Berwick-upon-Tweed u3a Newsletter

Berwick u3a News

Welcome to your Newsletter for: December 2026

Notes from the Chair

Welcome to our newsletter for December 2026. I attended the Wisdom of the Elder conference a couple of weeks ago (which was fascinating) and it reminded me just how wonderful the u3a organisation is and what it offers. We are a completely voluntary organisation run by the members for the members sharing people's interests, knowledge and passions through engaging, thought provoking and at times challenging activities where members can meet, chat and make new friends. I do feel privileged to be part of our local organisation and I hope you do too! Thank you to all of you for making Berwick u3a so wonderful.

Christmas Lunch:

This is booked for Thursday 10th December, again at the Greenses Restaurant 12 noon for a prompt 12.30pm start. There will be a raffle, quiz and games- look forward to seeing you then! Wear your Christmas jumper!!

New Group for 2027:

A new group called '**Berwick Environment**' is to be launched shortly. The group will focus on topics such as energy and pollution and seek to understand and explore at the local scale. It is proposed the group activities will include guest talks, self led projects and visits to local businesses and organisations informed in one or more aspects of our local environment. Colin Eliot has very kindly offered to lead the group- many thanks! If you are interested please contact Vanessa, Groups Coordinator via email: groupsco@berwicku3a.org

As always if you have an interest or skills you would like to share please do get in touch with either myself or Vanessa and we can provide you with a lots of support, help organise a venue and prepare publicity.

Open Meeting:

Monday 7th December 2026, 10am for a prompt 10.30 start at St Aidan's Hall. Melanie Deans will be talking about Border Links, from an initial idea to setting it up and then 20 years on. She will discuss the development of the business, what

Contact us:
Tel : 07561 626690
Website: http://berwick-upon-tweed.u3asite.uk/
(or scan QR code)
Email: info@berwicku3a.org

they do, the importance of integration within our local communities and our new Disability Hub in Berwick. Please do join us for this interesting talk, there will be refreshments and mince pies too!

Service of Thanksgiving:
On Wednesday 2nd December there will be a Service of Thanksgiving for David Knighton, at Berwick Parish Church at 11am. David was a longtime member of our u3a, a wonderful quiz master and Group Leader for Short Tennis. Our thoughts and best wishes to Ann. For more details please see attachment to this email.

That's all folks, wishing you a wonderful Christmas
Rowena x

Berwick U3A Open Meeting Monday 2nd November

At the Open Meeting on November 2nd, Roger Houchin presented a talk about the European Convention on Human Rights, what it is and how it affects the UK. All aspects of its structure, how it works, what it states and the UK's individual relationship with it were covered. Roger added a personal note, explaining why he, as a young prison governor in Scotland in the 1980s, became interested in it. This was a time of upheaval and transition in society, and greater care was needed to ensure that decisions made were strictly in accordance with the law. Having read a number of court decisions and being impressed with their good sense, he took a university fellowship to study the supervision of prisons. He later helped to design procedures to ensure reasonableness in decision making and led training for prison governors and staff in fairness and accountability. Roger went on to give examples of actual cases where UK citizens appealed to the ECHR to protect their human rights. Although UK courts are required to take into account ECHR rulings, they do not have to strictly follow or obey them. Nevertheless, the British public on the whole opposes leaving the ECHR, preferring to have their liberties supported in this way. We are very grateful to Roger for presenting a complex and contentious topic in such an interesting and accessible way.

Barbara Russell
Speaker Secretary

Jigsaw library:
There will be a good selection of jigsaws for members to borrow at the November and December and meetings, including seasonal themes. Perfect for those long winter evenings. Just help yourself, but please remember to return any you may have had for a while.
Thanks. Cathy and Graham

