any group you attend. You find all Group Leaders contacts in Newsletter.
- At the end of the meeting please can I appeal for more help from everyone in putting away chairs and tables. We have to follow a plan for where chairs and tables go, so to make it easier, we shall layout the seating in the original way, with the screen at the far end of the hall.

Carol Boyd Carolboydu3a@gmail.com

LAST MONTH'S SPEAKER



Tony Metcalf gave us a fascinating talk about the work undertaken by **Altogether Archaeology**. The group started off as a Heritage Lottery Fund project which ran from 2010 – 2015 in order to explore the archaeology of the North Pennines. Once the funding ran out the local people decided to carry on as an independent community group and Altogether Archaeology was formed. The aim of the group is to tackle gaps in knowledge about the archaeology of the upland landscape of the North Pennines and surrounding area. They are supported by professional archaeologists and have about 98 members.

Tony introduced us to some of the techniques used in an excavation including, detailed surveys using theodolites and GPS systems, the use of context numbers used in bagged finds, the use of drones, 3D survey and lite art.

He talked about a number of interesting excavations he had been part of including Holwick Well Head . Here a medieval long house was unearthed with three cattle stores on either side. Some early pottery from 1100 was found and there were indications the site had been last used in

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1540. Close by there was a spring and a curved wall which when excavated indicated an earlier settlement dating from 1800 B.C.

He said the group was inclusive, believed archaeology was fun and welcomed everybody no matter what their skill level was. He showed us photographs of a project involving local children from Cotherstone Primary School. They found buttons from the 14th century, they took their finds back to school washed and catalogued them.

One fascinating aspect for me was the detailed drawings of finds, he showed us an example of a drawing of a piece of Tees Valley Ware, he said how the group ran drawing classes for members.

Tony's talk opened up a window to the past lives of ordinary people living in that area. Thank you, Tony!

Marie Graham

REPORTS FROM GROUPS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Current Affairs is a group I enjoy,
I go there on Tuesdays with glee
'cos we have a natter
Then we get a platter
Of lov-er-ly biscuits and tea! (or coffee)

We give all our diff'rent opinions on
Every subject we could
But we don't fall out,
We don't yell and shout
Because that would be somewhat rude...

When we're knocking Brexit or talking 'bout forests
That loggers are all cutting down
We're one happy bunch,
As biscuits we crunch,
And laugh about Boris the Clown **Kate Brown**

Tuesday 25th February Current affairs this afternoon, attended by 9 members. Discussion took place on climate change and its worldwide effects, touching on our recent storms in this country. Issues of immigration in this country, freedom of speech and the latest buzz word WOKE, meaning apparently people taking offence at what other people say. We had an interesting discussion on organ donation, living wills and euthanasia. As usual a lively afternoon. **Gill Turnbull**

DISCOVERERS Friday 28th February – Visit To The Georgian Theatre, Richmond

On a cold February day 24 of us congregated in the theatre bar for an interesting and informative tour led by our guide Gerry. The theatre, which is rectangular with the short sides about half the length of the long sides, is narrow by modern standards with seating in 3 tiers on 3 sides. The stage is about 50% of the total length of the theatre and the furthest seat from the stage is only 35 feet away.



It is the oldest Georgian theatre in the country still in its original form. It was built in 1788 by 23 years old actor manager, Samuel Butler and his 46-year-old wife and travelling company manager, Tryphosa, to take advantage of a new law which devolved power from the Lord Chamberlain to local officials to licence theatres. As they were only allowed to perform in Richmond on 60 days a year, the theatre became part of a circuit consisting of Ulverston, Kendal, Northallerton, Whitby, Beverley, York, Pontefract and Sheffield. Butler died in 1812 and was succeeded by Samuel, his son from his second wife. The theatre closed in 1848 and spent the next century as an auction house, furniture store, grain store and wine cellar,

Following a campaign led by schoolteacher Edwin Bush, town clerk David Brooks and the local MP and his wife Lord and Lady Crathorne, sufficient funds were raised to refurbish and reopen it in 1963. It closed briefly between 2002 and 2003 for further refurbishment and repairs to the modern extension built in the 1960s. The theatre currently seats 214 but in Georgian times its capacity was 400. It originally had no toilets, bars or heating and whilst today it

still does not have any heating, it has the other facilities.



