

Cestria u3a at Chester- le-Street

Website – <https://cestria.u3asite.uk>

June 2025 Newsletter

Monthly Meetings

1st Wednesday
Cornerstones
Methodist Chapel
9.30 – 10.00 Pre
Meeting Coffee &
Chat – Prompt 10.00 -
Noon Main Meeting

4th June
‘Secrets of the Attic’
Part 2 – the Vile
Woman
....Tony Nicholson

2nd July
‘SE Asia, Laos & the
Hmong People’
....Eric Ryles

6th August
‘The Brontes’.....
Stephanie Yearnshire’

3rd September
The Wear Rivers
Trust.....
Philip Parker

Chairman’s Corner.....

Hello everyone. I hope this finds you well, and that the weather is still good!

We have had some great talks at our monthly meetings with a variety of speakers still booked to come. There are more interest groups now, and you will have had emails about History and Nature walks. Do check the website for more information.....cestria.u3asite.uk

We will be celebrating twenty years of our u3a next year. There is a suggestion box, on how to celebrate this at the monthly meetings or you could pass your ideas on to a committee member.

If you have the time and inclination, Robert needs some help with the IT system at our monthly meetings (**see page 4**). Margaret Chilver is also looking for help with the speaker list. (**Many hands make light work**).

Reminders:

We do not have emergency contacts for everyone in our u3a. Those whose number we don’t have were sent an email about it.

Also please make sure that during the meetings, your phone is switched off or on silent. We have had interruptions at each of the last two meetings.

All u3a details are on the group’s white card....keep it by you.

Best wishes Mike

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From the Editor.....



According to recent reports, the number of centenarians in Britain is rising significantly year by year. This remarkable trend invites us to ponder the secrets behind such longevity. Could being part of the u3a, with its emphasis on lifelong learning and activities, be one of the keys to staying alert and thriving into our later years? After all, centenarians are often celebrated for their sharp memories and vivid recollections of historic moments. Many of them likely remember exactly where they were during the joyous occasion of the World Cup Football Final on 30th July 1966.

Though the final was played at Wembley Stadium, the North East played a unique role in the games. The Italian team stayed at Durham University Halls, while the North Koreans were billeted in Middlesbrough. Even the Russians, based in Durham, found themselves, flocking to a local hair salon for 'Napoleon Solo' haircuts inspired by Robert Vaughan, the star of the TV show, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, a favourite both here and in Russia. Middlesbrough's residents were so warmed by the presence of the footballers that they felt a newfound sense of connection to the country.

As we remember these moments of celebration, it's fitting to turn our attention to another milestone: Cestria u3a's upcoming 20th birthday in 2026. We have shared community, learning, friendship, and experiences for two decades. The committee is eager to plan a celebration worthy of this achievement and is inviting members to contribute ideas. Whether it's a grand event or a nostalgic look back at the group's history, your suggestions are welcome. Keep an eye out for a suggestion box at our monthly meetings, or share your thoughts with any committee member.

Here's to many more years of learning, laughter, and shared memories!

.....**Christine Logan**

Although I do remember the day of the 1966 World Cup Final, I have recently enjoyed the recollections and gleaned information from Jonathan Coe's state- of-the-nation novel 'Bournville'.....

Help for monthly meeting at Cornerstones.....



Since standing down as chair last year, I have concentrated on providing technical support for our monthly meetings. However, our tech support team is very small and we now need to add to our numbers to ensure that our monthly meetings can take place.

As members will realise, we provide speakers with overhead projection facilities and also audio so that talks can be interesting and heard by all. Speakers use the PowerPoint application as the method to show their slides.

Currently, I bring my laptop computer to the meeting, connect it to the projectors and our speakers then give me a usb and we run the PowerPoint slide show. Gordon runs the sound desk so that we can hear our speakers on loudspeaker, occasionally, speakers will want to show a video with sound.

The IT and sound roles can be carried out either by the same person, or by two people. More than one person can volunteer for this role, ensuring that each month's meeting is well-supported and smoothly managed. Having multiple volunteers not only provides reliable coverage but also makes the task more enjoyable and collaborative.

