

South Durham



UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Founded April 2001

[www.sdurhamu3a.org.uk](http://www.sdurhamu3a.org.uk)

# Newsletter

July/August 2008 No 76

NEXT MONTHLY MEETING

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

Bowen Hall – Coffee etc. 10.00 a.m.

**Iain Wilkinson**  
**Scenes of Crime**

## Chairman's Message

Greetings dear friends and welcome to our July/Aug Newsletter. It seems only yesterday that I was wishing you a Happy Christmas and now we are halfway through another year.

In case you missed last month's meeting I'll give you a brief résumé. Our guest speakers were Dale, Keith and Ken – The Witton Park Historical Society. They gave us an in-depth walk back in time, through the various scenarios of this local village - one minute thriving, the next rising like a phoenix from what appeared to be total ashes, the latter being caused by the closure of the pits and iron works. But against all odds the village now stands proud as a modern and vibrant community. Their amazing repertoire of information, jokes and photos of village families (their own played a major part over history) gave a most enjoyable, educational and humorous morning.

I gave an early warning of the AGM in November when the major three year reshuffle occurs once again. If they agree to stand, only three committee members will remain, so please think seriously if you can step into the breach. As I said at the meeting, I have greatly enjoyed my three years as Chairman, especially as I leapt into the deep end after only being a member for a few months! The majority of our current committee all responded to Brian Everett's 'call to arms' at the last 'reshuffle AGM' in 2005 – so please accept this as my first 'call'. I am more than happy to talk (01325 722254) to anyone interested in helping our U3A grow and thrive as **without a committee it cannot operate.**

My very best wishes to you all for a super summer – don't forget there is no August meeting.

*Val Dodsworth - Chairman*

Address label

## Notice Board

### July Monthly Meeting

Speaker: Brian Everett  
Date: Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2008  
Topic: *Magic of the Orient*

### Welcome

Welcome to this month's new members and to visitors to South Durham U3A. We hope you enjoy your time with us.

### Best wishes

If you know of a member who is particularly unwell, or is approaching a significant birthday (80, 90, 100!), please inform a member of the committee so that as a group we can send our best wishes.

### Coach Outing – Holker Hall

The coach for our visit to Holker Hall on **Wednesday, 9th July**, will leave from the side of the Dolphin Centre at 9.30 a.m. We will have a 10 minute break on the motorway and should arrive at Holker at approx. 11.45 a.m. There is a cafe there or you could take a picnic. The coach will leave at 4.30 p.m. and we should arrive in Darlington around 6.30 - 6.45 p.m.

Contact *Judith on 266725.*

### A Day At The Seaside

For our visit to Bridlington our coach will leave from the side of the Dolphin Centre at 9.30 a.m. on **Wednesday, 10th September**, and we will stop somewhere on the journey for coffee. (Probably at Helmsley). We should arrive around 12 noon and we will be free to explore Bridlington until 4.30 p.m. We should arrive back in Darlington at approx. 6.30 p.m. The fare will be £15.00 and can be paid at the September monthly meeting or on the coach on the day.

Contact *Judith on 266725.*

### Coach Trip to Levens and Holehird

This trip, planned for **Tuesday August 12<sup>th</sup>**, (no monthly meeting that day) is being organised by the Gardening Group but is open to all members.

There are a few places left for this visit to Levens, Kendal and Holehird, Windermere. Names and deposit of £5 to Sylvia please. Balance to be paid on the day - the cost will be £9.50 if the coach is full, a little more if not filled. The coach will leave the side of The Dolphin Centre at 9.30 a.m. Contact *Sylvia on 259949.*

### Website

It is not possible to include photographs in the Newsletter but it is always interesting to see what the various groups have been up to. Any photos can be given to Syd to display on the noticeboard at the monthly meeting or alternatively, to reach an even wider audience, why not post them on the web site? (Address above). Contact *Barry Garnett at barry.garnett@ntlworld.com*

## Recent Events

### Art Appreciation

Our June showing of *Ruskin's Journey* on DVD was presented by Professor Michael Wheeler of the Ruskin Centre at Lancaster University. The story begins and ends at *Brantwood*, Ruskin's house in the Lake District where he lived for 26 years up to his death in 1900 aged 81. From there we followed his journeys across Europe to the Alps and to Venice. He was not only an influential art critic but also an inspiration for many ideas that we now take for granted such as conservation of works of art and architecture and being years ahead of his time on environmental issues.