The top level gallery has 3 narrow rows of benches facing the stage and 2 rows at the sides. As you get closer to the stage the view becomes more restricted. This seating, costing 1/- a seat, was for the poor and servants. The average weekly wage was 5/-. The actors were relatively well paid at 15/- a week. The servants spent much of the time servicing their masters/mistresses requirements for food and drink in the box level below. The box level consists of a series of boxes arranged in a horseshoe with those facing the stage having 4 seats and those at the sides 2. A box cost 3/- a seat. The Mayors box and the Dundas box are opposite one another on the stage and display the appropriate coat of arms. The other boxes are

named after playwrights with the Shakespeare box in the middle. This one still has the original name plate (although not with the spelling that we are familiar with). Below the boxes are the stalls which have cushioned benches of 5 to 8 seats in 4 rows. The stalls cost 2/- a seat. The stage is relatively deep and has a 14% gradient, consequently if a grand piano is required it must be chained down. Below the stage is the technical area with 2 operating trap doors, one of which can be used for a person to suddenly appear on stage. The theatre is licensed for weddings and this trap door is apparently used by some brides to appear by their future husband's side! The 2 dressing rooms are at the back of this area.

Lastly, we visited the small museum. The woodland painted scenery is the oldest in existence and was donated to the theatre although it did not originate there. The well-known Georgian actor, Edmund Kean, first performed here in 1806 and returned even after he became famous. After a worthwhile and enjoyable visit to a local treasure we had lunch at Richmond Station. **Margaret & Terry Dabbs**



GARDEN TRIPS GROUP

On 19th February and following a little hiccup (where I slept in and need to fill my car with fuel) a group of fourteen members met at Kiplin Hall, near Northallerton in order to complete the 'snow drop' walk.

We were advised by staff, that due to the recent heavy rainfall the grounds were very wet and a large area around the lake was inaccessible. Some of the snowdrops had suffered badly by the onslaught of wind and rain but those that survived were very pretty.

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Personally, I was disappointed at the lack of flowers but I believe we all enjoyed the fresh air and the walk around the grounds, the promise of spring with tulips and daffodils peeping through. Before we left for home, a large part of the group enjoyed lunch in the 'Tea rooms' which was very enjoyable indeed. **Kathy Liddle**

INTERMEDIATE WALKING 3rd February

Thirteen of us set off from the Kynren turn, just over the Newton Cap Viaduct, Bishop Auckland, to walk down the Bishop Auckland / Branden Railway path in a windy but bright day. We got to Sunnybrow where we had a drink and fruit stop then returned to the start, walking a respectable 5.2 miles. **Dave Boyd**

INTERMEDIATE WALKING Lunch 11th February 16 of us went to the Mowden Pub for our annual meal where we had a pleasant meal with good company and not a muddy boot in sight for a change. It was great to see everyone there and makes all the hard work so worthwhile. **Dave Boyd**



INTERMEDIATE WALKING 17th February

After Storm Dennis at the weekend, I decided that it would be best to keep away from rivers and fields. Instead, ten of us set off to walk from Aycliffe Station, along the tarmac track to the Locomotion at Shildon. Once there, we headed for the café and welcome refreshments. Then with the wind behind us, we headed back to the cars.

Thanks to all who came. **Sue Storey**

LOCAL HISTORY 18th February

Hummersknott Allotments celebrated their centenary in 2017 and were looking for a way to record this momentous event. Along came Paul Pegman from Darlington Video Makers seeking a project to film! The resulting 40 minute 'movie' was brought to our Local History group on this month by Ted Lickrish, one of the allotmenters and enjoyed by a record group of 28 of our members!

We learned that the site is the original kitchen garden of Hummersknott (a house built for one of the Pease family) which was ultimately sold off when the family lost all their money. Along the length of one side of the area is an original wall made of pale coloured Pease bricks and the internal area divided up with paths to make individual plots. The film showed us activities throughout the year - crop production, tree pruning and bee keeping. There were interviews with members of the group and filming of their centenary celebrations.



It was a most interesting film - and for some of us the first opportunity to see an area we had no idea that existed. I for one will be keeping my eyes open for notices about their Open Days or Apple Days to go and enjoy a walk around this hidden oasis in the midst of the suburbs of Darlington. **Ruth Beckett**

LOCAL HISTORY 20th February Visit to South Park

A group of 17 was warmly welcomed into the Education Centre by the Friends of South Park, a welcome that was very much appreciated given the cool and slightly damp weather. An introduction by Marie, the treasurer of the Friends, was followed by a guided walk around the main features of the 170 year old park, explaining the origin of the rare trees, the history of the clock tower and café and the various artefacts dotted around the park such as the Sebastopol cannon, the Fothergill fountain and the Stockton and



Darlington railway stone sleepers. It was interesting to see the more recent play equipment and multi use area as well as the aviary, which is mainly used today as a rescue centre for unwanted birds.

