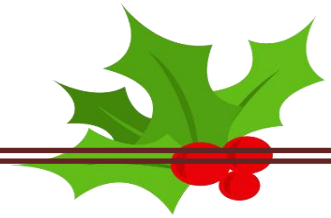
Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street

Website – https://cestria.u3asite.uk **December 2026 Newsletter**



Monthly Meetings

1st Wednesday of month Cornerstones Methodist Chapel 9.30 – 10.00 pre meeting Coffee & Chat….

Prompt 10.00- Noon Main Meeting

Speakers

2nd December…....
Christmas Fun – 'Old English Folk Songs of the North East'…… Pete Cryer & Al Giles

6th January ……Outlaws, Bandits & Raiders – the rise & fall of the Border Reivers…….. Paul Nash

3rd February…..
AGM…….. The Value of Exercise for Older People……. Jenny Wales

Chairman's Corner ….

Hello everyone.

I am getting near the end of my period as Chair of our wonderful Cestria u3a. Fortunately it looks as though we have a member willing to take the role on. However, the way is open for others to come forward for the Committee or an Officer.

We are still in need of someone to be our Speaker Secretary. Margaret has organised the rota for the speakers for our monthly meetings for many years. We need a replacement and this is getting urgent. Please consider helping out.

Some good events coming up:

We have a CAMEO event on Thursday 26th November in the morning. A chance to meet people and maybe introduce some potential new members.

Also, the monthly meeting in December on 2nd December will feature "Old English" Folk Songs of the NE. I always particularly enjoy the December meeting with the music.

Best wishes,

Mike.

From the editor……



I can hardly believe Christmas is almost here again. I must admit that I am still undecided about Christmas lunch this year. Will I be cooking the traditional feast, or simply enjoying a festive snack from the mountain of "just in case" supplies we have all faithfully amassed following Government advice? Only time will tell!

This issue marks the end of an era, as it will be the last newsletter produced in this format. Don't worry though, I will still be reporting on the outings, events, achievements and future plans of our u3a. In future, these articles will be available on the Cestria website https://cestria.u3asite.uk Please keep sending your news, stories and photographs so that we can continue sharing and celebrating all that makes our u3a such a vibrant community.

I have thoroughly enjoyed producing these newsletters over the years, but we are fortunate to have an excellent website which offers a permanent home for information, reports and announcements. Members will be able to access news whenever they wish, and nothing need be missed.

Like many of you, I have found following the national news this year rather daunting at times. Yet, when I reflect on what our u3a offers, there is so much to be thankful for. How marvellous it is that we can continue to meet together each month, enjoy our regular groups, learn new skills, share experiences and, most importantly, enjoy one another's friendship. The companionship, education, laughter and positive spirit that flourish throughout our organisation remind us that even in uncertain times, there is much to celebrate.

As we look forward to Christmas and a new year ahead, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed articles, supported activities and helped make our u3a such a warm and welcoming place.

Have a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year

…….Christine Logan

Black Friars Restaurant Newcastle on Tyne…….



The u3a is noted for bringing people in touch and once again Anne Lanigan brought a group of us together, attending a lunch at the pictured restaurant.

In the heart of Newcastle a few minutes walk from the middle of Stowell Street, we were greeted in a welcoming manner and seated at a pleasant table, where spotless napkins and sparkling glasses awaited us.

The building is very old, very interesting and well maintained. A modern menu had been provided previously. My meal of curried cauliflower fritters was extremely tasty and the sauce was balanced perfectly - not too sharp!

I was particularly impressed with the helpful and polite waiters.

It was most enjoyable to chat with friends in a very congenial atmosphere..... thank you Anne.

.....Jackie Proud

September 8th…… and Margaret Bozic arranged one of her amazing walks led by City Guide Tony Stephenson.

