

South Durham



Founded April 2001

www.sdurhamu3a.org.uk

Newsletter

December 2011 No 113

NEXT MONTHLY MEETING

January 10th 2011
Meet at Bowen Hall
Coffee 10.00am
"Loopy Lisa"
The Fudge Lady

Chairman's Message

Thank you for voting for me to be your Chairman in 2012. I look forward to working with you and continuing to make South Durham an active and lively U3A. A special thank you to Joan who has been a very successful Chairman over the last two years; I have a "hard act" to follow; sincere thanks to Francis, Mavis and Cathy for counting the votes at the AGM. Lastly, a huge round of thanks to Barry, for standing in when our dedicated guest speaker did not arrive. Following your talk Barry I would not be surprised if there is a huge uptake in Yoga courses.

I would like to wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.
Eileen Miller.

Message from the Vice Chairman

I would like to thank all South Durham U3A members for their support during the time I have been Chairman. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in this role and found it to be fulfilling. I would also like to take this opportunity of wishing our new Chairman, Eileen Miller, very best wishes.
Joan Sadler

Notices

Welcome

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

DECEMBER MEETING

December 13th 2011
Meet at Bowen Hall
Coffee 10.00am

MERRY QUIZ!!

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 we can send our best wishes as a group.

Christmas Lunch

The Blackwell Grange Hotel has offered us a bigger room so it is not too late to join us on **Friday 16th** if you wish we will meet between 12 for 12.30. Please give me your name and payment of £16.50 at the Dec 13th meeting. Merry Christmas to all.

Jean Tolmie 01325 722306

Literary Lunch

At Lumley Castle in April with author Anne Cleaves – details later. If you haven't read one of her books yet – try the library. They are thrillers – some set on the Shetland Islands, some in NE England. (Remember Vera played by Brenda Blethyn on TV recently?)

Sandy

Regional News

A special regional meeting took place at Ponteland Memorial Hall on 17 November 2011. The date for the "Big Event" is still to be finalised and the cost will be £12.

The venue proposed is the Walbottle Campus. Frances Beckett, who has been the Editor of U3A News for the past 15 years was the first key

note speaker. Frances gave an interesting talk with questions taken from the floor. One idea, which was mooted was the U3A News be communicated electronically. This idea caused a stir and a lively debate.

The second Keynote speaker was Elizabeth Gibson, Manager of the Resource Centre at National Office. Elizabeth spoke about how to access and get the best information for different groups ie Art, Music etc. Details of how to register with the resource centre was distributed. Also there was a discussion on the laws governing copyright. One thing was definite printed music can never be copied.

Professor Jim Edwardson gave an update on Voice North and the forthcoming competition for U3A members. Please note that there is information appertaining to this completion. Plus there is a chance to hear Professor Jim Edwardson speak at the Rugby Club, Darlington on 17 January 2012.

This was my first meeting to a Regional Event and I was amazed at the buzz in the hall and the various activities some U3As undertook. It was a huge learning curve for me and made me realise how much I need to know.

Eileen Miller

Competition

Prize money of £1,000, £500 and £250 is being offered to U3As in Northumbria Region who come up with the best ideas for easing the problems of daily life, particularly for older people. Originality, quality and feasibility of research are the main criteria for judging. Winners will have the opportunity of developing their ideas in conjunction with experts from Newcastle University. Ideas may be submitted from individual members, groups, or U3As. Prize money goes to the U3A. Professor Jim Edwardson from the University will be at the Darlington Rugby Club from 2 pm on Tuesday 17th January to tell you more about it. Book your place by contacting Jean Tolmie on 01325 722306

New Groups

The re-formed Local History group has held its first meeting and is planning future ones. The Current affairs group is up and running. It has not been possible to arrange the initial meeting of the Creative Writing group but I am hopeful that one will be arranged in the New Year. There has been great interest in restarting the Painting and Drawing Group so this is likely to begin before long. A Spanish Conversation group is planned and there is some interest in a French conversation group. Interest has been shown in a General Science group.