On returning to the education centre we were welcomed with hot drinks, bacon butties, chips, cakes and biscuits, which were very much appreciated. Our thanks and appreciation must go to all of the Friends of South Park, who are doing an excellent job and would welcome more members, including volunteer gardeners. Thanks to Debbie for arranging this visit. **Kevin Beckett**

MUSIC APPRECIATION

This time we watched individual members of the brass section of the Berlin Phil. discussing their instruments and their role in the orchestra. These covered Trombone, Trumpet, Tuba, and two versions of the French Horn which we were somewhat surprised to find they cleaned by showering it with a hose pipe and running the water through the instrument to clear it out. This was followed by a complete change, Jools Holland with the Big Band sound from Blackpool, naturally with plenty of Brass. **Barry Garnett**

PLAYREADING GROUP

Our reading of Alan Ayckbourn's 'Just Between Ourselves' lightened the mood after Alan Bennett last month - or did it? Ayckbourn's inevitable humour eventually revealed psychological abuse behind the 'happy families' relationship. The gradual grinding down of a person who was laughed at rather than laughed with. We have yet to read the second act when things might improve. On the side, it was not until we finished the first act that we ventured to admit that we might just have read the play before! However, we've forgotten the outcome, so we'll press on to the end next month. **Muriel Jones**

READING GROUP 1

For our February meeting we discussed '*Becoming*' by Michelle Obama.

Michelle, the wife of former US president Barack Obama, is considered by many to be the most admired woman in the world, with the exception perhaps of Her Majesty the Queen. One only has to look at the numbers, 35.5 million Instagram followers, 10 million copies of this book sold in the first few months of publication, to appreciate her fame and popularity.

Becoming was published in 2018 and is divided into 3 parts.

Becoming Me, *Becoming Us*, *Becoming More*.

The first part charts her early life growing up on the South Side of Chicago in a family just a few generations away from slavery. Michelle's parents had solid blue-collar jobs but were not well off. However, they encouraged both Michelle and her brother Craig to focus on their education by attending good schools. Michelle's lay on the opposite side of the city so she was compelled to spend hours travelling in order to fulfil her potential.

This hard work resulted in both siblings attending Princeton University, after which Michelle entered Harvard to study law. She subsequently joined a law firm where she met an intern, Barack Obama.

Becoming Us chronicles her romance and marriage to Barack, her difficulties with conception and the beginning of his political career as a senator in 2008.

She describes the roller coaster of the election campaigns and how she fought to support her husband, but at the same time, be there for her young daughters, Malia and Sasha.

In *Becoming More*, Michelle gives us a fascinating insight into life in The White House, 'a bit like living in a fancy hotel but with no other guests'! We learn of the many initiatives she pioneered as First Lady' (FLOTUS)

These included the creation of an organic vegetable garden to provide produce for the White House and to involve local children in its cultivation. Later, she promoted healthy eating in schools and initiated the childhood obesity programme, 'Let's Move.' She worked hard to support military families and became a role model for girls telling them that 'an education would help them spring forward into the World' and she visited many people who had suffered terrible tragedies such as mass shootings, sharing their pain. When their time as first couple came to an end, Michelle summed up her feelings about her country. 'For almost a decade I'd been privileged to move through it, experiencing its bracing contradictions and bitter conflicts, its pain and persistent idealism and above all its resilience.'

What now for Michelle? As for political ambitions, Barack has said 'There are 3 things certain in life, death, taxes and Michelle not running for President.'

The Group really enjoyed this book but some disliked the American spelling eg 'traveling' and found some of the election descriptions confusing.

As for me, I wonder what has happened to the veg garden. I can't imagine Melania digging up potatoes or Donald bothering with organic lettuce in his hamburgers!!

Many thanks to Ann for hosting the meeting and providing delicious refreshments. **Toni Carr**

READING GROUP 2

The Hundred Year Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared by Jonas Jonasson

We found this to be a fascinating book, two stories in one book!!, both very humorous and entertaining.

Firstly, as the title suggests, it tells the tale of Alan Karlsson, the almost hundred-year-old man living in an old people's home. To avoid the imminent birthday party Alan decides to escape, wearing his slippers and with limited funds he makes his way to the local bus station where he just happens to be left in charge of a rather large suitcase. On catching the next available bus a most unlikely journey begins for Alan.

On a journey involving lots of criminals, several murders, incompetent police, and not forgetting the suitcase, which just happens to be full of money, Alan is joined by many intriguing characters, including an elephant kept as a pet.