North East Region u3a - Events

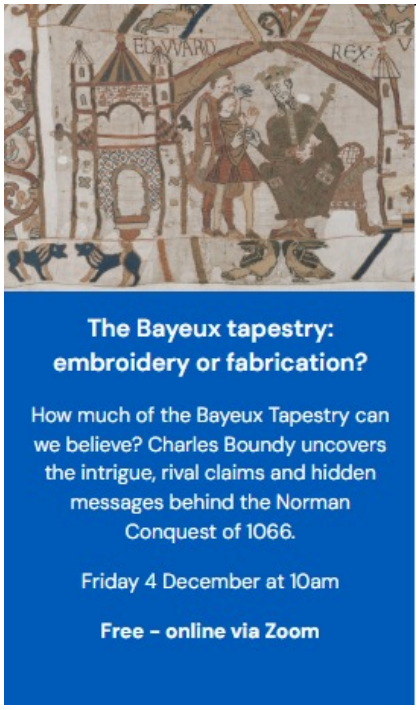
1. Ushaw Event 2027

The Festival of Fun, Music and Learning held at Ushaw House and will be on Wednesday 19th May 2027.

Please contact Cecilia Coulson cecu3a@gmail.com for further information.

National u3a: Online Talks in September - here is a selection:







Please click here for more information and to book via Eventbrite.

Did you know that the u3a also have a monthly podcast?
Click here to listen!

News from our Groups

Ballroom Blog

We expanded the social foxtrot to include a travelling variation.
This enabled the group to travel around the room quicker and added some interest to the dance.
Last session we introduced the group to a fun sequence dance called the Valentino Jive . A nice 16 bar sequence that combines jive music with cha cha steps. There is more work to be done but it's fair to say the group are progressing and having fun.
Well done to all for attending and persevering.
Anne and Eddie Cerexhe Burness

Ride & Stride

To avoid stormy weather, our October walk was postponed by a week. As a result, it was a lovely autumn day when we alighted from the bus near Kiln Point (Budle Bay) for our 6.5 mile walk to Seahouses. Initially following the coast path to Bamburgh with a lunch stop in the dunes, then taking the inland route on field paths and minor roads to North Sunderland, finishing along the course of the old rail line into Seahouses. There was plenty of time for refreshments before joining the bus back to Berwick.

After a local walk on 27 November, the next outing is planned for Friday 29 January. Details will be sent to group members in the usual way.

Derrick Joanes

Wildlife Group News

Octobers meeting was an inspiring and informative presentation from Keith Knight, one of Scotland's verifiers for the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory.

The difference between the classes of 'old' trees and the variation in what that means, dependent on species is perhaps something that we don't think about.

The Inventory is open to anyone interested in trees and once registered records can be explored, viewed and entered for verification. Penny and I had a walk at Abbotsford House just after the talk and were fascinated to see how many trees were recorded in the wonderful old parkland. December's meeting is a talk by Tom Cadwallender on the Summer Birds of Northumberland.

Simon Wright

Wine Group

The first meeting of the Wine Group for the 2026/27 year in October, was titled “Down the Douro”. Group member, Mark, had chosen the wines, prepared a handout including tasting notes and presented the wines to the group. There were 3 whites, 3 reds and 2 ports from around the Douro River in Spain and Portugal. We learned about the wines from the different regions, and Mark had written an informative summary of the different styles of port.

At our November meeting a smaller group tasted a selection of Great Value gold and silver medal winners of the International Wine Challenge. We started with the winning sparkling wine, a cava, then 2 white wines, a rosé, 2 reds and finally a sweet white wine. They had all been purchased either locally or online, although

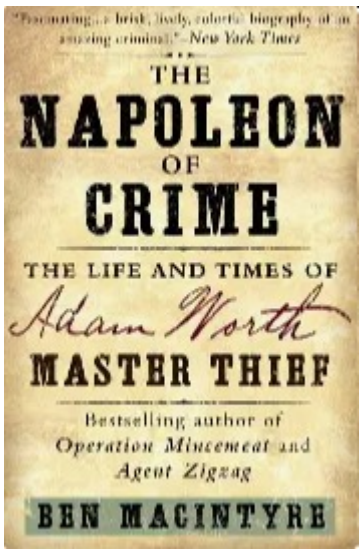
one involved a trip to Co-Ops over the border. The sweet wine was the most expensive at £13 for a half bottle and the cheapest was the gold medal winning white wine at £6.38 for a full bottle, which everyone thought was excellent value.
Anne Berry