List for all these groups will be in the Annex.

Many thanks to Jean Tolmie who has deputised for me during the last 8 weeks, in addition to all the other work she does for our branch of the U3A

Eileen Lorimer
eileenl@talktalk.net

Bras

I am collecting bras for the Great Yorkshire Air Ambulance again. Any bras welcome.

Sylvia 259949

Specs

I haven't collected any specs for a while so if you have changed your classes and want rid of the old ones please bring them along to the next meeting.

Sylvia 259949

Recent Events

Art Appreciation

Full house for the November session, there were twelve of us squeezed up to enjoy the DVD on The Dulwich Picture Gallery, it is England's first public purpose-built art gallery and was designed by Sir John Soane. Not one of us had ever been to this gallery so far it is off our beaten path, but we have obviously been missing something, it contains a superb collection. We were conducted first by the director who introduced us to key members of the staff and to behind the scene activities such as conservation work on Rembrandt's *Girl at a Window* and a close look at Mrs Siddons by Joshua Reynolds newly returned from exhibition elsewhere also activities such as a children's class being entertained by the Education Officer telling the story of *Venus Mars and Cupid* as painted by Rubens. This virtual tour was followed by a series of three minute talks where staff members provided a detailed background to many of the items on display such as *Murillo*, *Van Dyke* and *Veronese*. It was probably the best presentation that we have come across so far.

Brian B.

Current Affairs

The One Day Strike, the State of the Economy the Proposed cuts to Darlington Services and even the report in the press that David Cameron's wife's shoes were nearly £600 were all discussed at the

Current Affairs meeting which took place on Tuesday, 29 November 2011. It was a lively discussion afternoon, enjoyed by all. One last remark – does the 3 for 2 offers or buy 1 get 1 free on fresh fruit and vegetables and grocery items make you cross? Why can't the prices just be reduced – maybe we need to shop in pairs or even a trio!

Dinner Group

This month we went to Hogarths. Good English food. We had the Christmas menu plus lamb shank. They had made an effort to decorate the table for us and it looked very nice with Christmas decorations and crackers. Very accommodating. Nice friendly staff. Very good. We all had an enjoyable evening
Sylvia

Discoverers

Most of us gathered at the usual place 10am (a civilized time) at Cockerton shops to arrange the car sharing and set off in drizzle. However on arriving at the Timothy Hackworth Museum the sun peeked through so there was some divine intervention to reward Pat and Chris for their organization and the research that was carried out, a big thanks to them both on behalf of those members who attended.

Those who haven't attended one of our little trips are missing out what turned out to a fun day.

After a very cheap coffee to warm us all up at the start while we waited for those members who made their own way to the museum we were descended on by a very enthusiastic bus load of youngsters who entertained us, pressing the innumerable interactive buttons, and some of us had a go also, I'm ashamed to say I got some wrong myself, so had to ask some bright little youngsters for the answers.

We viewed the original steam

engine "Sans Pareil" which means "without Equal" in French which took part in the Rainhill Trials for the Liverpool/Manchester railway and would of won the contest had its boiler not blown up, this may have changed the course of history for the town if it had not been for the poor construction of the rivets holding the boiler together and Shildon may not of been so significant a town for railways as Stephenson's Rocket won instead, and the first passenger railway was created, a stately 6mph and the rest is History.

By 1843 SOME express trains reached the heady speed of 40mph. Today's fastest channel tunnel train reaches 186mph which highlights how far engineering has developed in this comparatively short period, the likes of Stephenson were our pioneers and we should be very proud of our heritage. We looked around Hackworth Museum when another group of little darlings joined us pressing those interactive buttons.

We then strolled along the route of the old railway reading the very informative information boards and took in the first railway shed which was built 1857 and seemed very small in comparison to modern times where large numbers of livestock and goods were transported by rail including import of bananas (dont think there were Fifes).