Intertwined with the most unlikely journey is the story of Alan's earlier life, the on-going theme being to blow things up, having killed a neighbour as a child he spent many years being locked up. Following his release, he becomes involved in the invention of the atom bomb, witnesses many historical events, while meeting many world leaders throughout his working life, a life comparable to Forest Gump, maybe!! **Debbie Hardy**

Website

Would all group leaders please check their page on the website to see if its UpToDate and shows their group in its best light. We know that new members are looking at the website to see what we offer.

We can change the words &/or pictures if you send us replacements!

Southdurhamu3a@gmail.com

Trip to the Chilterns September 2020

Our trip to the Chilterns area is proving very popular and we already have 37 people signed up to travel with us in September. There are still some places available so, if you are interested, please email me or call me on 07902 697508 to reserve your place. If you have any questions or wish to discuss anything with me, I shall be in the kitchen at the March monthly meeting.

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We shall be staying at the Voco Hotel Reading for four nights on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis. Please note that this is different to the hotel referred to in the November newsletter.

We shall leave Cockerton early on Thursday 10 September to travel to Reading, with appropriate comfort stops and a visit to the National Space Centre at Leicester, where we shall also obtain lunch and visit the planetarium. We shall then continue our journey to Reading and expect to arrive at our hotel at approximately 18.30 in time to freshen up before dinner.

On Friday morning we shall travel to Windsor Castle where we shall view the Changing of the Guard, the Chapel, State Rooms and gardens. After lunch we shall head to the landing stage to board our boat for a cruise along the beautiful River Thames to Bray where our coach will meet us to return us to our hotel.

Saturday will be spent at Bletchley Park where we will see how Alan Turing and his colleagues broke the code for the German Enigma machine and changed the course of World War II. The National Radio Museum and National Museum of Computing are on the same site. If time allows, we shall visit the Tree Cathedral at Milton Keynes before returning to our hotel.

On Sunday, we shall split into groups: one group will visit RHS Wisley Gardens whilst the other group will continue to Brooklands Museum and Mercedes Benz to view aircraft and racing cars. A Concorde Experience is also available at Brooklands for a small additional charge. Some people will visit Brooklands in the morning and RHS Wisley in the afternoon.

On our final morning, Monday 13th September, we shall leave our hotel immediately after breakfast and head homewards with appropriate comfort stops and a visit to Brodsworth Hall, near Doncaster, for lunch and to view the house and award winning gardens. We shall then continue our homeward journey and expect to reach Cockerton at approximately 18.30.

I shall have further information about each of the venues, with photographs, at the monthly meetings so do please have a look at these. I hope you will then decide to join us in this new adventure. **Pauline Noble**

FUTURE PLANS FOR ALL GROUPS

Wednesday June 10th is the Quiz at Hurworth Grange

We are looking for people to **volunteer** to help us in the kitchen. It will entail setting the tables, plating the food and making teas and coffees and unfortunately washing and clearing up!! Our Quiz usually attracts a lot of teams from local U3A groups so please help us make it another great success.

Please contact Kathy Liddle on 484208 to offer your services.

BOULES Boules is beginning again on 1st & 3rd Thursday mornings. Meet at 1030 at Hurworth Grange. .

CANASTA (1st & 3rd Thursday @ 1.45)

We meet at the Travellers Rest at 1:45 twice a month. We have more room here and new members are very welcome. Contact Margaret

CURRENT AFFAIRS (4th Tuesday of the month)

Next meeting 24th March

DAVE BOYD'S INTEREST GROUP

I have now booked a Bus for the trip to Victoria tunnel and have only 4 places left. If you wish to go please let me know as it will be first come basis. The date is **Thursday 7th May** leaving at 10:00.

goggledaveboyd1954@gmail.com

DESIGN APPRECIATION (4th Thursday of the month @ 2pm)

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DISCOVERERS (last Friday of the month)

Friday March 27th we are visiting Durham Cathedral for a tour of Stained-Glass Windows 10-30am for approximately 1 hour. Cost £5 per person. You can also visit Open Treasure, afternoon £5 per person. We will meet Cockerton Car to leave at 9-30am car share.

I will meet you inside at the back of Cathedral at 10-25.

Remember your bus pass.

If interested please pay at March's Meeting or send a cheque made payable to South Durham U3A to Mrs C Boyd, 37, Lowther Drive, Woodham, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 4UL.