Don't worry—help is always at hand! I will be available for as long as you need to get to grips with the job, offering guidance and support every step of the way. Whether you're stepping in for the first time or looking to share responsibilities, you'll never be alone in the process.

If you're interested, or have some IT experience and would like to help your u3a, then please let me know. Consider giving it a try! Your contribution, no matter how big or small, will help keep our meetings running seamlessly.

Robert Berry - email: berryr99@aol.com - 0191 389 0702

The Third u3a Northumbria Regional Quiz: A Wonderful Afternoon of Fun and Camaraderie

The third u3a Northumbria Regional Quiz proved to be a delightful event, held at the welcoming Sunnyside Club. The venue was perfect for an engaging afternoon, and the club staff ensured that all attendees felt right at home.



Twenty-three teams of four gathered to compete, bringing not only their trivia prowess but also an impressive spread of handmade cakes, ours made by super chef Steve Willan.

The quiz questions covered an entertaining range of topics, from the nostalgic "Dad's Army" to historical past Prime Ministers, toe-tapping music trivia, and even surveys on popular opinions about everyday objects. It was a test of wit, knowledge, and a bit of guessing!

Cestria, our team, put up an admirable fight and landed right

in the middle with a respectable score of 68 points—true to tradition! However, the top honour went to the team 'Who Done It' from Durham u3a, who secured the winning spot with their exceptional score of 77.

It was an excellent way to spend a chilly March afternoon—filled with laughter and friendly competition. Thank you Question Master Bob Pullan, and his glamorous assistant Cecillia Coulson. Here's to more events like this in the future, bringing people together for fun, learning, and plenty of laughter!

Steve, Jennifer, Judith & Christine.....Cestria Quiz Team

Tina: The Musical....Sunderland Empire....27th March



As you can see by the smiling faces, to say we had a great time in March at Sunderland Empire is an understatement! The day began with a delightful lunch at the 'Fire Station,' a bustling venue where the staff worked tirelessly to ensure everyone was well taken care of, despite the lack of spare seats. The attentive service and warm atmosphere set the perfect tone for what was to come.

The highlight of the day was undoubtedly the spectacular performance of Tina: the Musical. Elle Ma-kinga N'Zuzi delivered an inspiring portrayal of Tina Turner that left everyone in awe. If Tina's actual performances surpassed this, they must have been truly unforgettable for those fortunate enough to attend. The musical celebrated her incredible talent and resilience, showcasing Tina's ability to shine as the ultimate performer despite the challenges she faced throughout her life.

Adding to the magic was the young Tina, Anna Mae Bullock, played by child star Chloe Angiama—a name that promises a bright future in the performing arts. Her role was captivating and served as a reminder of Tina's humble beginnings, making the musical even more poignant.

A special thank you goes to Anne Lanigan for her tireless efforts in rounding up the group and ensuring everything ran smoothly—a task that's far from easy! As the group headed home, the air was filled with the melodies of 'What's Love Got to Do With It', sung with joyous enthusiasm.

It was truly a day to remember—a celebration of music and the indomitable spirit of one of the greatest performers of all time.

.....Theatre outings group.....

Cestria Bus Pass Group Explores Hartlepool Marina.....

Friday 11th April brought sunshine and smiles as our bus pass group embarked on an adventure to Hartlepool Marina. The day began with a well planned journey: hopping aboard the 21 bus from Chester-le-Street to Durham, and then transferring to the service 58 for the scenic ride to Hartlepool.



The journey sparked our appetites, and everyone was eager to refuel on arrival. The Brewers Fayre served up hearty meals at unbeatable value, with the group enjoying a fantastic £5 deal that perfectly hit the spot.



Energized and ready to explore, we headed off to the Museum of Hartlepool. At the museum, history took centre stage, where our group uncovered the

truth behind the infamous tale of the hanging of the monkey during the Napoleonic Wars - a story proved to be mere myth.



Intrigued by the maritime heritage, our outing continued to the Trincomalee, a grand warship built in 1782, named after the Battle of Trincomalee. Docked at the National Museum of the Royal Navy, this vessel revealed fascinating glimpses into naval life. However, our group agreed that the realities of being sailors in the early 1800s were far from glamorous. From the ship to the old shops and the ship chandler's, the scenes felt incredibly authentic, offering a vivid picture of the era.

