



Contact us: tel 07561 626690

Website: <https://berwick-upon-tweed.u3asite.uk/>

Welcome to your Newsletter for May 2025

Remarks from the Chair

Hello all! We are definitely on the map! In the u3a magazine (u3a Matters, Spring 2025 edition) there are THREE articles about our u3a and members. You can read it [here](#). Firstly our member Hilary O'Shea (who is our Speakers' Secretary) has an article all about her achievements as a Park Run participant, celebrating her 100 runs. What an achievement- well done Hilary! There is also an article about our Founding Father and national u3a specialist on Geography, Jeff Armstrong. Thank you for your dedication to the u3a Jeff! Finally our Publicity Officer, Phil Ravetta, has written an article about our 20th anniversary celebrations.

You can also **renew your subs** for 2025-2026 NOW. You can pay by cash, card or cheque at an Open Meeting; you can also renew via the website using Paypal- we have added some simple instructions to help you with this on the payments web page.

Our **Open Meeting** on Monday 12th May will combine with our AGM and will be at the Wm Elder Building on Castlegate. Simon Wright, our Wildlife group leader, will be our speaker- 'For Peat's Sake...' Peatlands are regularly in the headlines, due to increasing realisation of their importance to help combat climate change.



Working for the National Trust, Simon was heavily involved in early work on restoration of degraded blanket bogs. Over the last 30 years this work has been developed and refined and is now being used everywhere from Southwest to the Flow country to repair damaged habitats. Please join us for this fascinating insight! And pay your subs at the same time.

On to other news. The new group **Petanque** has had its first meeting. For more information please contact Janice Bowden (treasurer@berwicku3a.org)

Committee news: the committee is looking for new members. If you have a little time on your hands please do think about joining us, we are a very friendly and informal bunch dedicated to making our u3a the best it can be! To be frank, our u3a cannot continue

without new committee members, WE NEED YOU! For more information please contact myself (chair@berwicku3a.org).

The committee are now starting to plan for our new year. Members' Morning will be on Monday 1st September, at the Wm Elder Building. This is an opportunity for you to meet group leaders and sign up for groups.

As our u3a continues to grow we need more groups- if you have an interest you would like to share please contact Helen, Group Coordinator (helen@berwicku3a.org). There is A LOT of support for new group leaders so please be reassured the committee and fellow group leaders are here for you. We are also keen to explore a more devolved leadership model where several members in a group share responsibilities.

Thank you all for being a member of our wonderful organisation, I hope you enjoy your 'live, laugh, learn' journey with us this month! Rowena

North Northumberland u3a

Northumbria u3a Events Team in association with Durham University

September 2025 is the last year when Durham University Archaeological Department will be excavating the site on Holy Island, which u3a members visited in September 2024. This is your final chance to be shown around the site by Dr. David Petts of Durham University and visit the 'finds' store which show the items uncovered during the dig.

Date: Saturday September 27th 2025.

Time: 11am

Place: Meeting Dr. David Petts at the Market Cross, which is not far from the excavation site.

This event is free!

To register please contact Cecilia Coulson email: cecu3a@gmail.com

National u3a

As always there are some good [online learning events](#)- here is a selection:



Turner and Impressionism

This illustrated talk looks at the life and work of British landscape painter, JMW Turner. In 2025 we celebrate the 250th Anniversary of his birth.

Thursday 8 May at 10am

Free – online via Zoom

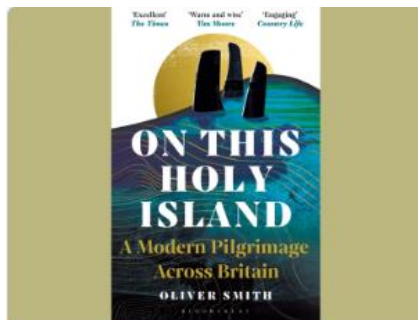


From the Soviet Gulag to Arnhem

Trapped behind Nazi lines in Europe, only the Dutch underground might help him escape. Stan's grandson and author Nicholas Kinloch tells his story.

Thursday 15 May at 10am

Free – online via Zoom



On This Holy Island

Join Oliver Smith, author of the book 'On This Holy Island' as he discusses how pilgrimage has shaped Britain across time.

Monday 19 May at 2pm

Free – online via Zoom

Click on the picture for more details. Please book online via Eventbrite through the u3a website.

Group Coordinator: Helen Atkinson

Notice for Group Leaders: the next Group Leaders meeting will be on **Monday 28th April 10-12noon** at the Wm Elder Building.

We are exploring the idea of a new group **'Sunday Socials'** where members can get together for chat and food, maybe a soup and sandwich or Sunday lunch at a local pub. If you would be interested in this please let me know: helen@berwicku3a.org

Badminton Group is looking for new members- please see more below, and a new group leader(s) is required for Art Appreciation. Please contact Lesley Angel for more information.