If you would like to visit **Cannon Hall Rare Breeds Farm on Friday May 22nd** near Barnsley please contact Carol ASAP as I need numbers for a coach. carolboydu3a@gmail.com 01325496153/07790584120

GARDENING & GARDENING VISITS

Garden Visits: March to May 2020

Whitegates Garden Centre, West Rounton, DL6 2LL: 18th March; Could you please confirm your attendance for this trip? We will be 'car sharing' and meet in Cockerton car park to leave at 10.30am. There is a lovely tea shop and opportunity to purchase plants or gifts.

Harrogate Flower Show: 26th April; Enterprise Travel will be taking us to this event (time to be confirmed). We need a minimum of 20 people to access the cheaper price of £32.39 and even cheaper if we have more people! Therefore, if you have friends/family who want to come along let me know (family/friends will not be covered by U3A Insurance). If we don't get to 20 people, we can book on the normal Coach at £35.00.

Lanchester Garden Centre, Bargate Bank, Lanchester DH7 0SS: 20th May; Once again we will leave Cockerton Car Park but at 10:00am. There is a restaurant serving delicious food and cakes and also you can buy beautiful bread as well as other items including of course plants.

Tel: Kathy 01325 484208

HILLWALKING (3rd Friday of the month @ 9.30)

The next hillwalk is from Reeth to Marrick Priory on **Friday, March 20th**. Approximately 7/8 miles. Fruit and lunch stops.

Please meet at Linden Avenue, Coniscliffe Road end, at 9.30. Susan, tel 252713 / Liz, tel 359921

INTERMEDIATE WALKING (1st & 3rd Monday of the month @ 10am)

For details of walks contact Chris & Eileen.

LOCAL HISTORY (3rd Tuesday of the month @ 10.30)

On **17th March** we meet as usual at Bradbury House, Age Concern. We have Tom Carr with the story of Mary Eleanor Bowes. Arrival from 10am for 10.30 start. Please do join us for another interesting morning.

Later in the month, on **25th March** we have a Group visit to the Bishop's Palace, Bishop Auckland. The cost for an annual ticket is £10.50, which can be paid on the day. (This will entitle you to visit the Palace, Mining Art Gallery, Tower and Spanish Gallery, once it opens, throughout the year). Please sign up at the March Meeting or contact Debbie Tel 482165 dahardy@hotmail.co.uk

LUNCH GROUP (2nd Tuesday of the month @ 12.30)

I am going to book the Tawney Owl for our next lunch on the **14th April**. I will have a menu at March meeting - if you cannot make the meeting and wish to go can you look at the menu on line and please let me know what you would like to eat. goggledaveboyd1954@gmail.com

MAH JONG (2nd & 4th Monday of the month @ 2pm)

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Group meets every 2nd and 4th Monday of the month at 2.00 pm at The Travellers Rest, Cockerton. For further details contact Adrienne Hopper on 482386.

MUSIC APPRECIATION (3rd Tuesday of the month at 10am)

The March meeting will be Chris Lunn's Choice, meeting at her home in Richmond. We do not yet have details of the programme but I am sure it will be an interesting mix.

PLAYREADING (3rd Tuesday of the month)

Next meeting is on **Tuesday 17th March** at Kay's.

READING GROUP 1 (2nd Wednesday of the month pm)

At our next meeting on March 11th at Marie's we will be discussing 'Adrian Mole, The Prostrate Years.'

READING GROUP 2 (4th Monday of the month pm)

Our next book is, As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning, by Laurie Lee.

We will meet at 46 Westfield Drive, on **Monday 23 March**. Any queries please ring Debbie Tel 482165

RUMMIKUB (1st & 3rd Friday of the month @ 10am)

First Fridays will continue at Liz's house (3rd April, 8th May). If 3rd Friday of each month is to continue we need volunteers to host it.

STROLLERS (2nd Monday of the month 10am)

Contact Brenda for details

Boules	Sue	07811 129179
Canasta	Margaret	485403
Current Affairs	Gill	07812 448094
Dave Boyd's Group	Dave	496153
Design Appreciation	Clive	358247
Discoverers	Carol	496153
Gardening	Ruth	252054
Garden Visits	Kathy	484208
Hill Walking	Susan	252713 & Liz 359921
Intermediate Walking	Chris & Eileen	720697
Local History	Debbie	482165
Lunch Group	Dave	496153
Mah-Jong	Adrienne	482386
Music for Pleasure	Pat & Barry	482391
Play Reading	Muriel	486129
Reading Group 1	Ann	356847
Reading Group 2	Debbie	482165
Rummikub	Liz	359921
Strollers	Brenda	496039
Theatre	Joan	358247

Next Monthly Meeting – Tuesday 13th April

Peter Barron – Granddad at Large