The day passed quickly, and we began our journey home. Though the return bus route took an unexpected turn through an array of County Durham villages, perfect sightseeing, while we reflected on a day of exploration, friendliness, and the joys of discovering local treasures.

Pat Rule.....

Photos: Kathleen Atkinson and Pat Rule

Sheila Fell: A Painter of the Unseen Cumberland



Skiddaw Summer

Sheila Fell's legacy is one of untamed beauty of the Cumbrian landscape, a place often overlooked in favour of the picturesque Lake District. The Sunderland Winter Garden exhibition presented a side of her work that focuses not on the serene tourist destinations but on the rugged terrain of West Cumbria and her hometown of Aspatria. It is in these windswept fields and heavy skies that she found her inspiration, painting the life she knew with complete honesty.

Born in 1931 to a poor but loving family, Sheila grew up among miners and farmers, witnessing first hand the hardship of those who worked the land. Life in Aspatria was not gentle; the soil was rough, the winters bitter, and the labour unrelenting. Despite these challenges, she excelled academically and

was encouraged to pursue her artistic talents at Carlisle Art School. Yet, ambition drove her beyond the familiar fields of home and determined to escape, she moved to London to study at Saint Martin's School of Art, immersing herself in the permissive bohemian lifestyle of the capital.

Though London offered artistic freedom, her heart remained tied to Cumbria. The haystacks, farms, and potato pickers of Aspatria lingered in her mind, emerging in her work through thick, dark brushstrokes that embodied the weight of the land and the people who worked it. Sheila Fell refused to romanticize her subjects, painting with a foreboding intensity that captured the unforgiving nature of rural life.

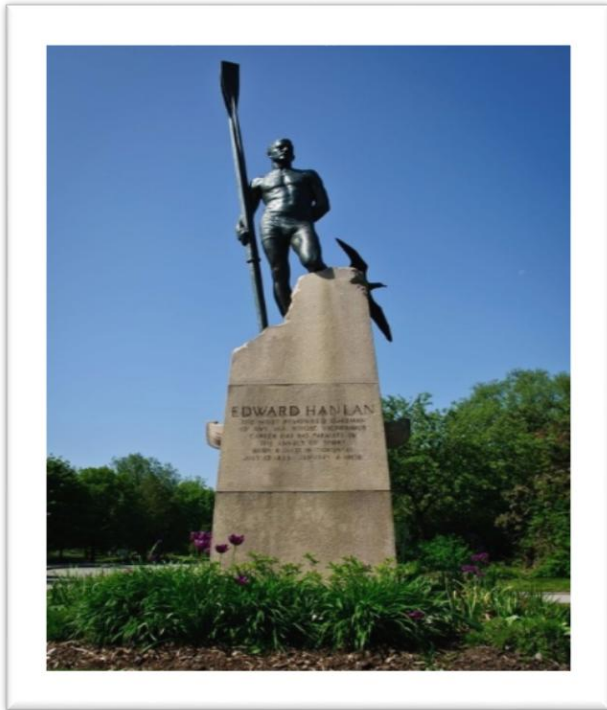
Her talent did not go unnoticed. L.S. Lowry, admired her work and gave her financial support, providing £3 a week for two years. Their friendship was based on mutual artistic respect, leading to summers spent together with her family in Cumbria, gathering material to fuel her London-based creations.

In 1963, she turned her attention to Skiddaw, painting its form with a lighter palette while still resisting undue prettiness. It was this piece that solidified her reputation, and was her most exhibited and admired work,

Tragically, Fell's life was cut short in 1979. Found in her Chelsea flat at the age of 48, her death was ruled as accidental alcohol poisoning, an end possibly caused by the pressures of preparing for an upcoming exhibition and a deteriorating personal relationship. She had once expressed a desire to live to 104, convinced that only then could she paint all the images trapped within her mind. Though that dream was left unfulfilled, her work ensures that Cumbria—its harsh beauty, its people, its struggles—remains immortalized. Sheila Fell's paintings do not simply depict landscapes; they breathe them. They echo the hardships, the resilience of those who called the rugged hills and valleys home. In every thick stroke and muted colour, her legacy endures.