Arriving at the main centre we looked around the gift shop where there were some very reasonable items for stocking fillers for those with Grandchildren and for us grown ups other items included jigsaws of "Downton Abbey" which was purchased by one of the group (lets hope its completed before the next series begins)

The exhibits were in excellent order including the Royal Carriages, very regal which were accompanied by less

salubrious carriages which followed for the servants and masses of luggage the Royals trailed around the country on their many jolly Jaunts.

Another interesting exhibition was named "1911 Heroes of the North" all about Northern amateur football teams to modern day, including photos of Jack Greenwell, son of a miner who helped West Auckland win the first World cup against Barcelona who he later became Manager and married a chorus girl from the Moulin Rouge, there were even WAGS in those times.

We all gathered again and called up the bus for a ride back to the cars and retired to the local hostelry with good company and a very reasonable priced and good lunch.

£1 for a pudding !!! you cannot get better than that I'm still salivating thinking about that apple pie drizzled with cream, not so good for the cholestrol.

Thanks again to Pat and Chris for doing their homework

Ian and Margaret

Hill Walking

7 stiles and a lot of horses!

Knowle was the starting point for our December walk. Meeting, by the seemingly derelict village hall (which we all saw the development potential of) we set off across the fields, making our way upwards to Weston Plantation, where a seat had been thoughtfully placed (a good banana stop) where we sat and enjoyed a lovely view of the Hambleton Hills. Passing through several fields, lots of 'kissing gates' (no stiles) and seeing a lot a well tended horses - the large ones we kept away from but succumbed to the inquisitiveness of the Shetland ponies - we made our way to Boltby. A pretty village, which seemed to be permanently inhabited rather than being full of second homes, we

walked over a narrow packhorse bridge where we could see some mosaics on the wall. On past the old schoolhouse we gradually climbed up to Cow Pasture Wood which Peter told us was the highest point on our walk and from where we had views westwards towards the Dales. Descending, again past fields of horses, to Tang Hall, we then joined a farm track, making our way up (again!) and eventually, before reaching Felixkirk, we passed a very imposing entrance, with electric gates and a code pad. The property could not be seen at all from the road but I gather has some very impressive (private) landscaped gardens. Lunch was at the Carpenter's Arms in the village - named 'Best Freehouse Pub in Great Britain' 2011. An enjoyable resting spot - we were assured there were no more hills in the afternoon. Leaving the pub our walk was across fields, several tricky negotiations of streams, (and the 7 stiles), all to the accompanying sound of gunshots - the pheasants were not having a happy afternoon! We walked along Paled Dike, slowly wending our way back to Kirby Knowle. A pleasant walk, with good weather and thank you to Peter for finding the walk and leading us up hill and

Carol Hillyard

Intermediate Walking

Our walk, kindly led by Mavis and Roger, started at Middleton-One-Row where, after a short road stretch, we went through a wood and skirted a rather muddy field. Further on, and now with good underfoot walking, we crossed part of Dinsdale Golf Club, then through woods and fields, eventually reaching a footbridge. A slight detour was made here for a break alongside the Manor House and Low Dinsdale's St. John

the Baptist Church. Through another wooded section, and always following the river, the Teesdale Way took us across the apartment patios of the converted Old Spa House. After another wooded section, a diagonal path took us up to the top of the Green back at Middleton-One Row to complete our walk.

Frances

Intermediate Walking Group; November 21st

Today 15 people met up to walk in rather poor weather, it was foggy and damp. When we arrived at our destination, visibility was only a few hundred metres; we still did the walk that was surprisingly still enjoyable and eerie at times. The consensus was that this was the first time we had walked in these unusual conditions. We started in the village of Cockfield with its long history from medieval times through the Romans and on to its mining and industrial heritage.