*Brian B*

### Birdwatching

Sadly the weather has beaten us yet again and we have had to cancel our visit to the Farne Islands. We all lead such busy lives that we haven't managed to arrange another date yet. I can see it being during next year's nesting season!

This was to be our final meeting of the group. Thanks to Gladys and Cliff, who have been with us on almost every meeting over the past three years, we have learnt a great deal about birds,

and, even more importantly, where to go to watch them. I am sure that we will all continue with this hobby, and hope to arrange one or two meetings over the year to venues further afield together.

Cliff runs a local RSPB group, which meets monthly during the winter to listen to excellent speakers, and arranges field trips during the summer. It is open to non-members, so do contact him for more details. So, thank-you once again, Gladys and Cliff - without you both the group wouldn't have amounted to anything! And thank-you all my fellow bird watchers for your support, ideas, etc. *Ann*

### **Bowes Group**

June was a busy month at Bowes – a forty minute tour of the Alfred Sisley painting exhibition, a local history lecture and a brief introduction to pottery production with a painted plate from Nevers, France, depicting an indoor tennis match, thought to be have been commissioned as a wedding present, as the centre piece. For a month where the weather has not been very dependable, the Bowes has proved a very enjoyable place to while away the time. And ... we found yet another excellent refuelling stop nearby. *Sandy*

### **Dinner Group**

This month we went to Cafe Indi-go on Bondgate. There were only 7 of us ladies - no men. Some of our regulars do not like Indian food and some were on holiday, hence the small turnout. Those who did not attend did not miss much however. It was a very mediocre meal. Probably will not go again. *Sylvia*

### **Discoverers**

16 Members set out on a 'blustery' but lovely sunny day to Foxglove Covert at Catterick. The nature reserve covers 36 hectares, and our guide suggested we split our walk into two parts in order to see different habitats. Our morning walk took us through the Ancient Woodland, where trees over 400 years old have been managed by coppicing. Following the course of a happy chattering brook, we were fascinated to see many boxes in the trees, not only for birds, including owls, but also for bats (pipistrelle and natterers), all numbered and recorded. In the undergrowth plants in flower included wood avens, red campion, birdsfoot trefoil, and the rare northern marsh orchid and heath spotted orchid, to name but a few. We ate our packed lunches in the excellent visitor centre. We were entertained by the many birds that came to feed there: yellowhammer, a superb pair of bullfinches, a jay, chaffinches, spotted woodpecker etc. Our afternoon walk took us through the 'wetlands', a series of interconnected ponds. In the clear shallow water we

could see hundreds and hundreds of 'toad poles'. At the waters edges, yellow flag iris, marsh marigolds, cotton grass and ragged robin added delightful colour to the restful scenes. A highlight of the walk was the Lake - towering above this was the tree top hide, beautifully and strategically placed to give stunning views all around. We were especially pleased to see the family of coots with three babies. A truly lovely, interesting and absorbing walk enjoyed by all. Many thanks to Judith for an inspiring trip. Highly recommended! *Sue Tait*

### **Hillwalking**

We set off in bright sunshine on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July to travel to Stanhope to meet up with the Richmond contingent at the excellent Visitor Centre there. Our party of sixteen then made its way to St John's Chapel to start a seven mile walk which included the villages of Ireshopeburn and Daddry Shield. Sometimes following the Weardale Way, this was a very varied walk over some rough pasture, through colourful hay meadows, some woodland stretches, along old tracks and some short stretches of road walking. Wonderful views of both the lower and upper dale. We lost the full sun fairly early on but conditions were ideal for walking, not too hot and only a few drops of rain just as we finished lunch. The full walk could be shortened at various places and on a couple of occasions our party split up to explore the alternatives. This enabled some of the group to visit The Weardale Museum on the outskirts of Ireshopeburn where they learned about farming, mining and Methodism in the area from the helpful curator. We came across a well-defined fossil in a stone on one of the tracks and a small little mammal (probably a bank or field vole) on one of the road stretches. Most interesting bird was a snipe which we were able to watch and listen to as we had our 'banana' break. Flowers included several patches of northern marsh orchid, banks of wild thyme, a cluster of wild pansies and, in the hay meadows, buttercup, yellow rattle, white and purple clover, to name the most colourful species. Finally we again stopped at Stanhope on our way home, this time for a well-earned cup of tea! Thank-you Peter for a lovely walk. *Chris*