Spanish

We aim to avoid rigid timetables within the Spanish group, enjoying a variety of topics and activities, usually provided by group members, to help us feel we are making progress in our ability to communicate in Spanish. We were able to enjoy something entirely new in November with a guest speaker. Marilyn Thomson gave us a wonderful introduction to the country of Colombia, including its history, geography and culture, with a very helpful PowerPoint to help those of us whose listening skills were sometimes challenged by hearing a fluent Spanish speaker. Marilyn concluded her talk by showing a short video about a project working to provide educational opportunities for children and young people so that they can embrace a future that is not based on the drug trade that many of us might think is the defining feature of Columbia - a very hopeful end to our session. We look forward to welcoming Marilyn again in the future.
Ros Richardson

Book Group 3



Nearly all the Book Group were present at our November meeting to discuss ”The Napoleon of Crime. The Life and Times of Adam Worth, Master Thief” by Ben Macintyre. A mixed reaction ensued in that one couldn’t read it, two didn’t finish it whilst one found it completely fascinating and the rest of the group struggled with its length and array of too many characters. Its mixture of a biography and a journalistic novel was too confusing for some readers. Adam Worth was a late nineteenth century criminal thief who looked after his men, abhorred violence and had his own code of moralistic values. He was so successful that he mixed with the elite of society both in the USA and in England. He developed a strange relationship with his

nemesis, William Pinkerton, the detective, resulting in a bizarre friendship. He was thought to be the inspiration for Conan Doyle's Moriarty and he became famed for stealing the Gainsborough portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire.

June Neilson

Busy Bees Crafts

We had fun at our meeting on the 11th of November making Christmas cards. Colouring stamped images and adding embellishments and sentiments.



Our next meeting is 11th December for Pre-Christmas party. Please bring with you a few nibbles and the wreath challenge, if you chose to take part. Also bring along your own project in case there is time for crafting. There might be a little project for fun.
We welcome new 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 encourage those working on their preferred craft and focus on fun for all.

We meet on the second Friday of the month at King James court, West Street Berwick 10am – 12 noon. Monthly fee currently is £2 for hire of room and refreshments.

The next meeting is December 11th; we will resume meetings after the Christmas holiday on 8th January.
Happy Christmas all

Theresa Wilkinson

Creative writing 1
Please find attached to this email a story written by one of our members Lynda Povey which will be read out on the radio!

Stella McLaren

Poetry Writing Group

We are proud to have produced "We Live In Trees Now", a short anthology selected from poems that we have written since the group started two years ago. Copies will be available from group members, and various locations around town - a perfect gift for the poetry-lover in your life.

Madeleine Ravetta

Art Appreciation

At this months' meeting the group were treated to a very interesting and engaging presentation by group member Chrystine on the artist Louis Wain (1860-1939)

Born in London, he struggled with mental health issues throughout his life and was certified insane in 1924. He studied and later briefly taught at a London Art College, selling his first work in 1881.

Working in bright colours and a variety of mediums he is best known for his pictures of cats dressed and acting like people. He has been described as the "Hogarth of cat life" and his art appealed to all ages and tells us a lot about British society of the time.

There is no December meeting, we meet again on Wednesday, January 27th next year.

Carole Lawrence

Community Events:

1. Morris dancing:
Rag Bag Border Morris dancing are trialling a new venue in Berwick for some of their practice sessions. If anyone wants to come along and meet us, see what we do, or have a go you'll be very welcome. We would love to have some new dancers and/ or musicians.

Venue: The Maltings on Hide Hill (next to Newcastle Building society)
Dates: Tuesday 1st December
Time: 7pm until 9pm
For further information email: cathyjt63@gmail.com or just turn up.

2. Christmas Concerts







And finally….

Many Thanks to the group leaders for their contributions. Please email contributions to the chair by the 20th of each month: chair@berwicku3a.org

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.
It's a really good read!



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 or opt out of receiving the newsletter please contact the chair: chair@berwicku3a.org