Our walk started & ended at a unique house, which was the first in the world to be lit by coal gas. The family of mining engineers named Dixon, discovered how to make the gas after several explosions, including blowing up their own house. Later, one of the brothers went to America and set up the Mason-Dixon railway. We headed to a hamlet called Burnt Houses then skirted the edge of the Raby Estate and its North Wood before heading across new fields created by the NCB after clearing and landscaping, huge slag heaps, pit heads and shafts then digging out masses of coal in their opencast. We then went onto Cockfield Fell, listed as an ancient monument with its long history. The walkers were surprised to know that this part of the fells was hit by bombs during the war, when German planes were being chased by fighters and simply dumped their loads to be lighter and We followed

ancient paths across the fells to return to the top of the village and walk down the main street back to our cars. Finally it is useful to tell you that Cockfield is my home village where I grew up as the youngest of nine children leaving home in my mid-twenties so I know the history of this area well. I shared some local information with the group on the way...

My thanks to Norman for sharing the leading of this walk with me.

NB: our walks continue until Christmas so do come and join us anytime.

Harry Peart; Tel; 284077; e-mail; peart60@btinternet.com

5th December Walk

Excellent turnout for the walk and also turned out to be an excellent social gathering. Unfortunately, the paths around Hurworth were very icy at the start of the walk, but once we reached the fields it was easier underfoot. It was a shorter outing than usual. Once we arrived at Neasham it was a quick inspection of the works ie the flooding prevention development and then we returned back via the main street of the village. It was great to have a good turnout as this was the last walk in 2011. A warm welcome to the two new members of the intermediate walking group, Susan and Pat and we look forward to seeing both of you in 2012.

Happy Christmas.

Chris & Eileen Miller

Play Reading Group

At November's meeting we began to read John Mortimer's 'A Voyage round my Father' which proved very entertaining. Perhaps not a laugh-a-minute as we found with Alan Ayckbourn, but still a smile or two.

Muriel

Reading Group

Was Shakespeare a put off? Certainly not for the members of the reading group in November. A Midsummer Night's Dream had kept us all busy. Between us we had collected a DVD, a video, a sound recording and various books, one of which was a collector's item illustrated with beautiful sketches. Comparing and contrasting this and other plays by William Shakespeare naturally led us into the never-ending debate on the actual author of the 37 plays and poems attributed to him. A quick look at Bill Bryson's book - Shakespeare - provided a background to the bard's life and times. Recommended books were Peter Parker's The Last Veteran; Mavis Cheek's Anne of Cleves; Steig Laarson's trilogy set in Sweden.

Sandy

Group Details and Future Events

The Brain in Spain

Do you fancy nibbling some Spanish - not the liquorice, the language- and are you a complete beginner? Are you prepared to commit 10 hours (or thereabouts) in total spread over 10 weeks (preferably consecutive and starting in **January 2012**) in a small group of 10 (maximum) people?

If your answer to all is "Yes" and you weren't able to attend our December monthly at Bowen Hall then contact **Felix on 259949**.

"Language learning highly effective in maintaining healthy brain function" - Recent Research

Art Appreciation

The next meeting will be on **8th December** before the monthly meeting for which we will have a DVD featuring Palin on Art, Anne Redpath &

the Scottish Colourists.

We start the New Year on the **12th January** with a DVD, courtesy of John and Dorothy Baldwin, The Adoration of the Christ Child by Filippo Lippi. One of a BBC series The Private Life of a Masterpiece. Both meetings are **10am** at Trinity Mews as usual. Contact Brian B on 480611

Beginners Bridge

We meet at Eric's on **Wednesdays**, commencing at **1.30 pm, until 4.00/4.30**
Please contact Eric on 720260.

Bezique

You are invited to play a friendly game at my house on **Dec.21st.**

Newcomers welcome
Jean Tolmie 01325 722306

Canasta

The group meets on the **first and third Thursdays** of the month at **2.00pm**. New members always welcome.
Contact Margaret on 485403

Current Affairs

The next meeting will take place **Tuesday 31 January** 2012.
Details contact Eileen Miller 720697.