### **Music Group**

At our latest meeting we enjoyed a rewarding session led by Barry and Pat based on two video-recordings sourced from BBC2's Nocturnal output. Firstly a Wayne Marsalis programme using the Boston Symphony Orchestra to illustrate shape in the Sonata form, using Prokofiev's Classical Symphony and later, shape in Jazz and Blues to a workshop of fascinated children. After

coffee came a superb Jules Holland session called 'Cool Keys' illustrating many keyboard techniques of jazz piano: Boogie-woogie, Blues, New Orleans, Swing, Ragtime, Stride, Big-band, and Be-bop were all brilliantly demonstrated by some of the piano greats! A very enjoyable meeting. *Syd*

### **Painting and Drawing**

Only six of us met on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> June at the Arts Centre for our third session with Paul Dillon. This enabled us to continue with the painting of Pen Hill which we started last time we met. He emphasized it is usually best to keep things simple and to limit one's palette to as few colours as possible. With landscapes your picture generally divides into four sections being sky, distance, middle distance and foreground and you can bring tonal qualities to your pictures with light and dark colours. He demonstrated, and we practiced, what looked the simple way of painting leaves on trees etc. This proved more difficult than it looked and the temptation to make a repetitive pattern needed to be avoided if a natural look was to be acquired.

We also met at Bowen Hall on Thursday morning the 19<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately there were only four of us present to share a pleasant session. This does of course mean it is not a viable proposition so we would like to see some new faces joining us for a casual get together with an interest in watercolour. This provides the disciplined opportunity to spend a couple of hours on your hobby which is sometimes difficult to find in a busy week staying at home. *Jos*

### **Photography Group**

At the beginning of the month, the Photo Group received a special invitation to visit the Temple Grange at Richmond. The day was warm and sunny and we were shown around the grounds by a very enthusiastic Mrs Lawson. Her enthusiasm rubbed off on to our group as many photographs were taken and we now have a total of 31 pictures to show and thank her for such a wonderful time. Inevitably, some pictures were duplicated but they were all very good and I am sure that Mrs Lawson will be most appreciative. Not so good, was our later trips to visit the Wild Flower Meadows, the Thursday trip was cancelled due to torrential rain but the Wednesday and Friday groups fared better. The days were showery, but as there were some sunny spells in between we were able to get a few pictures. Lunch out and good company always turn bad days into memorable ones! *Brian H.*

## Group Details

### Art Appreciation

Our next meeting is on **July 10<sup>th</sup>** at Trinity Mews. The subject is *Painting – Antiques* an interesting insight into the valuation of paintings at the London auction house of Sotheby's. There will be **no meeting in August**. On the **11<sup>th</sup> September** there is a change of venue, it will be held at **39 Barrett Road** (off Hummersknott Avenue), the time unchanged at 10am. The subject will be a DVD on *Rodin*. Contact Brian B on 480611, or, for the *September meeting only*, Eileen on 462261

### Astronomers!

Covering the period up to the next monthly meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> September: **Full Moon** is on the 18<sup>th</sup> July and the 30<sup>th</sup> August.

**New Moon** is on the 1<sup>st</sup> August.

Sunrise on the 1<sup>st</sup> August is at 5.18 am, sunset is at 9.06 pm. Equivalent civil twilight is 4.32 a.m. and 9.51 p.m. On the 1<sup>st</sup> September sunrise is 6.14 a.m., sunset at 7.57 p.m., equivalent civil twilight 5.36 a.m. and 8.35 p.m. (All times are BST).

**Mercury** is not visible at this latitude.

**Venus** will become visible again low in the west after sunset by the middle of August.

**Mars** is no longer visible and will remain so for the rest of the year.

**Jupiter** continues to be visible for most of the night. It is now moving retrograde in the constellation of *Sagittarius* and therefore taking a low path only a few degrees above the horizon.

