

Newsletter March 2025

COMMITTEE

June Keeler Chair	Trevor Pitt Treasurer
Speaker Secretary	Andy Downs Groups Coordinator
Sue Mellish Membership Secretary	Sheila Simms Minutes Secretary

Chair's report

Welcome to your March newsletter

Let's start with some good news! Sandy Carter, one of our guest speakers from Marrick Priory has invited us to Afternoon tea and a tour. The dates are either; Tuesday 3rd or Wednesday 4th June starting at 2 pm. She would like an estimate of numbers. They are working on the costs at the moment. If you haven't been before there is usually lots to eat and see. Buses are provided from Reeth or you can choose to walk. You can contact me through the website or my email if you have it and/or write your name and details on a list at the next speaker meeting.

The not so good news is that your committee is quickly shrinking. I mentioned in the last newsletter that we needed a membership secretary, speaker secretary, groups coordinator and even a secretary. We are also looking for someone who can take charge of providing refreshments at the speaker meetings. Beth, who has done this for over 3 years is resigning from her role too. Melanie Geldeart will explain the role and provide a list of dates for you to sign up for over the next year so that a rota can be put in place.

Can you help to find someone who would like to join this fantastic organisation and offer their services in any way? Remember, there is no age minimum or limit, gender bias or ability to become a member. The only criteria is that a person needs to be either in part-time or not in full-time employment.

Best foot forward Leyburn!

June

HELP YOUR COMMITTEE

Monthly Meetings

Vacancies;

1. Meet and greet people who attend.
2. Setting up drinks table. (No washing up involved!)

Two lists have been drawn up for you to add your name to do either of the above jobs. These lists will take us through to April 2026 and means your very small committee do not have to spend time organising these important jobs. Check your diaries. Both jobs are easy and could be done by two people. Contact Melanie if you want to add your name or tell Melanie at the next monthly meeting. Thank you.

Monthly Meeting

Boundary stones - discovering hidden history in the landscape by Hilary Jones is the subject of the Leyburn u3a talk on Friday 21 March.

Hilary will explore why they were installed and what you can discover from them about your local area. From parish boundaries to lighthouses and castles, marking the boundary was, and remains, part of our hidden history. This will be illustrated with many varied examples of boundary markers,

Hilary is vice-chair of the Milestone Society, a charity that seeks to conserve our wayside heritage of milestones plus boundary markers and traditional finger posts.

Doors open at 10.00 for 10.30 at Leyburn Arts and Community Centre, Richmond Road, Leyburn DL8 5DL.

Visitors and new members are always welcome, for details contact Membership secretary via www.leyburn.u3a.site.uk

Speaker report

Encounters with gorillas - Ann Barrowclough

Do you remember Guy the gorilla at London zoo in the 1970s? Most of the audience who attended this presentation certainly did. Captive in a concrete cage at only 3 months of age and spent the rest of his life there. This memory was the inspiration for Ann's presentation and what she did next.

In 1985 a primatologist and conservationist Dr. Dian Fossey was found murdered in her cabin at Karisoke, a research site in the mountains of Rwanda. It is believed that she was killed in connection with her lifelong crusade against poaching. The combination of this event and an advertisement in the Coast magazine in 2020 inspired Ann to have an adventure. The advertisement entitled Gorilla Adventure in Uganda 2021 became a dream challenge for Ann and within half an hour she had booked her place on it. There were in fact several challenges facing her; climbing in tropical rainforests, the 'hotel' was in reality a campsite, and other species as in younger, faster and fitter trekkers than herself in the group. She would be 69 at the time. And finally, the cost of £5000. Remember the film 'Born Free'? The charity of the same name works tirelessly to stop the exploitation and suffering of wild animals. Ann had some serious fundraising to do for herself and this charity. If you noticed the year that she booked the trip was during Covid lockdown. She organised fundraising raffles in the village hall at a safe distance. She improved her general fitness by completing a triathlon; 250 miles on a bicycle, 200 miles of walking, 30,000 steps on a climbing machine each day. In 2021 she followed a strict training regime over 6 months. There were delays, cancellations, postponement of the trip to September 2022! Training had to be adjusted and the challenges increased. So, onto the trek itself. She was hoping to see Silver-backed gorillas. Gorillas sleep in nests in trees which can have their own problems when they fall out of them! Fortunately, vets are on hand. Tea plantations are used as a 'soft border' because, allegedly, they don't like tea. That particular day they decided to cross the border...just where Ann was. This group were interested in feeding from a particular tree. The group watched the dominant males and infants getting priority to feed and the others having to wait until

