



Contact us: tel 07561 626690

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

## Welcome to your Newsletter for April 2026

### Remarks from the Chair

Hello! I can't quite believe April is on the doorstep already! The clocks will be going forward tonight (March 28<sup>th</sup>) and I'm sure we will all be glad for longer light evenings.

Most importantly our Open Meeting this month has a different date and venue- **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April at the Wm Elder Building**, in the conference room. Same time though! Our speaker will be telling us all about Berwick's first woman MP, something I know very little about.

It will be our **AGM in May**, which will form part of the May Open Meeting, again at the Wm Elder Building in Castlegate on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May. Anne, our Business Secretary, has circulated nominations and resolutions.

**Members' Morning** will be on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September, at St Aidan's Hall following the same format as last year. Renewals for 2026-2027 will be open from 1<sup>st</sup> April, payment either online via our website or at our Open Meetings. We are asking members to pay by card at our Open Meetings, via Paypal on the website or by bank transfer (Janice will send out the details in a separate email). We would like to move away from cash and cheques as both methods carry additional charges.

### Group news:

There are four proposed new groups starting in April:

#### 1. New Intermediate French group

I would like to offer a new French group for intermediate speakers based on reading graded and abridged classic French books. Following each short chapter, helpful grammar tips and exercises are provided, as well as activities to check comprehension. If you are interested, please contact me by email and I will organise a meeting to discuss this further. I will also bring along a copy of the first book, 'La Tulipe Noire' by Alexandre Dumas, for you to see. If there is sufficient interest, this group will commence in September for one hour sessions twice a month.

Barbara Russell

[queenb32@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:queenb32@hotmail.co.uk)

## 2. **'Tracks and Tales'**

A workshop will be held on **Wednesday 22nd April 1030am** in Horncliffe Village Hall to discuss a proposal for a new group. All welcome - members and non-members. Light refreshments provided.

The aim of the group is to support well-being and social engagement by offering accessible regular short walks (weekly, fortnightly, or monthly to be determined). The walks will be for up to 60 minutes depending on walkers ability, followed by 60 minutes creative writing in the village hall.

We will aim to publish an anthology of members writing annually for those who wish to share their work. Please contact Helen if you are interested

**Location:** meet at Horncliffe Village Hall. Car park and adjacent street parking/bus service

3. **Latin, in a Classical Context**, a course for beginners. If you're interested please email Helen: [helen@berwicku3a.org](mailto:helen@berwicku3a.org) so we can assess interest. **The first meeting** will be Tuesday 21st April, 10am, at the library.

## 4. **Monthly Book Group, number 4.**

Love reading and good conversation? Come join a new monthly book club.

Each month we will meet in a different member's home — the host picks the book for discussion and provides some light refreshments.

It's all about friendly discussion and discovering new authors together, in relaxing surroundings.

 Interested?

I'll arrange an **initial meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2pm** and we can agree some guidelines, a format and a schedule.

Come along to read, relax, and make new friends who love books as much as you do!

Please contact: Vanessa Wilson by email: [vanessamwilson1@gmail.com](mailto:vanessamwilson1@gmail.com)

We are very keen to extend our range of groups. If you are thinking about starting a group please get in touch with either myself or Helen, Group Coordinator. There is a lot of support for new group leaders so please don't let the idea of running a group put you off.

## **Community Engagement:**

1. **Northumberland Library Service** are currently asking local residents to complete an online survey to help shape future services. As they say 'use it or lose it' - please do take 5 mins to fill it in. The link can be found [here](#).

## **Help required please:**

1. Person required to shadow and support our Publicity Officer, Phil Ravetta. This role includes circulating posters, updating our social media pages and distributing the newsletter/leaflets etc. Please contact myself or Phil if you can spare a little time.

Finally there is a **Group Leaders' meeting** on **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April** 10am/10.30am at the Wm Elder Building, conference room - come along for coffee and cake and to meet with other GLs. We start at 10am for a Beacon workshop, and then the main meeting starts at 1030am where we will share updates. At the end there will be an additional meeting for new GLs.

That's all folks! Very best wishes

Rowena x

### **Berwick u3a Jigsaw Library**

Another selection of jigsaws will be available at the next Open Meeting. Please do consider borrowing a jigsaw- many thanks

Graham and Cathy

### **Open Meeting March 2026:**

'Castle Parks' was the theme of the March Open Meeting talk, presented by Valerie and Peter Bistram, who are members of Friends of Castle Parks, and Kate Dixon, the Parks Officer. Many diverse aspects were covered, including the history of Castle Vale Park, which celebrates its centenary in 2028, and Coronation Park, planted out in 1937. We also learned about the varied flora and wildlife habitats contained within them as well as events and projects organised by the Friends of the Parks, details of which can be found on their website, [friendsofcastleparks.org](http://friendsofcastleparks.org). Gardening tasks are carried out by volunteers from the local community, and funding comes from donations and the proceeds of events such as plant sales and Open Garden visits in the summer. This was an interesting and informative talk. Members of the audience were given a copy of the Castle Parks Trail guide and were invited to consider joining this very worthwhile organisation.