**Saturn** is still in *Leo*, now close to *Regulus* but will be increasingly difficult to see before being lost in the evening twilight.

I mentioned 'dark matter' last month. Puzzling enough but there is now 'dark energy' as well! Just in the last ten years observations of different galaxies have revealed that the Universe, far from slowing down its rate of expansion, is accelerating! So now the task is to find the force 'dark energy' that must be the cause of it all. Ideas to the Astronomer Royal please, not to me.  
*Brian B.*

### Bowes Group

Ever wondered what goes on in Bowes Museum? It is undergoing massive changes – some of which are already complete, others to be finished over the next few months. There's something for everyone – with lots of activities for (grand)children. A look-see is being offered to members of South Durham U3A, with a **personal guide** to answer all your questions, on **Tuesday, 5th**

**August at 10.45 am.** There is ample free parking (or use your free bus pass right to the door!), a coffee shop, free use of wheelchairs if required. Admission for non-Friends is £5.45. Why not come along and see what attracts the 'regulars' in this group? See the Bowes 'What's On' guide or go to [www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk](http://www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk) for more information about other events. To arrange car-sharing or for further details contact *Sandy* on 01325 384496.

### Bridge Group

We currently play on **Thursdays**, in each other's houses, commencing at 1.30 pm. If you can play bridge, why not join us for a relaxed game in a friendly environment?  
Contact *Pauline* on 244 403.

### Canasta Group

This new group is now meeting on the **1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays** of each month. Learners welcome. If you are interested in joining this amazing group contact *Rod* on 469051.

### Coffee Morning

The coffee morning is always held on the **last Tuesday of each month** at Bowen Hall. Our next meeting will be on **29th July** from 10.00 'til 11.30 a.m. We are pleased to welcome members old and new to our very friendly and informal meetings. This is an excellent opportunity for new members to find out all about our U3A. For further information please contact *Pat* on 466975, *Sylvia* on 259949 or *Judith* on 26672

### Computing Group

No official meetings are planned until September. Contacts are *Sandy* on 384496 or *Richard* on 357343

### Dinner Club

In July we will be at *La Sorrentina*, just down from the Theatre. See you there **7.00 p.m. Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July**. *Mint*, in Duke Street, will be our venue on **Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August**, again meeting at 7.00 p.m.  
Contact *Sylvia* on 259949

### Discoverers

The Discoverers will meet on **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July** for a visit to Bishop Middleham Nature Reserve, a walk of approx. 2 miles. Please meet at Cockerton Car Park at **10.00 a.m.**, and take a packed lunch. Parking at the reserve is limited so we will aim to take as few cars as possible. Contact *Gladys/Cliff* on 466471.

### Family History

Next meeting to be arranged. For further information contact *Pat* on 466975.

### Gardening Group

Coach trip to *Levens, Kendal and Holehird, Windermere* on **Tuesday 12th August** (details page 1). *Egglestone village gardens* are open on **Sun. 13th July**, 1.30-5.30 p.m. Teas available.  
Group contact *Sylvia* (259949).

### Golf

Our meetings are arranged to suit our players' diaries and the weather. If you would like to join us please contact: *Ian Aitchison* on 01740 622 843 or [ian@aitchison-uk.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:ian@aitchison-uk.fsnet.co.uk).  
**Ladies Golf:** If you wish to play please contact:  
*Patricia Downie* on 355 894

### Hill Walking Group

The next walk will be 7 miles in Waldendale from West Burton on **Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August** (contact Peter). The following walk will be on **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> August**, 7 miles from Reeth (contact Eric). In September our walk will be from Keld on **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September** (contact Peter). For all three walks meet at E. D. Walker Homes at 9.30. Bring a picnic lunch.  
Contacts: *Eric* on 720260; *Peter H* on 469958 or [peter.hay1@ntlworld.com](mailto:peter.hay1@ntlworld.com)

### Intermediate Walking Group

There will not be a walk in August, but I am planning one on **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September**. If you are interested please contact me nearer the time for details.  
*Margaret Smart* 01325 265024 / 07811 456741.