Lesley, Lorna, Christine and Ray, from our group attended the exhibition, none of us had the same opinion of it, but that is what art is about. We all agreed though, that stepping into the blaze of light, colour and sound of Sunderland Winter Garden Museum, was a delight for adults and children alike.....

The Hanlon: A Tribute to a Rowing Legend.....



Do you ever walk past a place each day, barely noticing its name, until one day you pause and wonder—who or what is it named after? Our visitors from Toronto pointed out 'The Hanlon' in Birtley, a small public house believed to be named after Edward 'Ned' Hanlan, the famous rower born to Irish parents in 1855. Hanlan, regarded as Canada's first individual sporting hero, was a pioneer in the world of competitive rowing.

Growing up on the western part of Toronto Island, now known as Hanlan's Point, pictured here, he trained in the surrounding waters, winning sculling regattas that were a staple of Toronto's sporting life. Known as the Boy in Blue for his racing colours, Hanlan revolutionized rowing by mastering the sliding seat technique, a development that would change the sport forever.

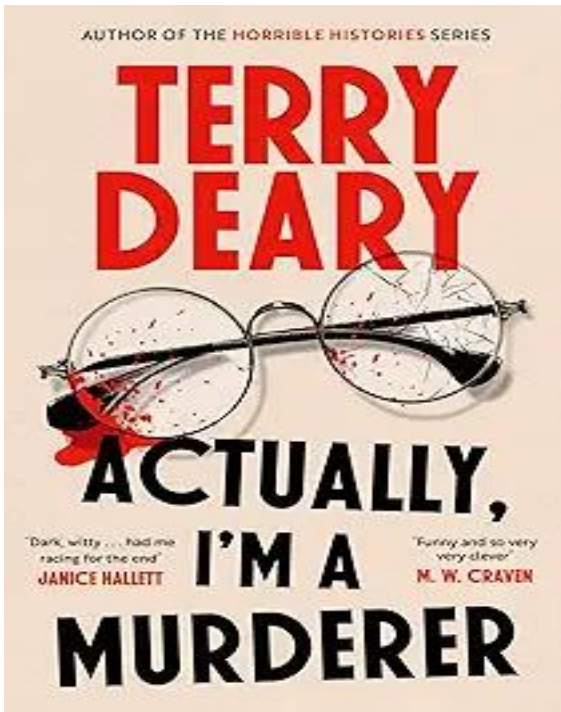
His rise to fame was swift. In 1877, he won the Canadian Championships, followed by the American title in 1878. Then, in 1879, he travelled to England to compete for the English Sculling Championship. On 16th June, he raced against William Elliot of Blyth, covering the course from Mansion House in Newcastle to Scotswood Bridge in a record-breaking 21 minutes and 2 seconds. With this victory, Hanlan secured triple national titles: Canadian, American, and English, a feat that cemented his place in rowing history.

Newcastle had the privilege of hosting this prestigious race, and what a sight it must have been! But Hanlan's ambitions didn't stop there. His ultimate goal was to become World Champion, and in 1880, he achieved this dream on the River Thames, racing in front of 100,000 cheering spectators. He became Canada's first World Champion in an individual event and went on to defend his title six times.

So, the next time you stroll past The Hanlon pub, take a moment to look up at the sign and remember the legacy of Ned Hanlan, the man who once raced on the River Tyne and left an indelible mark on the world of rowing.

.....**Christine Logan**

Local Hero: Terry Deary's Inspiring Journey.....



The Story in Durham was buzzing with excitement as local lad Terry Deary took the stage to promote his new book and share insights from his remarkable career. Born in Sunderland, the son of a butcher and educated at Monkwearmouth Grammar School. While his classmates struggled to score in the teens for essays, Terry consistently achieved marks of 17 or more out of 20. Despite this, it was never once suggested that he take up writing as a career.