Barbara Russell, Speaker Secretary

### **Regional Quiz**

On 4th March 2 teams from Berwick u3a travelled to Sunnyside Social Club (about 4 miles from Team Valley) to the Regional Quiz. There were 20 teams from all over the Northumbria region, but we had travelled the furthest. Thank you to the drivers. There was a picture round of garden flowers, a picture round of British food where the dish names referenced places, a music round and some traditional general knowledge questions. In the interval there was quite a range of refreshments provided by the participants along with a hot drink available. A team from Prudhoe won. Our teams fared better than on previous occasions: the team of four, "Berwick Brainboxes", came equal 2nd and the team of three, "Best Town" came equal 7th – we were very pleased with those results.

Anne Berry



**WELL DONE!**

## **Northumbria u3a - Events**

### **1. 12th May 2026, Summer School**

#### **Special Day at Ushaw Historic House**

A Festival of Fun, Music and Learning for all our u3a members. Workshop places are limited but there is still availability for:

10am i) Introducing Uzbekistan

ii) 4.5 mile walk – a 2 hour session

11am i) The man behind the concept of the tomb of the unknown warrior

ii) Geology 1 - The Cheviot Volcanoes

1.15pm i) Egyptian Hieroglyphs

ii) Flower photography - a one and half hour session

iii) Bird watching walk

2:15pm i) Local history workshop - one and three quarter hours

ii) The Art of Joan Miro in Ushaw's Art Exhibition Gallery.

3:15pm Irish History & the poetry of Yeats

### **2. Golf Day**

A Northumbria Region u3a Golf Event is to be held at High Gosforth Park Golf Club for both ladies and men on **Friday 10th July 2026**.

On offer would be either:

a) a round of golf over 18 holes with buffet - cost £40.

Tee off arranged 12 noon – 2 pm

b) a taster session on the 28 bay driving range with buffet – cost £24. Any time.

c) a bit of fun on the 18 hole mini (crazy) golf course with buffet - cost £20. Any time.

Much more information is on the website,

or contact Mike Wallace: email address [mike.wallace.u3a@gmail.com](mailto:mike.wallace.u3a@gmail.com)

## **National u3a**

### **u3a Festival 26 booking now open!**

u3a Festival is back – the biggest celebration of the curiosity, creativity and community spirit that makes u3a so special.

Join us for three days of hands-on workshops, musical performances, sports tournaments, fascinating talks and many more surprises.

Tickets are limited - let your members know so they can book now and avoid disappointment!



1-3 July 2026



University of York



Tickets cost £18 for a day, or £50 for all three days



[Book your festival ticket and accommodation on the u3a website](#)

## Festival volunteers needed

The Festival team are looking for **u3a sports teams and members to host activities at the festival**. The idea is to offer participants the chance to try a new sport in an accessible environment, and support them to stay active.

Some sports we'd love to see include: new age curling, walking sports (cricket, netball, football), pétanque, badminton, tennis, croquet and running.

Please share this opportunity with sports groups in your u3a - they can get involved by emailing [festival@u3a.org.uk](mailto:festival@u3a.org.uk).

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



### Adventures in science with u3a

Join Nick Doll to hear all about the thrills and spills of four years in the Chichester u3a practical science group.

Friday 10 April at 2pm

Free - online via Zoom



### Richard Nixon- a truly complex man

Paul Carter looks at Nixon's political life travels across the landscape of post-war US and the world.

Thursday 16 April at 2pm

Free - online via Zoom



### Oi! Mind yer language!

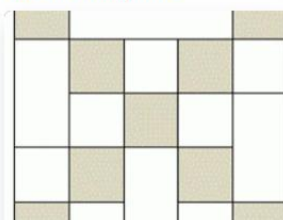
Exploring our English language, as the essential human skill - history, structures, usage, mysteries, magic and more.

Thursday 30 April at 2pm

Free - online via Zoom

### Puzzles and games

Did you know there is a page of maths puzzles you can try each month? Click on the image...



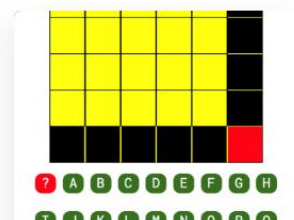
### Logic puzzles

Puzzles once a month followed by solutions the month after



### Maths challenge

New quiz every Thursday followed by answers a week later



### Aileen's game

Play Aileen's game, a word game created by East Suffolk u3a member Ian Clarke.