Open Meeting Monday 7th April: Stained Glass by Annie Robinson

We had another record attendance for Annie Robinson's amazing and beautifully illustrated talk on the history of stained glass, which ranged from glass beads in Mesopotamia 4000 years ago to modern works of art much closer to home in Berwick. She explained that the 'stain' is applied to the back of glass and that the panel is held together with lead. There is a very ancient example in Jarrow which dates to the seventh century. By the seventeenth century Ouseburn was a thriving centre of production under the Tyzack family. Two hundred years later, William Wailes of Gateshead and his team were creating one church window per week. Here in Berwick, the Wilson family ran a business in Bridge Street, and the Lamb family traded from Church Street and Woolmarket. Outstanding modern examples of stained glass have been produced by Simon Harvey (now based in Morpeth). There is also a stained-glass display company that manufactures frames in Wooler. Annie is compiling a register of all the stained glass in Berwick, whether in churches, hotels, pubs, halls or houses. Two prominent examples are the panels by Linda Gibbons at the Visitor Centre and by Julia Davies in the railway station waiting room. Annie also makes wonderful pieces herself as an inspiring hobby.

Hilary O'Shea



Berwick U3a Jigsaw Library

We will bring along another selection of jigsaws for members to borrow at the meeting on the 12th May.

This month's theme is 'The Best of British'.

Please return any completed jigsaws to us. Many thanks

Graham and Cathy

News from our groups

French Improvers

This group has evolved to offer more structured learning than I had originally planned, with an emphasis on communication, pronunciation and grammar. Our motto could well be "reculer pour mieux sauter", as we have gone back to basics to provide a sound foundation for dealing with practical, transactional situations and simple, personal exchanges. It is a small, informal and very friendly group of mixed ability learners, where members with some knowledge of the language are supportive of those with less experience. In order to achieve our goals, we have used a textbook, PowerPoint presentations, audio clips, reading passages and many games and quizzes. The workload has been lightened by a lot of fun and laughter. Successful learning should be a pleasure, and hopefully this has been the case for everyone involved.

Barbara Russell

Wine Group

The Wine Group met at Angus and Sophie Hamilton's home at the end of March. Angus presented 4 English white wines and 4 Mediterranean reds. This included a sparkling white produced for an anniversary of Angus' former school. We discussed the difference between English and British wines. Wikipedia states: "The term British wine is used to describe a drink made in Britain by the fermentation of grape (or any other fruit) juice or concentrate originating from anywhere in the world. It cannot be used for wine in the legal sense, which must be produced from freshly pressed grapes." The most common English wines are sparkling.

The Mediterranean reds came from 3 continents – Europe, Asia and Africa.

Angus and Sophie made us all feel comfortable and kindly provided crackers and water to cleanse the palate between tastes. Thank you very much. The April meeting is fully booked because numbers are limited.

On 15th May, the group will be going to Majestic on North Road to sample North American wines. We are looking forward to benefiting from the manager's expertise. He was very knowledgeable and personable when we went last year. If anyone is interested and isn't on the current group mailing list, please contact me to see whether there's space.

Anne Berry

Ride & Stride

After last month's walk through the grounds of Ayton Castle, eventually finishing in Eyemouth, the next walk is of 6.5 miles on Friday 25th April from Branxton to Cornhill, taking in the Flodden Battlefield Trail. Bus 09.00 from Berwick Railway Street, or 09.03 Golden Square, route 266 to Branxton.

Following that, there will be a 6.6 mile walk on Friday 30th May from Tillmouth Park Hotel to Norham via Twizel Viaduct. Bus 10.05 from Berwick Rail Station, or 10.10 Golden Square, route 67 to Tillmouth Park Hotel. Return from Norham at 14.05.

Please let me know if you'd like to join us.

Derrick Joanes

Berwick U3A Tuesday Geology group

The final Tuesday geology group session will take place on Tuesday May 13th at 10.00 – 11.30 at St Aidan's Small Hall, as usual. There will be no charge.

The topic is 'Glaciation', with a particular look at how ice-sheets have influenced the landscapes and soils of the Berwickshire and north Northumberland areas. The last ice sheet in this area melted between 15,000 – 12,000 years ago, so imagine this area at that time as present-day Iceland, but without the black sands. As temperatures increased and vegetation colonised the clays and sands deposited as the ice melted, this area was left with fertile agricultural soils which led to Berwick's economic growth in early medieval times. You can see a layer of reddish glacial till on top of the cliffs around Berwick and many of you will garden on clay and pebbly soils.

