



Newsletter September 25

COMMITTEE

June Keeler Chair		Trevor Pitt Treasurer	
Melanie Geldeart Groups Coordinator		Mary Sadler Speaker Secretary	
Sue Mellish Membership Secretary		Sheila Simms Minutes Secretary	

Chair's report

Welcome to the September newsletter .

I hope you have enjoyed the summer and found plenty to do. We are still in the throes of transferring our bank account from the Yorkshire Building society to the Coop. It's proving to be very time-consuming and stressful particularly for our treasurer and the signatories. We will keep you updated.

Melanie Geldeart, Groups Coordinator will be contacting convenors to have a meeting in the near future. You may have noticed that on recent Speaker meeting days the back of the function room is adorned with u3a bunting and information. You should also have received an invitation to learn about Beacon. By the time you read this, this will have happened and I'll report back to you in the next newsletter or possibly via email. Please ensure that your contact details are up to date. Our membership is currently at 204. Please spread the word about how much fun Leyburn & District u3a is!

Monthly Meeting

Lady Isobel Chaytor – pioneering aviatrix

By Georgie Sale

Friday 19 September 2025

Discover how a random hit on eBay led to revealing the fascinating story of a woman who lived life to the full.

Isobel, a baker's daughter, became a 'Lady', the mother of 4 and at the age of 42 flew with a young pilot in a Gypsy Moth to Australia. As a titled lady she threw herself into the society of 'bright young things', became a fashion icon and an aviatrix.

Born in Middlesbrough in 1890, she died in Funchal, Madeira in 1968 where only two people attended her funeral. How did this woman with ' a genius for friendship', come to such a sad end – the research goes on.

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 www.leyburn.u3asite.uk

Speaker report

Famous for 12 minutes? - Malcolm Johnson

We welcomed the return of our speaker this month who shared his story of a reality TV experience with us.

The show was called The Undriveables which encouraged failed drivers to give themselves a second chance. Malcolm's story started on 30th May 2014 when he was enjoying a game of 10 Pin Bowling. At the age of 65 he still couldn't drive despite an attempt to when he was in his twenties. Angela, his wife had always been the chauffeur. He had never driven and drank and she had never drank and driven. At the age of 42, on his daughter's 17th birthday she passed her test and bought a car. His history of driving was that he'd had 50 lessons, didn't take a test and had had 3 instructors. He used public transport to travel to work which involved two trains and then running for 6 miles from the station and back; good practice for the London Marathon.

Angela, one day, asked him the question, 'Do you regret not driving at 65?' At the same time a friend made him aware of a new reality TV programme called the Undriveables. The producers were looking for young people but he applied anyway. It was a 1000 to 1 chance that he would be accepted. There was the questionnaire of course and he needed to pass a Theory test. 'Shine TV' were the company and who also are involved with Masterchef. On 18th June he attended a Skype interview to gauge his suitability for TV. On 25th June he was observed and filmed driving a car for 20 minutes on an estate. This would lead to a week's driving instruction but first he had to pass the Theory test. He did with flying colours, in fact, enough to become a driving instructor! On 4th July a contract of 6 pages was signed and a £1 fee. On 8th July they began to film the backstory of his life. On 20th more filming took place in Liverpool of his driving lessons. On 25th July he would take the driving test. In spite of friends trying to persuade him to break the Confidentiality agreement and share the result, he kept it to himself. On 15th September at 8pm the programme was transmitted. Many hours of video produced 12 minutes of screen-time. He was the only one of 12 in the series who... passed! He acknowledged his wonderful instructor, Ursula who had an 87% pass rate with new drivers.

Did he become famous? Nationally, no. On radio, yes, slightly. Did he drive to Leyburn u3a that day? No, they were in Angela's car!

CURRENT AFFAIRS DISCUSSION GROUP.

Eight of us met on 5 September to debate "How are all the people of the world to be fed with a growing population and climate change? How do we relate this to the UK?"

A wide ranging discussion followed, ranging from alternative methods of growing food to the realisation that we tend to eat too much and the population was very healthy on war time rationing. Our next meeting will be on Friday 3 October, 2pm at LACC when we will discuss "Standards in Public life." U3A members interested in the group are asked to contact Gerald Hodgson

Groups - Travel Expenses

I am in the process of updating the Group Convenor's Guidelines. One of the guidelines involves travelling with other members and the sharing of the costs between the driver and passengers. In 2018 it was decided that members would pay 25p per mile to the driver to cover costs. Do you think this is still the appropriate amount and what if the car used is electric? Contact Melanie Groups' Co-ordinator

'Start a Stitch'

This is a proposed new group for our U3A to enable members to learn or improve the same stitch technique.

The first meeting will be held on Wednesday October 8th in The Garden Room, Burlledge, Wensley Road, Leyburn to discuss details.

Jan Bell will coordinate the group, please contact her Jan

Garden Group Report

I write following a very successful trip to Beningbrough Hall on the 2nd September. The weather was perfect for enjoying the gardens, both the traditional herbaceous borders and the new Mediterranean garden designed by award winning designer Andy Sturgeon.