### Live Music Group

I have had 11 people interested in this new group. I have put a sheet out in the back room at Bowen Hall with concerts coming up for those interested. If you know of any concerts of live music of any kind which you would like to attend, please let me know. *Sylvia* (259949)

### Lunch Group

Our lunch on **July 11th** will be at the tried and tested *The Tawny Owl*, Neasham Road (just passed the football stadium) on the right. We will meet at 12ish for 12.30. Looking forward to seeing all your smiling faces there. Phone me if you need any help with transport.  
Contact *Jean T.* 01325 722306

### Mah-Jong

Firstly, an apology, as our first meeting in **July is 14th** and **not 7th** as stated in the last Newsletter. We usually meet in members' homes on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 2.00 pm. For the next 3 months meetings are as follows:  
**July 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>**  
**August 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> (Bank Hol.)**  
**September 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Members will be notified if there are any amendments to these dates. If you are interested in joining us, please contact *Adrienne on 482386*.

### Music for Pleasure

Meetings held 10.00am on the **third Tuesday** of the month.

**July 15:** Members' miscellany of Spring/Summer music to be held at John and Dorothy's.

Group contact: *Chris on 351024*.

### Painting and Drawing

The next meeting at *Bowen Hall* will be **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July** at 10.00 a.m.

Contact *Jos. Powell on 352440*

### Photography

The next field trip will be to the Crook Hall Gardens at Durham. Due to the current unpredictability of the weather no firm date has been set and will wait until later in the month to see if a reasonable forecast can be made. A date will then be set but can be expected to be within the last week of the month.

Contact *Brian H on 01325 460919*

### Reading Group

Usually held **2.30 pm** on the **first Wednesday** of the month but subject to change as necessary.

**6 Aug:** *Lark Rise to Candleford*, Flora Thompson. Venue: *Chris's*.

**September:** No meeting.

**1 Oct:** *Middlemarch*, George Elliott. Venue: *Sandy's*  
Your contact for this group is *Sandy on 384496*.

### Scrabble Group

We meet once a week on a **Monday afternoon** starting at 2.00pm, enjoying a very friendly game in a relaxed atmosphere. We usually play at *Marjorie Leatherbarrow's* house. Reference books available. Anyone for Scrabble?  
Contact *Marjorie L. on 467 648*.

**Newsletter contributions for the September issue (remember there is no August issue) should be sent to Chris Lunn by Friday 29th August 2008**

Contact: [calunn@aol.com](mailto:calunn@aol.com) (e-mail contributions preferred if possible) or telephone 01325 351024

**Not a member? Like to know more about South Durham U3A?  
Please contact our membership secretary: Doreen Woodward, 01325 461 953**

## Event diary

**Please note:** It has not been possible to obtain confirmation of all the dates listed.

Please check with the group contact (as detailed above) before making arrangements.

As many groups do not meet in August only those forward dates actually cited above are listed for August and September.

JULY			AUGUST			SEPTEMBER		
Tues	8	Monthly meeting	Mon	21	Scrabble	Thur	14	
Wed	9	COACH OUTING	Tues	22		Fri	15	
Thur	10	Art Bridge	Wed	23		Mon	18	
Fri	11	Lunch	Thur	24	Bridge	Tues	19	
Mon	14	Mah-Jong Scrabble	Fri	25		Wed	20	
Tues	15	Music	Sat	26	Dinner	Thur	21	
Wed	16		Mon	28	Mah-Jong Scrabble	Fri	22	
Thur	17	Bridge Canasta Painting + drawing	Tues	29	Coffee	Mon	25	Bank Holiday Mah-Jong
Fri	18	Discoverers	Wed	30		Tues	26	
			Thur	31	Bridge	Wed	27	Hillwalking
						Thur	28	
						Fri	29	Newsletter Deadline
						Sat	30	Dinner
						Mon	1	Intermediate walking
						Tues	2	Committee Meeting
						Wed	3	
						Thur	4	
						Fri	5	
						Mon	8	Mah-Jong
						Tues	9	Monthly meeting
						Wed	10	COACH OUTING
						Thur	11	Art
						Fri	12	
						Mon	15	
						Tues	16	
						Wed	17	
						Thur	18	
						Fri	19	
						Mon	22	Mah-Jong