

Cestria U3A at Chester- le-Street

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

September 2026 Newsletter

Monthly Meetings

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

Speakers

2nd September
History of Forensic
Science.....
John Yernshire

7th October
Neighbourhood
Protection – work of
neighbourhood
wardens.....
Claire Liddle

4th November
Sports for working
people in 19th century
– Local Heros.....
Pete Welsh

2ns December
Christmas Event....
Old English Folk
Songs of the North
East..... Pete Cryer
& Al Giles

Chairman's Corner

As I write this in mid-July it is fairly warm and getting warmer. We have already broken temperature records in May and June, hopefully not any more but clearly climate change is affecting us all.

Last month we held our 20th Anniversary celebration which seemed to be enjoyed by everyone there. Thanks to all those who did the organising beforehand (there was a lot of that) and also on the day. It makes a big difference when people join in to help. Well done.

We have had some interesting and varied talks recently at our monthly meetings. Margaret Chilver has done a great job on this over the years. However, she will not be doing this role for ever. We are looking for someone, or maybe more than one, to work with Margaret for a while with a view to taking over in due course.

I hope that you all have a good summer.

Best wishes,

Mike,

Chair, Cestria u3a.

From the Editor.....



The Summer of 2026.....

Well what a summer we're having, potentially the hottest on record, great for some of us, too much for others and oh so sad for our gardens!

Disregarding the weather our u3a has had a great summer, with birthday parties for our 20th anniversary and a 100th Birthday (which you'll see later). Fabulous outings, and fantastic speakers who have transported us to distant reaches of the world.

I mention the speakers because when I was arriving at our July meeting I spotted a lady struggling with a very heavy load on a trolley. Little did I know this was our speaker for the morning. Her name was Denise Howe, a retired head teacher and schools advisor, Her passion now is Japan and she gives presentations entitled 'The Japan Experience, Culture and Lifestyle'. Her presentations cover Japanese customs, daily lifestyle and traditions, accompanied by an abundance of authentic cultural artifacts, which were all available to be handled freely. A wonderful speaker!

Denise was closely followed in August by Malcolm Johnson, with his talk on 'Trekking to Everest and Annapurna base camps' The high altitude of the Everest terrain was a sharp contrast to the more diverse terrain, and lower starting elevations of Annapurna, these were captured by Malcom using the tiniest pocket camera. Malcolm's style of presentation was very intimate as he is an independent public speaker and freelance presenter, he pulled no punches about the rough conditions, the mishaps that befell the group and the panic to get flights home during bad weather. Would we still fancy a go at it – I don't know!

.....Christine Logan

June 9th, Wine Club Special get together.....

To celebrate the upcoming 100th birthday of Wendy we had a special get together featuring Spanish wines and a range of tapas.

Starting off with a glass of cava and nibbles (olives and savoury biscuits). The main wine selections on the day were White and Red Rioja. White Rioja was revelation for some. A range of tapas were served including pan de Catalan (toasted bread with garlic and tomato) Albondigas (meatballs), green beans with sun dried tomatoes, and garlic mushrooms. Then prawns and peppers were served with tortilla and chorizo in red wine, accompanied by a large green salad.



Everyone enjoyed the afternoon,,,,,especially singing happy birthday to Wendy.

.....Terry Hambleton

Celebrating 20 Years of Cestria u3a Photos by Lyn Cutter



On 12th June, Cestria u3a marked a very special milestone — our 20th Anniversary. Cornerstones Hall was the perfect setting for an afternoon of friendship, laughter and shared memories. Over tea and delicious treats, members relaxed together, including friends who have known each other since those very first days two decades ago.



We were delighted to be entertained by the *Saxaholics*, who were more than happy to enjoy their tea alongside us.





A heartfelt thank you goes to Rachael, Anne, Kathleen, Margaret and Pat for organising such a warm and welcoming celebration. Thanks also to Lyn Cutter, our photographer for the day, for capturing the smiles and moments that made the afternoon so memorable.

Here's to twenty years of learning, friendship and community — and to many more ahead.

Bowes Museum Bus Pass Group..... Our first bus pass outing of the year!



On Friday 15th May 8 of us went with Anne to Barnard Castle using our bus passes. We caught the 8.30 bus to Bishop Auckland where we caught the connecting onward bus.

Five of us walked to Bowes Museum to see the Vivienne Westwood collection. Getting our priorities right we went first to the cafe where we enjoyed an early lunch before exploring the exhibition.

What a treat! We found evidence of the various stages of her famous career, punk, tartan, shocking and all together beautiful.

After visiting the museum we walked back through the shopping street, where some were tempted by the lovely largely independent shops, and met the rest of our group in the pub where they had enjoyed lunch.

The weather was very kind to us which made our trip all the more enjoyable. A tired but happy group enjoyed the return journey where we saw again sheep, lambs, goats and donkeys .

Thank you Anne for planning a lovely day and taking care of us all.....**Brenda Mackie**

Chester le Street Bird Walk.....

2nd June we were once again treated to a bird watching walk by ornithologist Michael Turner. This time along the Chester le Street Riverside, an area new to Michael, but it's the same birds. Michael is hugely entertaining and incredibly knowledgeable about birds and bird life. His anecdotes are priceless. We started at the café in the Park and walked down to the river. Where were the swans? But there were plenty of ducks. FACT: Only the female mallard quacks. FACT: The black headed gull has a brown head. There were also herons along the banks and up in the trees. A kingfisher zoomed past. Only Michael saw him.