The gardens of Jervaulx Hall are open for the National Gardens Scheme on Wednesday 17th September. They are well worth seeing.

There has not been a very positive response to the proposed vineyard tour at Yorkshire Heart Gardens, so I am considering visiting Ripon Walled Garden instead. They are celebrating their ancient orchard with an Apple Day on Saturday 4th October. There should still be plenty of interest if we visit on the following Tuesday 7th October.

Ballet - Gentle ballet classes designed for those over 50.

This new group is going to start on **Tuesday 9th September 10.45-11.45 at LACC**

Improve flexibility. Boost your strength and coordination. Enjoy low-impact, mindful movement. Make new friends in a relaxed social setting.

Contact Janet for information or to book your place.

Spanish 2

Complete Beginners Group. Are you planning a holiday in Spain? Have you got Spanish speaking family or friends? Or would you like to give your brain a little exercise learning a language? Emphasis will be on speaking, listening, with a little grammar, reading and writing. This class begins on **Monday 15th September 11.30 - 12.30 at LACC.**

Contact Mavis for further information or to book your place.

Leyburn & District u3a Laptop & Technology Group (Tech Group)

The attendance levels at our Tech Group sessions has been reducing significantly with each passing month this year, as has been mentioned in previous newsletter reports. Last month saw only one member requiring assistance.

Whilst we as convenors are happy to continue hosting these sessions, we do need to cover the cost of room hire, which low attendance levels sadly means is not happening.

A decision on whether to hold a meeting in September is pending but current group members will be informed by email nearer the time.

Myself (John), Christine and Sue will be meeting up soon to discuss this and to also give consideration to any other options that might allow us to continue offering tech support in some form. An update on this will appear in the October newsletter and current group members will be kept informed by email.

U3A Bird Group Report South Gare

This month our group headed to the coast which seemed perfect timing given the weather reports of another approaching heatwave. South Gare is an area of reclaimed land and breakwater on the southern side of the mouth of the River Tees in Redcar. The land is made from thousands of tons of basic slag from blast furnaces. The high limestone content of the slag produces a base rich soil that is attractive to lime loving plants. The area has changed dramatically since our last outing with the steel blast furnaces now completely dismantled and levelled to the ground. The area is under redevelopment and new skyline will emerge on the Teesworks site as construction ramps up on new investments like Net Zero Teesside and SeAH Wind's offshore wind monopile facility. South Gare consists of tidal mudflats, scrub, grassland, sand dunes, rocks and freshwater and saltwater pools, and attracts a very wide range of birds. It has been designated a SSSI since 1971 and we were all looking forward to seeing a variety of wading birds.

After parking up, we noticed that the tide was out exposing a vast expanse of sand and mudflats; we headed to the area near the headland and lighthouse along a wooden boardwalk onto the pebble shoreline. A deserted expanse of beautiful beach with Redcar and Saltburn further down the coastline stretched out before us. With the low tide we were able to get really close to the sea birds enjoying a feast of sand eels. Gannets, of all ages, were showing off their amazing diving skills amongst a raft of Guillemots. The adults were sporting black tips to their enormous wingspan ranging from 1.65 to 1.80 m (approximately 5.4 to 6 feet). Along the mudflats we had an amazing encounter with a Ringed Plover parent who was desperately trying to locate its wayward youngster who was playing amongst the pebbles; so brilliantly camouflaged it avoided being spotted by the predatory Gulls that were very territorial and aggressive to other birdlife.

The advantage of going bird watching with a group is that expertise can be pooled and we were lucky to spot a solitary Curlew Sandpiper.



Chatting to members of the Teesmouth Bird Club, who are regulars to this spot, helped us confirm our identification of Sandwich and Common Terns. The wooden piers provided great sunbathing spots for Cormorants as the shoreline became popular with locals searching out cockles on the pristine beach and rockpools.

On returning to the quayside for lunch, a trio of Linnets were spotted flitting amongst the grassy sand dunes - these were quite small, dark brown birds, with the males having a blush-coloured breast. A fisherman reported that once the tide had come in, they were off to catch mackerel which seemed a great way to spend the afternoon. We then headed further down the mouth of the estuary, admiring the array of huge ships entering and exiting Teesport, including a bright green dredging vessel that maintain this deep-water port. A flock of Oystercatchers were enjoying feeding on this stretch unhindered by any Lesser Black-backed



Gulls, alongside a Ruff and Godwit expertly spotted with Richard's scope. A total 27 species were recorded on this very warm, humid day. On returning to the car, we noticed a lady with bag of litter which she had collected. I commented how clean and litter free the area was, and she informed us that every Saturday the South Gare Litter Pickers patrol the area and regularly collect 20 bags of litter! We thanked her for all their hard work in keeping this special area safe for the birdlife and visitors alike. Many thanks to Liz A for leading the group and Richard carrying his scope on such a hot day up and down the shoreline.

Next Meeting: Monday 13 th October Ripon Wetlands at 10.00 am. New members are always warmly welcomed.

Images courtesy of C.Fieldgate