Dinner Group

I am going to arrange a dinner at Ochis on **Friday, 30th December - (note FRIDAY)**. List in back room if you are interested. We have been here before and it's very good.
Sylvia 259949

Gardening Group

We have not yet managed to get to Peter Barratts for our pre Christmas gathering to arrange our meetings for 2012. How does **Tuesday, 20th December** sound? Otherwise it's going to have to be in January.
Sylvia 259949

Hill Walking Group

The next walk will be 7 miles from Forest in Teesdale on **Wednesday 28th December**. Lunch at the Langdon Beck Hotel.
Meet EDWalker's Homes **9.30**. The following walk will be on **Wednesday 25th January**.
Contact Peter on 469958 or peter.hayl@ntlworld.com.

Intermediate Walking

We have a walks planned for **December 5th and 19th**
Dates for the New Year are:-
16th January - lead by Howard and Mavis
6th February - lead by Isabel and Betty
5th March - lead by Norman and Margaret
Contact Harry on 284077 or e-mail peart60@btinternet.com

Mah-Jong

We meet in members' homes on the **2nd and 4th Mondays** of each month at **2.00pm**.
Contact Adrienne on 482386

Play Reading Group

There will be no meeting in December as it would be too close to Christmas.

January's meeting will be the third Tuesday as usual, **17th January**, and we will meet at Kay's house (tel.720361). It will be a continuation of reading 'A Voyage Round my Father'.
Muriel 486129

Reading Group

Forthcoming meetings:
14th December - Christmas celebrations in Gainford;
4th January The Cellist of Sarajevo by S Galloway (books from the library);
1st February Northern Clemency (books from the library).
Watch out for The Help film now out.
Contact is Sandy on 384496

Theatre Group

Once again Winston are presenting their Follies night and have block booked us tickets for Wed 21st March commencing at 7.30pm. Tickets are £5. This is always a pleasant, funny and cheerful evening. I would be grateful for approximate numbers and a list will be in the side annexe. These numbers can be added to during February. The presenter of the Follies has asked that we provide some indication of numbers during January.
Joan Sadler 01325 358247

Newsletter contributions should be sent to Rod Tait.
Contributions by 1st January please.
e-mail contributions preferred if possible to rodtaitu3a@gmail.com or telephone 469051

Not a member? Like to know more about South Durham U3A? Please contact our membership secretary:
Jean Tolmie 01325 722306

December 2011 Events

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.

| | | | | | |
|------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Thu | 1st | Canasta | Sun | 18th | |
| Fri | 2nd | | Mon | 19th | Intermediate Walking |
| Sat | 3rd | | Tue | 20th | Gardening Group |
| Sun | 4th | | Wed | 21st | Bezique, Beginners Bridge |
| Mon | 5th | Intermediate Walking | Thu | 22nd | |
| Tue | 6th | Committee Meeting | Fri | 23rd | |
| Wed | 7th | Bezique, Beginners Bridge | Sat | 24th | |
| Thu | 8th | Art Appreciation | Sun | 25th | HAPPY CHRISTMAS!! |
| Fri | 9th | | Mon | 26th | Mah Jong? |
| Sat | 10th | | Tue | 27th | |
| Sun | 11th | | Wed | 28th | Beginners Bridge, Hill Walking |
| Mon | 12th | Mah Jong | Thu | 29th | Current Affairs Group |
| Tue | 13th | Group Meeting | Fri | 30th | Dinner Group |
| Wed | 14th | Reading Group | Sat | 31st | |
| Thu | 15th | Canasta | | | |
| Fri | 16th | Lunch Group | | | |
| Sat | 17th | | | | |

January 2012 Events

| | | | | | |
|------------|------------------------|--|------------|------------------------|--|
| Sun | 1st | | Wed | 18th | Beginners Bridge |
| Mon | 2nd | | Thu | 19th | Canasta |
| Tue | 3rd | Committee Meeting | Fri | 20th | |
| Wed | 4th | Beginners Bridge, Reading Group | Sat | 21st | |
| Thu | 5th | Canasta | Sun | 22nd | |
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| Mon | 16th | Intermediate Walking | | | |
| Tue | 17th | Play Reading Group | | | |