A mallard performed for us whilst Michael explained about its tufty tail. Then a pied wagtail displayed itself in a puddle on the path. Although forecast for rain, we only experienced a light shower towards the end. But there were plenty of puddles.

FACT: A bluetit has a brood of up to 12 fledglings. And the Mother has to feed them all. No wonder she looked so bedraggled. FACT: A Jackdaw is so called as Jack means small and daw is a crow. No nightingales in the North East but a blackcap kept us entertained with its song. And we could hear a great spotted woodpecker somewhere in the woods, although the circular saw being used at the Boat Club was putting up some competition. The Chiff Chaffs and the Wrens were louder though.



We walked back through the woodland of the Riverside Wildlife Area with goldfinches and great tailed tits flying overhead.

Michael's verdict at the end was that it is a lovely Park. And the café does a lovely chip sandwich.

.....Margaret Bozic

.....Photo: Lyn Cutter

Sunderland Heritage Walk led by Margaret Bozic.....

Our latest u3a heritage walk took us through the heart of Sunderland, uncovering stories, landmarks, and personalities that shaped the city across two centuries. We began at **Sunderland Central Station**, built in **1836**, upgraded in **1879**, damaged during the **1943 air raids**, and rebuilt in **1965**. Its layered history made it the perfect starting point for a journey through Sunderland's past.

From there, we explored an impressive collection of historic sites:

- **Binns, Fawcett Street** Opened by **George Binns in 1807**, once known as "*the Harrods of the North*." Famous for refusing to stock goods made from slave labour and employing **over 400 staff** at its peak. Closed in **1983**, but still fondly remembered.
- **The Athenaeum, Fawcett Street** Sunderland's own *Lit & Phil*, long a centre for learning, discussion, and civic life.
- **British Day School (1858)** The birthplace of **Sunderland AFC**, originally formed as the *Sunderland and District Teachers' Association*. A modest building with a mighty legacy.



- **Sunderland Post Office (1903)** A fabulous Edwardian building, proudly standing as one of the city's finest civic landmarks.
- **Villiers Street Technical School** Entry was by exam only, later becoming a boys' school. A reminder of Sunderland's commitment to technical education.
- **Quaker Meeting House, Villiers Street** Known for the Quaker ladies' strong anti-slavery campaigning. Now located in **The Old Tyre Shop**, another striking historic building.
- **The Old Tyre Shop & Sir William Chaytor** Purchased by **Sir William Chaytor**, 1st Baronet — an illegitimate child who rose to become MP for Sunderland. Later home to the **Union Joint Stock Bank**.
- **The Exchange Building** Founded by **Sir Henry Vane Tempest**. Architecturally impressive, and remembered for its connection to a 1990s murder case.
- **Bodle Well** Once Sunderland's main water supply. "Bodle" meant **half a farthing**, the cost of the water. A ferry operated from here across the Wear until **1957**.
- **Tombola House** A fully *green* riverside building. Home to online bingo and bingo-ticket printing. Owned by **Phil Cronin**, though the business began with the **Thompson printing family**.
- **Sunderland Echo Building** Now a **180-apartment complex** with sweeping views across the city.

- **Elephant Tea Rooms (1872–1877)** Designed by **B. Fawcett**. Famous for its exotic terracotta elephants and gargoyles — one of Sunderland's most iconic buildings.
- **Mackie's Corner (1850s)** Once a luxury shop, now the city's favourite meeting place.
- **New Glass Centre, Sunnyside** The future home of Sunderland's Glass Centre — a promising site for a major cultural attraction.
- **Fire Station & Empire Theatre** Much-loved landmarks, familiar to many Cestria u3a members.
- **Keel Square** Celebrates Sunderland's shipbuilding heritage with **8,100 ships** recorded. Leads to the new **Keel Crossing**, linking past and present.
- **Sheepfolds Stables (1883–1884)** Now a vibrant leisure, food, and drink destination. One unit is run by **Si King** of *Hairy Bikers* fame, serving his celebrated *Propa Pies*.



A Walk Full of Character

This was a walk rich in architecture, activism, industry, and civic pride. Each stop revealed another layer of Sunderland's story — from education and commerce to shipbuilding, entertainment, and social reform. The route was easy, sociable, and full of fascinating detail, making it a thoroughly enjoyable outing for all. Thank you Margaret Bozic.....and again thank you Lyn for the photos.

Bus Trip to Belsay Hall.....Saturday 18th July a group of us set off to Belsay Hall and Gardens taking advantage of a special bus offering 20% discount off admission to the venue. Arriving at 10.00am the small refreshments we enjoyed ensured we missed the light rain.



Belsay Hall – home to the Middleton Family - is unoccupied but there is much to view. The Pillar Hall, Reception rooms and upstairs bedrooms interested us especially the remaining beautiful wallpapers. The Hall although unlived in often is the basis of Exhibitions – the current one is 'Make and Mend' -making, mending and recovering. We had much fun dressing up as the photos show.

Outside the gardens were stunning especially the Quarry Gardens Grade 1 listed gardens full of exotic plants and unique trees. Some members sat on the 'Octopus Tree' given that name for the spreading lower branches resembling octopus legs!



Walking the longer path which reached the Medieval Castle two members climbed to the top of the turret waving to those of us below. Fortunately, there was another café so lunch was sorted.

Returning by a shorter route through the West Quarry we sat in the sunshine admiring the views alongside a visit to the shop.



We all agreed it was a day to remember before returning together on the special bus. Hopefully the photos reflect parts of the day.



Where next will our adventures take us ??
Anne Lanigan

Committee 2026

- **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
- 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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