Terry joined the electricity board as a management trainee. However, by 1972, his passion for storytelling led him to the Powys Drama Company, where he toured Welsh villages as an actor, bringing theatre to children. Terry's flair for writing soon emerged as he crafted plays featuring the beloved character, the 'Custard Kid.'

Determined to make a difference in education, Terry trained as a teacher at Sunderland College of Education and later became Director and Drama Advisor of the Lowestoft Theatre Centre. His writing journey began in earnest in 1976, though it was far from easy. His second book had 73 rejections, but Terry's persistence paid off when he found his niche with the Horrible Histories series in 1994. These fun and educational books have captivated generations, including many grandparents who fondly recall buying them for their grandchildren.

Terry has since branched out into adult literature with titles like 'A History of Britain in Ten Enemies' and eagerly anticipates the release of his new murder mystery novel, 'Actually, I'm a Murderer,' on June 20th. The audience at The Story was enthralled by Terry's tales and anecdotes, which included stories about Jack Crawford of Sunderland and the Battle of Camperdown, Saint Margaret Clitheroe, the Pearl of York, and the controversial bombing of Dresden.

The event was a captivating hour filled with humour, history, and heartfelt moments. Terry Deary's journey from Sunderland to becoming a celebrated author and storyteller is a testament to the power of perseverance, creativity, and following one's passion.

.....Another successful outing for the Crack group

16th April.....Hollathans Chester le Street.....



Smiles all round once again at one of our favourite venues.....Hollathans, organised by Anne Lanigan.

Photos.....Kathleen Atkinson

Crack Group Outings.....

1. Crack Group go Fire Station Sunderland, 26th Jan 25 - Zervas n Pepper 'This Flight Tonight' (Joni Mitchell songs)

Members of the Crack group went along to see this musical tribute to Joni Mitchell, guided by Ian, who had seen them before but Harry, Moira and Wendy were new to them. This is a duo (Welsh singer/songwriters Paul Zervas and Kathryn Pepper) supported by an ever-changing band of up to three other musicians coming and going as they went through Joni's songs in chronological order, describing and explaining the context in each case. Kathryn's voice is superb and uncannily like Joni's and 'in total immersion' Joni Mitchell describes the show as better than a 'tribute act'. The setting in the Fire Station was also excellent with a full back wall lit up with projected Laurel-Canyon like window scenes with leaves gently blowing and curtains rippling in the breeze. This act is highly recommended, but their 'Joni show' tour is only performed now and again. They are playing at the Glasshouse (where's that?) on 25th October 25.

2. Crack Group go Fire Station Sunderland – National Theatre/Live Dr Strangelove Steve Coogan 31st March 25

A handful of Crack group members attended this 'live' play, based on the 1964 movie (political satire black comedy) starring Peter Sellers and directed by Stanley Kubric, in which Sellers played three roles. The play was adapted for the stage by Armando Iannucci and Sean Foley starring Steve Coogan playing FOUR roles. The Fire Station is becoming a great venue for all sorts of events and this was Harry's first time for 'live theatre' in a cinema. The whole experience was highly enjoyable and almost captures the magic of 'live' live theatre. In the play, the cast loosely recreates the movie with clever scenery and lighting changes moving the action from a War Room to the cockpit of a nuclear bomber heading for Moscow. Harry tried to catch out Steve Coogan's sneaking on and off stage to change character, but it was so smooth he gave up. This is still on in various cinemas and is highly recommended.

.....**Harry Clark**

3. Charlie Chaplin's The Gold Rush – The Glass House – 6th April 25

Lesley suggested that the Crack group give this show a try, and they were not disappointed. The Gold Rush remains a masterpiece of silent cinema—an enchanting blend of slapstick humour, poignant emotion, and sharp social commentary.

Now reaching its 100th birthday, this cinematic gem still holds its place as the highest-grossing silent comedy, a testament to its timeless appeal. Chaplin himself regarded it as the film he most wanted to be remembered for, and it's easy to see why. From the iconic dance of the bread rolls to the gripping scenes of survival in the frozen wilderness, The Gold Rush captures the essence of human resilience with Chaplin's signature charm and heart. Its themes of ambition, hardship, and hope resonate just as strongly today as they did a century ago.....

