



FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to April's newsletter !

A big thank you to all of you who have so far renewed your membership. Our new system called Beacon seems to be working well. Remember when paying by BACS to complete the renewal form and check that your personal contact details are up to date. If you decide not to renew could you please inform the membership secretary as there is a fee to pay to the national u3a for every single member recorded.

We are getting nearer to the AGM which takes place on Friday May 15th, 10am for a 10.30 start at Leyburn Arts and Community Centre (LAACS).

Refreshments available. This will be followed, unusually by a speaker. Lyn Ward is a local artist based in Leyburn. There are vacancies on the committee and further down in this newsletter are more details of them.

June

**Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital and
the Hallelujah Chorus**

by Joanne Aston

Friday 17 April 2026 at 10.30

Leyburn Arts and Community Centre

Discover the link between Handel's Hallelujah Chorus and a historic institution for abandoned children. Retired sea captain Thomas Coram established the Foundling Hospital in 1739, to help deal with London's growing number of abandoned babies. Joanne's talk sets out this history and includes case stories both successful and tragic.



After retiring in 2008, Joanne completed an MA in Classical Studies (Leeds); before walking the 500 mile Camino to Santiago de Compostela. She now gives talks on this experience and other subjects reflecting her interests, studies and travels. She lives in Thirsk with husband John and cat Pea.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following vacancies have arisen and below is a resume of each role's duties;

Business secretary; this role supports the work of the Chairperson dealing with correspondence from the national u3a or general enquiries from members of the public/u3a. It requires some basic I.T. skills such as emails, preparing agendas for committee meetings, taking minutes at meetings, and booking venues for speaker meetings. The committee has divided this role up in the 3 year absence of a secretary.

Groups Coordinator; liaises with group convenors, updates groups information and displays this in the meeting room before the start of a speaker meeting. This information is now on our Beacon platform and so requires some basic I.T. Your current Groups Coordinator says – "I was happy to stand in to do this role for the year as it is one of the easier ones to do. It has been made easier now with the introduction of Beacon which I did not find it difficult to use. I feel sure we will find this system very useful in the future. All group information is now on Beacon and all paperwork is up to date and in place. I would be happy to talk to anybody who is interested and assist anyone who takes it on when the new year begins. Go on give it a go!

Perhaps you would be prepared to do it for one year. A year passes quickly."

Membership secretary ; this role is crucial to the continuation of Leyburn and District u3a and now uses the new platform called Beacon. Our current secretary says " The position has been streamlined and from now onwards the time taken per month is minimal. So if you have a little spare time and basic computer skills please give some thought to helping to keep your u3a running smoothly. Thank you". Training is provided.

Proposal forms will accompany the agenda to the forthcoming AGM via email. Please give some thought as to how these roles can be filled.

Members of our U3A, Start a Stitch group have been busy working on and completing their sampler of infill Blackwork patterns for use in future projects.

The next project could include the use of variegated coloured thread to give a different effect. The stylized picture of an autumn oak leaf is an example of this.



Our next meetings are on Wed April 1 and Wed April 15, 2-4pm.
Jan Bell

Gardens group

Our March meeting is a visit to Clifton Castle which is open under the National Garden Scheme this on the afternoon of March 29th.

On April 14th we will be visiting Northdale Nursery in Northallerton. Northdale is a charity which provides horticultural training, work and leisure activities for local adults with learning disabilities. From there we will continue to Strikes Garden Centre to attend a demonstration on creating a hanging basket. After Strikes, there is an optional extra trip to Mount Grace Priory in the afternoon.

All 14 seats in the minibus trip to Yews Garden and Blackwell in Bowness have now been taken. A waiting list has been opened for seats vacated by anyone who needs to cancel before the payment deadline of 1st July 2026.

Croquet

We are hoping to start playing croquet again on Thursday April 30th at 10.30 on the Mill Dam, opposite the Wensleydale Heifer in West Witton. Playing weekly weather permitting. But we do need more people to play regularly to make it viable. Please contact Mary Sadler 07516544744 if you would like to play. Beginners welcome, we play a simple version and pay £2.00 every week up front, which pays for the cutting of the grass. Nice gentle exercise! Lifts available from Leyburn.