## News from our groups

### **Gardening Group**

The first meeting of the season for the Gardening Group took place on the Second Tuesday of the month in March. Our season runs from March to October unlike most u3a Groups as gardens (and gardeners) are not at their best in December and January. At the meeting we put together a provisional plan for the

year with ideas for future events, it's subject to change depending on what the seasons bring. Also at the meeting we did a seed swap with members bringing along spare seeds. Several side tangents of gardening were explored such as plant pot recycling, making plant pots out of old newspaper and the use of railway sleepers for raised beds; that's what makes meetings interesting.

One member asked if anybody had come across 'seed snails' as a method of seed germination, which she had come across and seemed to be very effective. Nobody else had and after some investigation (and some speculation as to what it was) one member found some information on the internet and we have decided we are going to do a 'seed snail challenge' and several members are going to have a go with it ahead of the April meeting. The (rough) schedule so far for 2026.

- April: Seed Snail Challenge and a short talk by a group member about root trainers.
- May: Visit to The Hirsell, Coldstream. Hopefully the Azalias & Rhododendrons will be in flower and the sun shining, otherwise the tea room beckons.
- June: Flagstaff Park with a tour led by the Parks Officer.
- July: Visiting a member's garden which is small but she sounds to have done amazing things in pots, then onto the Parish Church eco garden where hopefully somebody will be on hand to tell us about it. (not confirmed as yet)
- August - October plans are a bit nebulous from this distance.

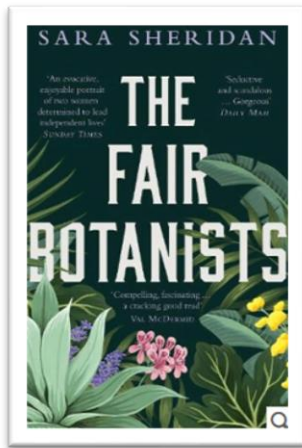
Ian Berry  
Gardening Group Coordinator

### **Art**

We meet every Wednesday from 10 - 12 in the Granary. This month Art 1 have 3 sessions. They will be given the opportunity to say what they would like to do on the 29th So each group will have 2 sessions on making a collage' of buildings or a cityscapes. You will need to bring some thin card such as colourful cereal packages for the background scene and thicker card and/or foreground work also any suitable material to give variety. Also you will need a glue stick and background card to make your picture showing the sky etc. if you are quick at doing your collage and would like to create a Spring garden scene You will know what to bring in especially if you have a garden catalogue. Hope you all give it a try.

Sue Handoll





### **Book Group 3**

March's book was *The Fair Botanists* by Sara Sheridan. It is set in Edinburgh in 1822 when the Botanical garden is being moved from Leith Walk to its current location. Edinburgh society is also excited by a possible visit from King George IV. The story explores the lives of several women and the men around them. Women who want more from life than just a conventional marriage, children and being passed from the ownership of their father to the ownership of a husband. Their actions are sometimes shocking, but is that only because they are women? What are the men getting away with?

The novel divided opinion in the group with 5 enjoying the book and 4 not, although we all found some positive things to say. There were a lot of 'issues' covered in the book and most of us felt Sheridan could have reigned in a little and been more focussed.

Sheena Hewitt

### **Ride & Stride**

We had fine weather at the end of February for our walk from Doddington North Moor to Belford via St Cuthbert's Cave. As there was very little wind, we had our lunch break on the edge of the hill above the cave overlooking the sea and Holy Island.

As I write this, we are looking forward to our 25th March walk on Holy Island where we should have plenty of spare time for a café stop at the end. After that we revert back to Friday walks, the next being on 24<sup>th</sup> April, the provisional plan being to walk from Ayton to St Abbs.

Derrick Joanes

### **Busy Bees Crafts**

There was a good turnout at the March meeting. A variety of crafts were seen including quilting, knitting, crocheting, patchwork, and diamond art. Members have been busy making sunflower brooches as thank you gifts to the supporters of "Northumberland Stands Together". At the next meeting members are going to complete them with brooch pins. Please bring sewing needle for wool and small scissors.

Busy bees continue to welcome U3A members to join the group. We constantly look to try out a range of crafts to suit individual needs and explore new ideas. We also support those working on their preferred craft. Monthly fee is £2 for hire of room and refreshments.

We meet on the second Friday of the month at King James court, West Street Berwick on the second Friday of each month 10am – 12 noon.

April 10<sup>th</sup>, May 8<sup>th</sup>, June 12<sup>th</sup>, September 11<sup>th</sup>, October 9<sup>th</sup>, November 13<sup>th</sup>, December 11<sup>th</sup>

We take a break in July and August.

For further information

Contact: Theresa Wilkinson Busy bees crafts via Berwick U3A website, [contact-group-select-group-email](#)

### **Wine Group**

There was a waiting list for the Wine Group's February meeting, unfortunately, due to the size of the venue. Those of us who were able to attend tasted 7 different wines. All the wines were listed as supermarket "Best Buys" by the consumer organisation Which?