Out and about with Cestria Friday walkers.....photos Lyn Cutter



21 walkers at Lanchester 4th April

Pretty Shincliffe 18th April



South Hetton 25th April

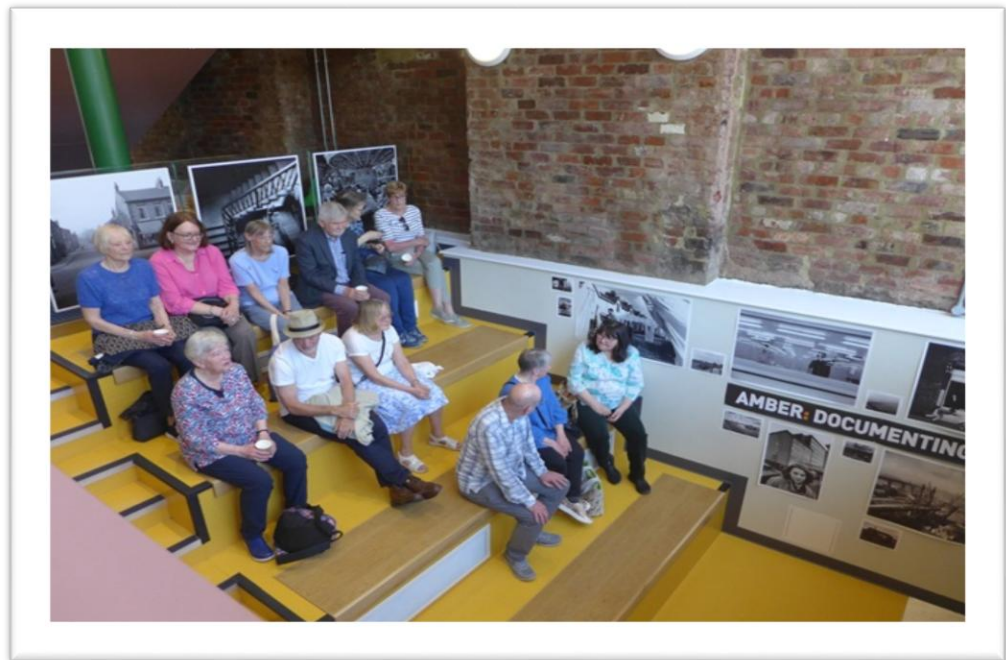
Enjoying the sun in Houghall Woods 2nd May



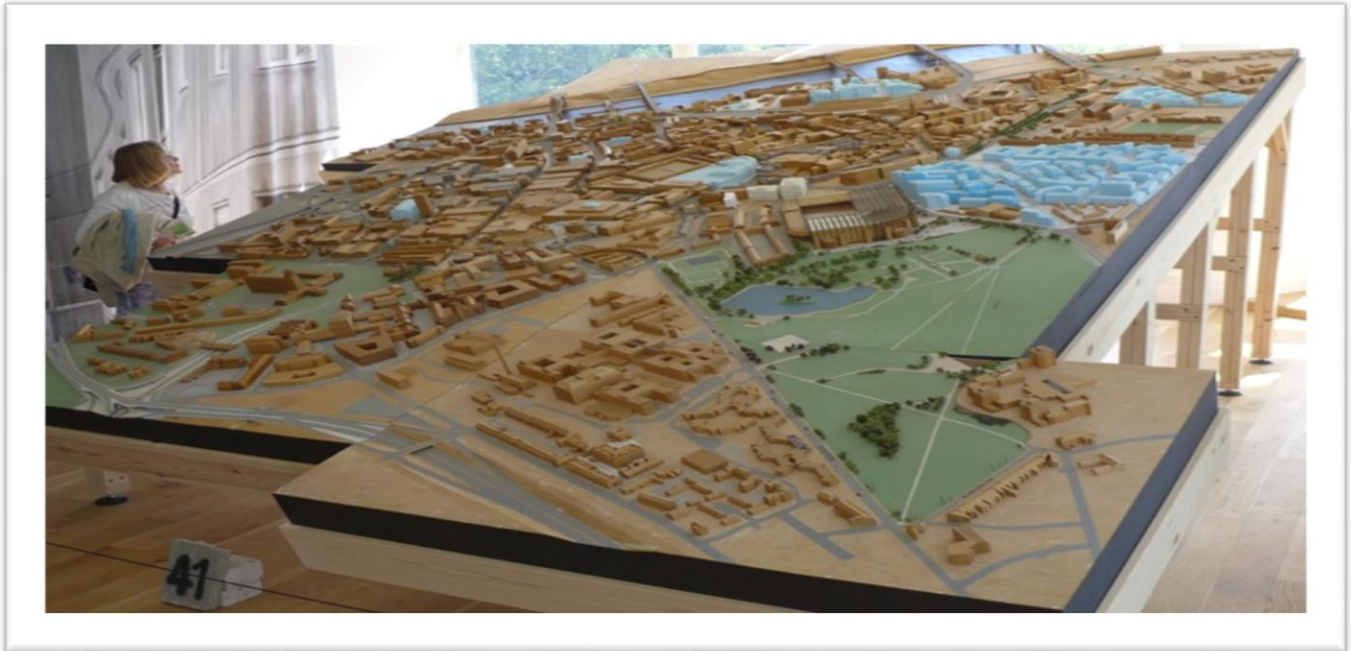
The Farrell Centre.....