There will be an outing to Killiedraughts Bay on the morning of Friday 6th June, to look at the junction of the Eyemouth volcano with ancient red sandstones. There is a walk of about half a mile from Eyemouth to reach the shore and it is well within the capability of many of you, so you are very welcome. Full details will follow during May. The first meeting of next season will be on Tuesday 9th September.

Alison Tymon

Wildlife group

Walk on 16th April: The forecast was better for our time window, so we went ahead on our walk up the coast at Magdalene Fields.

In windy but dry conditions, four of us had an enjoyable and productive walk, culminating in a distant view of the promontory at Needles Eye.



There were significant numbers of breeding seabirds; tightly packed rows of guillemots, slightly wider spaced kittiwakes and the more aloof razorbills and fulmars. Total bird species count was fifteen.

This was all framed by a good display of primroses and some early signs of sea pink (thrift). Many trees were coming to life, (including one I should have known but had to identify at home!), Goat Willow.

Our next walk on the 21st May will be at Cocklawburn, where the very varied topography has a good mix of plants, in addition to interesting history, geology and good views out to sea.

Simon Wright

Petanque

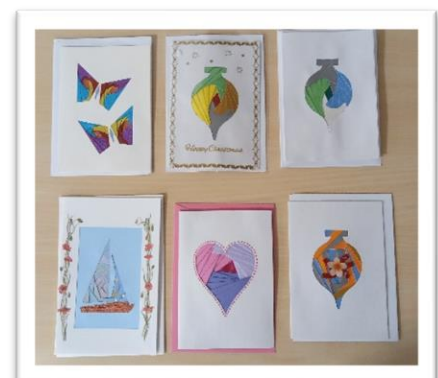
The Berwick U3A Petanque group met up for the first time on Thursday April 3 in Seafield Park, Spittal. About a dozen of us, all of us learners, agreed that the park, although not ideal, would certainly be OK provided the grass is cut on a regular basis! We agreed on the 1st Thursday each month, 2-4. Today April 17th, a few were away for Easter but 9 of us had an entertaining practice run. Our session was curtailed by hail and rain - but it was fun! We meet again Thursday May 1st, 2-4. New members very welcome. No knowledge of petanque necessary nor sets of boules. Just turn up and have fun!

Paula Browning

Busy Bees Crafts

The April meeting was well attended. Members brought their completed iris folding card and the coconut shell birds nest challenge. Several members started the stitched card project of either daffodils or a chick. Please bring to show at the next meeting. The next meeting will be on the 9th of May where making a gift bag will be demonstrated and members can take part, materials will be provided. There should be plenty of time to work on own project too.

Best wishes Theresa



Word Games

This month's session was great fun as usual, starting off with a quiz based on Cockney rhyming slang. We also had a challenge with words that sounded the same, but had very different meanings, and equally different spellings. There were also crosswords, word ladders, and the all-important tea and coffee with biscuits.

There will be a May Day challenge on the 5th.

Kay Gardiner

Badminton Group

Badminton is the most popular racket sport in the UK and is accessible and enjoyable for everyone. It can help to improve coordination, agility and speed across all age groups and is excellent for overall body health. Badminton can also help increase strength and flexibility. On top of all that, it's a lot of fun!

The Berwick U3A Badminton Group is a friendly bunch of players of mixed abilities, some have played for many years and some have taken up, or returned to, badminton more recently. We generally play doubles, so everyone gets a chance to play with, or against, a variety of others in the group throughout the session. Cost is usually £4-5 each, depending on numbers attending.

Do you fancy having a go? Why not come along and find out for yourself what it is all about. The Badminton Group meets every Friday at 10:20ish in the reception area by the turnstile for a 10:30am start in the Sports Hall at Berwick Leisure Centre, Tweedmouth. Make yourself known and someone will bring you through to the Sports Hall, or knock on the window looking into the Sports Hall and get the attention of one of us who will come and let you in. The Group Leader is Jimmy Forrest, email jimmyforrest46@gmail.com

Tim Edwards

Exploring History and Places

In March the Exploring History and Places group went on a tour of Tweedmouth West End where a Georgian house has its main big windows facing south over looking fields- they did not want to see out to the Tweed, as at that time there were factories by the Tweedmouth riverside, not a pretty sight! These included a shipyard and iron works nearby. We made our way through back alleyways going past the old brewery on to Tweedmouth Parish Church of St. Bartholomew. The graves in the church yard include John Wilson, the author of "Tales of the Borders". In May we will be meeting a week earlier, (due to the Spring Bank holiday) on Monday 19th May.

Regards Martin Rowell

ART GROUPS 1&2

Everyone who can make it on April 30 is to cut coloured paper up to make pictures as Matisse directed his team of helpers to do. You will also need a large piece of paper or card scissors or cutting knife, pencil and pritt or similar glue stick ideas from Matisse and a positive good mood. Please look at our WhatsApp before the session. In May our last indoor month using your choice of subject using layers of colour till you have really interesting see through-colours in the first two weeks.