We don't actually score the wines ourselves, but discuss our opinions of them. The most popular white wine was an English Bacchus wine from Devon. The favourite red wine was split between a Rioja and a Portuguese wine from the Douro. The one that several people poured away was an uninteresting Picpoul de Pinet. It was noted that all the wines selected for the tasting were European, by chance.

Anne Berry

### **Homer's Iliad Study Group**

We met for the second time on March 20th. This time we discussed books 2 and 3 of the poem. There were several different aspects which we considered:

What do we think of it as a work of literature? It is incredibly rich in description of the natural world, of the appearance of the warriors and of the behaviour of the gods. We read excerpts of several different translations to compare what each translator had chosen to emphasise.

What do we think of the gods? Poor Helen gets bullied by Venus, gods intervene in the fight to please or spite each other, and the Greek concept of a god is very different to the Christian one.

Sound - we listened to a few minutes of performance in Ancient Greek, and to English translations for comparison.

Along the way we talked about the films of Brigitte Bardot, a children's illustrated version of The Iliad, novels by Madeleine Miller, Margaret Atwood, Lindsay Clarke and others. It was a lot of fun, and we will meet again in May/ June. Next time we might think more about the Ancient Greek mindset as portrayed in the poem.

Evelyn Grant

### **Woven tapestry**

In March we met in the library to take advantage of the excellent overhead light. As always we looked at work on the looms and got on with some weaving together. In the break we

looked at 18th century tapestries designed by Goya for the Spanish Royal family. Goya first came to prominence in Spain for these designs before he gained a reputation as a portrait painter and lithographer. The tapestries were woven at the Royal Tapestry Manufactory in Madrid, which is still in operation today. While the tapestries now hang in royal palaces and national museums, the designs are on the walls of the Prado art gallery. Goya's relationship with the weavers was prickly as he was reluctant to accept that they had a greater understanding of how to weave a successful tapestry than he did!

Evelyn Grant

### **Note about the newsletter**

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](mailto:chair@berwicku3a.org)  
If you would like to opt out of receiving the newsletter please contact myself:  
[chair@berwicku3a.org](mailto:chair@berwicku3a.org)

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

[chair@berwicku3a.org](mailto:chair@berwicku3a.org)



### **DON'T FORGET!**

**If you cannot attend one of your group sessions, please remember to contact your Group Leader in advance to let them know. Thank you.**

**Digital version of 'u3a Matters' magazine:** There is a digital version of the [u3a matters](#) magazine that you can read and download for free via the national u3a website.

## **Local Events:**

**NEWSFLASH BERWICK LITERARY FESTIVAL:** Here's a rare chance to hear one of the most important voices in contemporary fiction live in Berwick!

Berwick Literary Festival is proud to welcome the Booker Prize-winning author of Shuggie Bain for a special one-off event this May.

One of the most celebrated novelists writing today, Douglas Stuart's work has reached readers across the world. Shuggie Bain won the 2020 Booker Prize and Young Mungo became a Sunday Times number-one bestseller. His writing is known for its emotional depth, unforgettable characters, and powerful exploration of class, masculinity, faith and belonging.

He joins us to discuss his remarkable new novel, John of John, set on the Isle of Harris. A story of homecoming, family, and the quiet struggle to live truthfully within a close and watchful community.

In conversation with Berwick-based Dr Karen Aitchison, and with a book signing to follow, supported with our thanks by @thebookloft\_berwick

Wednesday 28 May 1pm, Holy Trinity Church

Tickets £15 - book via The Straw Yard at

<https://www.thestrawyard.co.uk/.../an-afternoon-with...>

Tickets will fly for this event, so act quickly to avoid disappointment!

Thank you, but don't want to cause you any hassle so no worries if you can't do it.

Valerie

St. Cuthbert's Church, Norham



**Spring  
Concert**

With Berwick Concert Band

Conductor: Gordon Campbell  
Organ: Julian Bonia

Featuring Modest Mussorgsky's  
Great Gate of Kiev

Sunday 3rd May, 3pm

*Tickets £10 on the door, under 16s free  
In aid of the St. Cuthbert's Concert & Charities Fund*

Including tea and home baking



**Easter Bunny  
Hunt**



Saturday 4th April  
11am-12pm, Coronation Park

Find the bunnies, solve the clue,  
claim your egg!  
*Free family event*

**Competition**  
Decorate an egg at  
home and bring it with you.  
Prizes for the best 3 eggs.



Northumberland  
County Council

More details on our website: [friendsofcastleparks.org](http://friendsofcastleparks.org)  
Regular updates on Facebook: [castleparksberwick](https://www.facebook.com/castleparksberwick)