We have the equipment but If any of you have played with us in the past and still have mallets and balls please return them to Mary.

Thank you
Mary

Current Affairs Discussion Group.

Our meeting on 6 March was scheduled to discuss "Cancel Culture" but in view of the USA and Israeli invasion of Iran, we discussed the implications of that instead. We noted that the US stated objective of the invasion kept changing. Also that there seemed to be no plan for the aftermath of the conflict. Trumps motives were questionable, particularly as had stated that the Iranian nuclear threat had been eliminated months ago. A wide range of unintended consequences had resulted and an early end to the conflict was very unlikely. The first Friday in April is Good Friday so we will meet instead on Friday 10 April at LACC at 2pm when our topics will be "Cancel Culture" and "Crypto Currencies".

Litter picking group

The group will be out as usual on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, which will be April 8th at 2.00pm.

Meet at the Market Store near the Fire Station for equipment.

Please bring your own gloves and help keep Leyburn clear of Litter. Rose

U3A Bird Group Trip to Low Barns Nature Reserve



This month the U3A bird group ventured a little further North to Witton le Wear home to Low Barns Wildlife Reserve (DL14 0AY) under the management of Durham Wildlife trust. This SSSI site was a mixture of woodland and species rich grassland centred around a wetland reserve.

A circular, flat accessible walk takes in a series of viewing points.



Our first stop was filled with some beautiful Nuthatch, Willow, Great and Blue Tits enjoying their bird feeder feast as was a mouse gorging itself on an apple below!





The path then took us alongside the Alder Wood which was once a channel of the Wear. However, in 1771 the river dramatically shifted its course in a great flood. The Alder tree is a pioneer species and as such this wet woodland makes Low Barns a wildlife gem. Song thrush and the sound of the distinctive "laugh" or Yaffle of the Green Woodpecker filled the area along with Wrens, Dunnock and Long Tailed Tits.

The centrally located Marston Lake was home to a wide variety of ducks including Golden Eye, a winter visitor who had yet to depart. Lapwing and Oystercatchers and Tufted Duck, Little Grebe and Pochard were enjoying the weak sunshine.

Further hide viewing points were explored, one of which provided a superb view of Reed Bunting, Chaffinch and even more Nuthatch who showed off their tree climbing skills to great effect.

Winding our way back to the visitor centre (café and toilet facilities available), we took the Reed Bed boardwalk path which was alive with frog calls, and we also caught sight of a stoat running along with reserve boundary.

Our group thoroughly recommend this reserve for the whole family and Durham WT volunteers have made the spacious hides attractive and hugely informative. Thanks to Liz for leading and Richard for carrying his scope for close viewing of some of the 32 species observed.

The next visit will be to Redmire Moor 11 th May. New members are warmly welcomed.

SPEAKER REPORT

What Inspires Art? — Kevin Byron

Another well-attended audience learned that there is a process to being creative; Substitute; where parts or materials are substituted, for example, the airbus A350 whose wings material were changed .

Combine; where ideas and functions are brought together such as the Printing Press when Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century, combined a coin punch with a wine press

Adapt; the massive radar dish was scaled down in size and adapted to produce a microwave oven.

Modify; involves scaling up/down/duplicate/multiply, for example in Sweden they are building houses using 3D printers and an industrial Cyclone Dust extractor on the outside of a factory was modified into a Dyson vacuum cleaner.

Put to other uses; the thistle-like flower heads of the Burdock plant that cling onto animals fur were transformed into Velcro material.

Eliminate; the fine spray of the Swiss Eco water tap was created to eliminate surplus water in areas where water is scarce.

Reverse; inverted/opposite ideas such as the Lloyd building in London where the



design is 'inside out'.

This was a fascinating presentation and we look forward to another one of Kevin's entitled Geometry in Art and Ornament.

Active Groups

Ancient Greece Dry Stone Walling Spanish GCSE
Art Appreciation Gardening / Visits Start a Stitch
Birds Litter Picking Ukule
Book Group Science Walk and Talk
Croquet Spanish Beginners

For further information go on the website