they have finished. Silverbacks have to wait until they are approximately 12 years old before they gain a silver back. They don't drink water, instead they get it from leaves. The movement of gorillas allows the sunshine to reach the undergrowth and promote new growth of vegetation. The Silverback group leader, who was 15 years old, was happy posing for the cameras and so we enjoyed some great photos of him. Did you know that each gorilla has a nose print? This helps with recording censuses and in 2018 gorillas became labelled as endangered instead of critically endangered. This is due to the intensive conservation efforts and anti-poaching patrols. Ann's final photos contrasted Guy in London zoo with a memorial statue of one of Uganda's best known mountain gorillas, Rafiki. In 2020, Rafiki was found dead from a single stab wound. He was said to be 25 years old when he died in the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and was the leader of 17 mountain gorillas. It is illegal to kill gorillas. Four men were arrested and maintained that it was self-defence. One of them was jailed for 11 years. This group of gorillas was described as habituated, meaning that its members were used to human contact. Fortunately, one of the group took on the responsibility of looking after them to the approval of the matriarch. This was so important as a wild Silverback would mean the group would not want to come into contact with humans, which ultimately could affect tourism. An inspiring and educational presentation to everyone's enjoyment!

Bird Group

It was a cold, damp and murky winter's day when 8 of us met at the Nosterfield Reserve. I opted to stay in the hide in the mistaken belief that I would be warm. What would such a morning hold in the way of birds?

We weren't disappointed as there were plenty of water fowl on the lake in front of the hide. In the distance was a peregrine falcon eating its prey, whilst sitting on a fence post. Nearer to us were a flock of lapwings and gulls. On the edge of the water were some shovelers resting and some mallards. A few Canada geese were finding plenty to eat in the shallows and were joined by some greylags. A couple of oystercatchers picked around in the grass as a marsh harrier flew overhead. My favourites were a "gang" of what I thought were garganey (correct me if I'm wrong) which kept coming out of the water to feed then playing "last one in is a sissy" to get back in it again.

The star of the show was a pintail. Even I could tell what it was when it popped its head in the water, sticking its rear up, with the longer tail clearly visible. The handsome male also had a white stripe on the side of his head. The rest of the group walked to another hide to get a closer view, leaving me to watch the resident robin going from post to post along the front of the hide. Whenever we visit Nosterfield he follows us around. We then got in our cars and headed to the quarry, mainly to look for the smew but also to get warm inside the visitor centre and eat our lunch. The smew didn't appear so a disappointment for some. In total 32 different birds were spotted so well worth turning out for.

Our March visit is to Bolton Ponds on the 10th. The weather should be better by then so do come and join us. No prior knowledge of birds is needed as those who know what we are seeing will gladly tell you if you don't

PS. The "gang" of birds in near the hide may have been wigeon after all. Sheila Simms

The Current Affairs Discussion Group met on Friday 7 February to add our thoughts to "The Assisted Dying Debate". We were all broadly in favour of a suitable facility for assisted dying in appropriate circumstances and with suitable safeguards. One point was the impracticality of expecting the High Court to address individual cases in a timely manner and a suggestion was that a panel should be appointed, perhaps chaired by a retired judge, to make the decisions. It was pointed out that many people in deep distress at end of life commit suicide.

The next meeting will be as usual on the first Friday of the month, 7 March at LACC at 2.00pm when we will discuss "Surveillance - Is Big Brother watching us". If time allows, we will then discuss "The developing situation in the USA".

New members are welcome. If you are interested please contact Gerald Hodgson, group convenor,

The Gardens group

Our February meeting was a trip to the beautiful historic church and graveyard at Redmire to admire the display of snowdrops and winter aconites, followed by a short journey to Nappa Hall, where the grounds were carpeted in swathes of snowdrops. We then convened at the Wheatsheaf in Carperby for a warming cup of coffee and to discuss ideas for our March meeting. We are meeting at West Witton village hall at 2pm on March 11th. In keeping with the founding principles of the U3A, each of us is bringing along our favourite gardening book and sharing why we like it, whether as a handy reference or for the simple pleasure of reading.

Below is a photo of the snowdrops in Redmire churchyard



U3a Newsletter contribution

u3a matters Magazine

Many of us have busy lives and often magazines sit around for a while in our house before we get to read them - or occasionally we might not!!

Over a cup of coffee and with a bit of time to spare we actually looked through the latest issue within a day or so of it popping through the door. This month we found several things of interest and

also discovered there are many online u3a events that members can attend for free. Actually some you can also invite a friend for free too.

The following were some of what caught our attention: Page 31 Living Well giving good tips about how to clear the clutter both physical and digital. Page 42 Love in a suitcase;.....and Page 90 Learning Through Life...later-life learning opportunities.