The Farrell Centre in Newcastle is the place for the exhibition of modern architecture in Tyneside. It is located near to Newcastle University just off the Haymarket. We visited it on 1st May. There were 13 of us and our guide was Caitlin. There isn't a great deal to see therein but we happily spent an hour there, as we were able to watch videos about 1960s Newcastle, enjoy a guided tour and then have free time to explore.



The current exhibition is called "Concrete Dreams" and is about the concrete brutalist architecture of Newcastle in the 1960s. It was a time of great change, a time when T Dan Smith had the vision of Newcastle becoming the "Brasilia of the North", with buildings on all levels from basement up to high in the sky, a monorail, a 15 acre deck to be built across the Tyne between the Tyne and High Level Bridges. All to bring unity to Newcastle and it's near neighbour, Gateshead.



The model of Newcastle started in 1963.

Of course most of that never happened but we did get high rise domestic buildings and the Byker Wall. The Metro tram system (only one of three underground systems in the UK), The Millennium Bridge, and the Baltic and the Glasshouse Centre for Music on the Gateshead side.

There were very modern civic buildings erected also including the Felling Swimming Baths, since demolished, where the manager was Moira Foster's father, and Jesmond Library.

Gateshead did not fare so well. The Trinity Square project of the early 1960's (including the infamous "Get Carter" car park with it's never opened restaurant on top) failed to take off and many of the shop units remained vacant. The whole was demolished in 2010 and a new centre built.

We also marvelled at the huge model of Newcastle which was previously in the Newcastle Civic Centre, and not updated since 2010 when it went digital.

The Farrell Centre is open Thursdays to Sundays from 10 until 5, and it is free entry. Look out for the children's activities.....**Margaret Bozic**

Thanks to Margaret arranging for organising such a special outing and letting us have your report.....also thanks to Frank for the pictures.....

Committee 2025

Honorary President - Robert Berry

- **Chair:** Mike Parker
- **Treasurer:** Tony Morrell
- **Secretary:** Angela Hamilton
- **Groups:** Anne Lanigan
- **Membership:** Pat Rule
- **Newsletter:** Christine Logan
- **Speakers:** Margaret Chilver
- **Website:** Steve Willan
- Kathleen Atkinson
- Margaret Bozic
- Rachael Burton
- Lorna Thompson

Contacts for the above from our White Cards or website.

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Cestria u3a at Chester-Le-Street is a Registered Charity no1163334

Cestria u3a (University of the Third Age) is an autonomous, self-help organisation run by the voluntary efforts of its members. It is a member of the Third Age Trust (a Registered Charity) which is its national support and advisory body. The word "university" is used in its original sense of people coming together to share and pursue learning in all its formt aims to encourage and enable older people no longer in full-time paid employment to help each other to share their knowledge educational, cultural, recreational, physical and social.

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