Last two weeks is on movement. Think about how you can indicate in a picture the movement of humans, boats, traffic, birds and dogs/cats in the sky on the shore. This is to help our outdoor activities during the summer.

Sue Handoll

Scrabble

Due to Easter we are having April's Scrabble on Monday 28 April. We meet again on Monday 19 May. We welcome anyone who wishes to come as I gather we have a fair number of recent new members to our u3a.

Sue Handoll

Needles and Hooks

We meet on the 4th Friday of every month except in December. We have a good range of talents and activities producing some unique work while chatting and having a coffee break. May's meeting is on May 23 in King James Court, West Street.

Sue Handoll

French Conversation

The group has enjoyed meeting in a relaxed and mutually supportive environment this year, with many light-hearted moments, working towards understanding everyday language and chatting as naturally as possible in French. Consequently, confidence has developed and accents have greatly improved, despite the sometimes daunting challenges that speaking a foreign language can present. We exchange news and read about, listen to and discuss topics of personal and cultural interest, usually chosen by members of the group. These have included holidays in France, French food, traditions and celebrations, aspects of French life during the Second World War, our hobbies and events and people that link France with the Scottish Borders. We have also read poems by Victor Hugo and Jacques Prévert, listened to some French jokes and played the French edition of Scrabble. Next year we plan to read some short stories or maybe a novel.



Barbara Russell

Book Group 1

Book Group 1 had its inaugural meeting on Friday 11th April where we discussed 'Small Things Like These' by Claire Keegan. The book is Irish writer Claire Keegan's fourth work of fiction. It was shortlisted for the 2022 Booker Prize and won the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction and the Kerry Group Irish Novel of the Year. The theme addresses the domestic life of a County Wexford native, Furlong, struggling through a personal crisis and alongside this highlights the tragedy of the Irish laundries. The book had a Victorian feel, although it was set in the 1980s- we felt this was part of the intended atmosphere building and a representation of life in rural Ireland. The book promoted some lively and very interesting discussion- unanimously we all enjoyed the book with the majority scoring in a 10/10.



Our next book is 'The Night Watch' by Sarah Waters and we will be meeting on Friday 9th May 10am in Berwick Library. Copies are available from the library, we have room for more members!

Rowena Redgwell

Gardening Group

Our April meeting was a visit to a member's garden in Berwick. The weather forecast had been good for the visit, however in the morning of the visit there was a bitter cold wind (we are by the North Sea coast after all 😊). Fortunately the wind dropped in the afternoon and the garden had a nice big wall around it so we were able to sit in the garden without having to huddle up in coats and hats. The owner took us on a tour of what is now a quite mature garden and even though it was early in the year he had planted plenty of colour and the fresh green of the trees. He told us how he had developed the garden since they had moved in. It was then doing what gardeners do best, sit about and chat about plants, it all made for a pleasant visit. Next month we will be in Seafield Park in Spittal and then onto another member's garden.



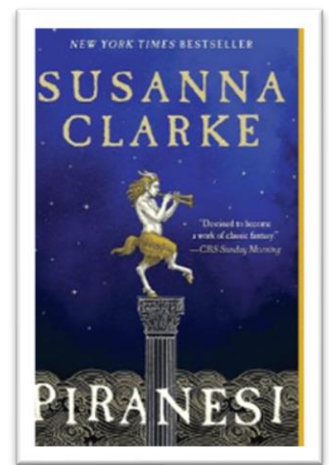
Ian Berry

Book Group 3

This month's book was Piranesi by Susanna Clarke, who is perhaps best known for her novel Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell. Opinion in the group was divided about Piranesi - some loved it and others were ambivalent or disliked it. Most found it intriguing and we all enjoyed Clarke's writing style, but some found the fantasy elements difficult. People

commented on the slow pace and detailed, but rather beautiful descriptions of Piranesi's surroundings as well as the gentle, meticulous character of Piranesi himself. We agreed that the novel and its setting could be visualised and interpreted in a number of different ways.

Sue Block



Note about the newsletter

Just to remind members that, for ecological reasons, we are reducing paper copies of the newsletter and are planning to stop deliveries in the New Year. If you currently have a paper copy delivered, you will still be able to get your copy in one of the following ways:

1. Via email
2. At an open meeting
3. From the library
4. By providing a stamped addressed envelope for it to be posted to you

If you would like to chat about your delivery please contact the chair chair@berwicku3a.org

Many Thanks to the group leaders for their contributions. Please email contributions to the chair by the 20th of each month:

chair@berwicku3a.org

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Berwick-Upon-Tweed