We wondered what topics others found interesting. John Sutton

Strolling Group

Our first walk of the year we walked to Easby Abbey, it was cold but dry. Afterwards had lunch at the station cafe. Our next walk will be meeting at Pinkers pond then a stroll to Coverham Abbey. 12th March, lunch venue still to be decided to see what is open, anyone wishing to join our group you can get in touch with me directly

Hazel



Leyburn and District u3a Laptop Technology Group (Tech Group)

It seems u3a members are less in need of any tech help as the numbers attending the monthly sessions has been gradually reducing. That's no bad thing if it means most people are getting on ok with their laptop, phone etc. Of course some will also have family members who can offer a bit of help too. The main issue for those who run this group is that low attendance doesn't cover the room hire cost so this is something we have had to give careful consideration to. To reflect falling numbers and to help cover room hire whilst still keeping the sessions running, with effect from the next meeting they will run for 90 minutes rather than two hours - 2pm - 3.30pm.

Publishing a Book...

This was a first for the Tech Group. A new Tech Group member has been keen to put down on paper and publish as a book, a record of a year long exciting lifetime travel adventure - something which could then be given to their grandchildren to perhaps inspire them. A considerable amount of time

and energy has already gone into this project - a gradual labour of love for sure, spread across several winters. The bulk of the typing is now done so it's time to look at getting it proof read, locating a publisher leading then to a small number of copies published in hardback form if possible.

Whilst this is clearly not something we have any experience of, it was nice to talk it through and give further encouragement. Since the February meeting and inspired to go to the next level, the member has now made contact with a UK based publishing company and is now much closer to realising her dream!

Creating Folders/Labels in Gmail

Every email provider does things slightly different - or sometimes very differently if it's Gmail! When you want to keep certain emails grouped together in one place, the ideal thing to do is to create a folder that these can be saved in and future ones easily added to. Some email providers make this really easy and you can create a folder using your Phone, Tablet or Computer. Of course not everyone has a PC. For reasons best known to Google, with Gmail they have chosen to make this way more difficult than it should be, and surprisingly there's NO easy option to create a folder (or Label as Google like to call them) using an Android

device. If you do a Google search you'll find numerous posts over the years about this crazy situation - Google say you can only do it on a computer. Crazy!

However, never say never. After much soul searching, the following day we came up with a workaround which will allow you to create, amend or delete a Label (folder) in Gmail using an Android Phone or Tablet. If you use Gmail and don't have a Computer or want to know how to do it on your android phone/tablet, come along to the next Tech session and we'll show you.

New Wallpaper!

Once upon a time wallpaper was as the name suggests, something you put on a wall. Fancy that!! and a tablet was something you swallowed to feel better! Today the term Wallpaper is commonly applied to the background image chosen on your phone, tablet or computer. You can choose from a multitude of designs for such backgrounds and your chosen wallpaper can also be a favourite photo that you've taken or had sent to you. This is what one member needed some help with and happily it was easily achieved.

A FREE Alternative to Microsoft 365 Software - Libre Office

There are various alternatives to paying a monthly or yearly subscription for Microsoft 365 office software. Many Laptops come bundled with a 'Free' trial period in the hope you'll then subscribe. Libre Office is a popular and FREE to use trusted alternative.

We can all be creatures of habit and stick with what we know - it takes time to adjust to a new way of doing things, but for a casual user and especially if you'd like to save money, then it's definitely worth giving Libre Office a try. If you're unsure how to go about downloading it, or you have done but need some guidance, come along to one of our monthly sessions.

One member did just that as she wanted to know how to create a pdf using Libre Office, which we were able to explain. Like most things, it's easy when you know how.

Here to help you

Leyburn & District



The u3a Tech' Group aims to provide basic help and assistance in a safe, friendly and welcoming environment. The ethos of u3a is all about mutual learning and we look to give advice and information that helps the member to solve their own tech problem wherever possible, so that if a similar issue occurs again they know what to do and may even be able to help someone else who has the same problem. Nothing beats that satisfying feeling of having solved a problem yourself - ok with the help of Google occasionally.

Feel free to email either myself (John), Christine or Sue if you'd like to attend or to be added to the meeting email list.

Next Meeting...

We meet on the third Monday of each month. The next meeting is on Monday 17th March 2025. Meetings take place 2pm - 3.30pm at Leyburn Arts & Community Centre. £2 per member which helps cover room hire. Coffee and Tea are available for a small charge of just £1. Non u3a Members can attend up to two sessions before deciding whether to take up u3a membership so feel free to bring a friend.

And finally!

If you are coming to a session, please bring your device and any connecting lead or charger AND most importantly have available any password related to it or to your query. We look forward to welcoming you.