

Newsletter May 2025

COMMITTEE

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

Chair report

Welcome to May's newsletter... not June's! 😊

We are in our tenth year at Leyburn and District u3a and in July, at the Speaker meeting, we will be celebrating in style with cake and music. We're not alone, as Beccles u3a in Suffolk and Collingham and district u3a in Nottinghamshire are also celebrating ten years.

We have many interest groups in Leyburn u3a, one of which is Spanish. The current Spanish group would like to expand so if you have a moderate level of Spanish and wish to keep it going then let the convenor, Melanie Geldeart know by accessing the fantastic new website. It meets on Mondays, 09.45 am at TOSH in Leyburn.

I mentioned before that Marrick Priory invited us for afternoon tea and a tour in June. Unfortunately, this has to be postponed until either Wednesday 6th August or Wednesday 20th August as they now have a school booking.

Finally... you know what's coming. Yes, it's the AGM on Friday May 16th at 10am for 10.30. So please complete nomination forms in order to have a full committee for the coming year. We're looking for a secretary, membership secretary, groups coordinator and speaker secretary. That's a lot of secretaries!

June

ANCIENT GREECE GROUP

CONVENOR : STUART LENNIE

How many of you have recently enjoyed on the television Professor Alice Robert's excursion around Greece, in which she visited Athens, Delphi, Ephesus and Corinth and a few lesser sites. Well, here's your chance to learn more about the civilisation of Ancient Greece by coming along to the Ancient Greece Group.

Group sessions cover many aspects of this wonderful ancient civilisation such as history, philosophy, politics, drama, art, ceramics and architecture. Take part in the discussions or if you prefer it just sit and listen. Each 2 hourly session deals with a specific aspect of Ancient Greece. May I stress that no previous knowledge of Ancient Greece is needed to enjoy these sessions.

We meet on the first and last Fridays of the month at LACC between 10 and 12.

Why not just come along and sit in on a session to see if you like the format? The next 3 sessions are on the 2nd of May, 30th May and June 27th. For more information, email website .

u3a Litter Picking Group

the next session is May 14th at 2.00pm, meet opposite the Parish Church.

Please bring your own gloves. Rose

DIY Group

After 9 years, the beginners DIY Group ceased to operate. Its numbers have fluctuated as members have joined and left. I like to think that everyone has enjoyed the sessions and picked up a few skills

We have made everything from Xmas items to garden trugs. All good things come to an end!

Leslie Kinsman

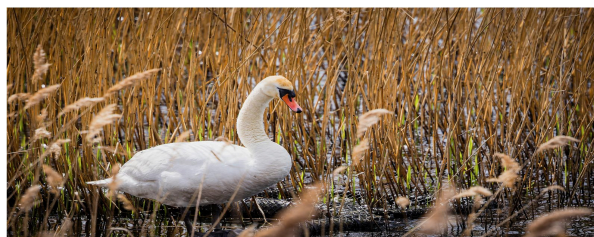
Convenor

U3A Bird Group Report Fairburn Ings April 2025

This highly regarded RSPB reserve near Castleford is just under an hour's drive from Leyburn and has an amazing reputation for its avian biodiversity due to its location on migration routes and diverse habitats. Just collecting my car parking ticket provided a wonderful sighting of a Willow Warbler at close quarters singing its heart out. An Avocet (the poster bird of the RSPB) also made an appearance on the margins of the reed beds surrounding the Main Bay Lake. The day certainly got off to a good start!



Following the well signposted paths, we saw a stationary Heron poised to catch fish in the River Aire from behind a wooden screen. It was lovely to share this sight with some keen youngsters on their Easter holidays. Moving further round, we were treated to a panoramic view of this former coal mining area. Although a tad windy, a Cettis warbler's lovely musical call filled the air. A Green Woodpecker was also heard amongst the willow scrublands; the soil here is rich in ants which make up a large portion of this bird's diet. The woodpecker has adapted to this dietary preference with a long, sticky tongue and powerful beak- perfect for excavating nests. They can consume two thousand ants per day!



Seeking shelter from the wind, we moved to get a closer look at Fairburn's resident Spoonbills. These wonderfully distinct birds were nesting in a rather tricky to spot to locate

on the far side of the lake. However, patience was rewarded with a great view of the Spoonbills enjoying a mid-day feeding session after a long morning of nest sitting. Sporting their summer plumage, the adults had a distinctive yellow tip to their spoon-shaped bill and the crest plumes make this a very attractive bird. Our group were fortunate to have Max and Richard who accompanied us with their high magnification scopes enabling us to see these beautiful birds so clearly. Spoonbills tend to breed in mixed colonies, alongside herons and inland-breeding Cormorants. The latter having rather taken hold of this part of the reserve and their guano (droppings) made the trees have a ghostly white appearance. Tony, one of the RSPB rangers who patrols the site helping visitors getting the most of their time on the reserve, informed us that last year there were 155 Cormorant nests recorded with 300+ fledglings. It is the largest Cormorant colony in the UK; in fact, they now have a project to attract some of the colony to St Aidan's RSPB reserve, so Fairburn Ings is not overrun by these very distinctive and prolific fish feeders. Spoonbills were recorded as having 17 nests with 31-27 fledglings last year. So, fingers crossed for another successful breeding season. Unfortunately, the wind made the booming Bitten (well hidden amongst the reedbeds) even harder to hear, but fragments of its distinctive call were heard by our group.

Turning our binoculars to another of the lakes we were treated to view of a very handsome Black Necked Grebe, resplendent with his black crest and ginger feathers and red eye glinting beautifully in the sunshine. This bird is another success for the RSPB being on the "amber" list - meaning moderate concern among experts; a surge in breeding pairs of Black-necked grebes last year, with 30% of the UK population living at nearby St Aidan's RSPB reserve. Our group then retraced our steps and headed for the Bob Dicken Hide to see a variety of birds including a large colony of twelve Avocets, a pair of Oyster Catchers, a variety of ducks including Golden Eye. A total of 43 bird species were recorded so making this a rewarding and memorable visit.

Our next trip is on Monday 9th June to RSPB Bempton Cliffs Nature Reserve. New members warmly welcomed. Images courtesy of Colin Fieldgate .

Croquet Report

Four croquet players met in West Witton on Thursday morning at 10.30 and welcomed a new lady. We shall play every Thursday weather permitting and the grass is being mowed by the PCC every Wednesday.

New players and beginners welcome

Contact Mary Sadler

GARDen GROUP

Our April meeting was at Constable Burton on Palm Sunday afternoon. By the honesty box to pay for your entrance, there is a box containing a handy guide to the gardens. Despite being fairly late in the season, there were still plenty of daffodils to admire as well as some early tulips, flowering shrubs and perennials.

Our next trip is to see the recently refurbished garden at Raby Castle on May 6th. Please meet in the car park of Raby Castle at 11am. Please contact me by email if you need a lift, and we can arrange for someone to pick you up in LACC car park at 10am