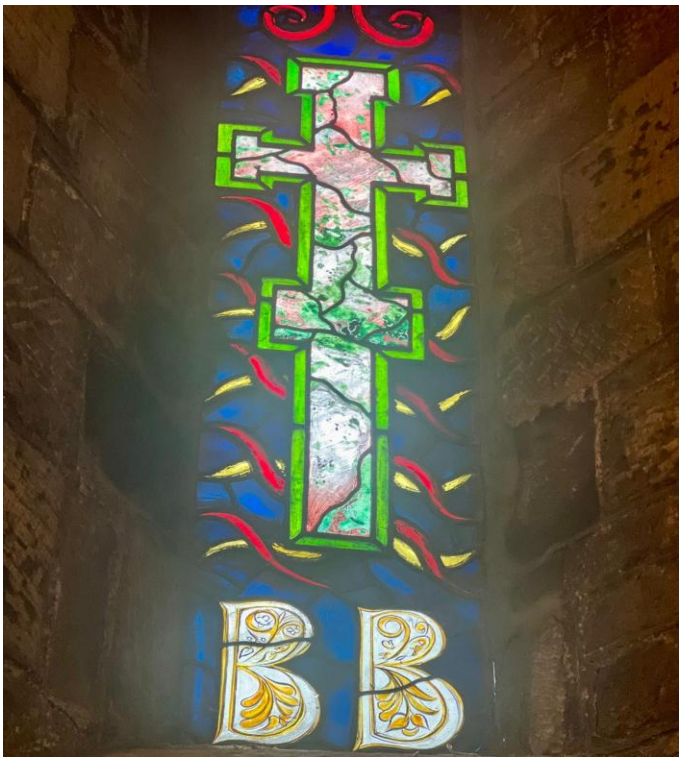
Jarrow Slake doesn't sound like the most romantic of places, but its wealth of social history makes you tingle with excitement if you have any interest in the area. Jarrow Slake, the wide tidal mudflat on the south bank of the Tyne, was once a busy, workaday part of the town's industrial life. Long before the riverside was reshaped by shipbuilding and modern development, the Slake served as a practical storage ground. For many years, great piles of timber were stacked there to season in the open air, ready to be cut and used as pit props for the coal mines of County Durham. The Slake's open, windswept expanse made it ideal: the wood could dry, harden, and be sorted before being taken upriver or by cart to the collieries.



Tony brought this landscape alive, half industrial, half wild, it formed part of the world that shaped Catherine Cookson, who grew up in East Jarrow. Her childhood was spent among the sights, sounds, and smells of the riverside :playing the piano keys (running over the timber on the Slake), the staiths, and the constant movement of coal wagons heading for Tyne Dock. Cookson's novels often draw on these early impressions. Jarrow's industrial spaces, including places like the Slake, helped form the backdrop of her storytelling, giving her fiction its gritty realism and strong sense of place.

Moving on to St. Paul's Church, the Church in Jarrow is one of those rare places where the past feels close enough to touch. Standing quietly by the River Don, it is a church that has witnessed more than thirteen centuries of worship, learning, and community life. Its chancel, still largely intact, was built in AD 685, making it one of the oldest surviving church structures in England still in regular use.

At the heart of St Paul's story is St Bede, often called the Father of English History. As a young boy, Bede entered the twin monastery of Monkwearmouth–Jarrow, where he spent his entire life in study, prayer, and writing. It was here, in the peaceful rhythm of monastic life, that he produced works which shaped the understanding of early English Christianity, including his famous Ecclesiastical History of the English Church and People. Bede's scholarship reached far beyond Northumbria, influencing thinkers across Europe and earning him the title Doctor of the Church many centuries later.







Visitors to St Paul's today can still see the original Saxon chancel, original stained glass, the 7th-century dedication stone, and the remains of the great monastery where Bede lived and worked. The churchyard, simple and serene, seems to hold the same atmosphere of contemplation that must have surrounded the monks in Bede's day.

St Paul's is not just an ancient building; it is a place where history, faith, and learning meet. It reminds us that even in a quiet corner of Jarrow, a single life devoted to knowledge and reflection can echo across the centuries.

We finished off with a warming and delicious lunch at 'Jarrow Hall', served by the most efficient and excellent staff I have ever come across

Photos: Lyn Cutter

Elsie Marley of Chester le Street…

Our cousin from Toronto in Canada has done much family history research in our local area. He loves our local music and would like to live here. He contacted me about the song 'Elsie Marley' and although I know it well, I didn't realise just how local she was to us, so I looked her up and this what I found:

Many people know the name *Elsie Marley* from the lively North East folk song, but fewer realise that she was a real person with strong links to the Chester-le-Street area. Elsie, whose real name was Alice Marley, lived in Picktree near Chester-le-Street during the eighteenth century and became one of the region's most famous landladies.

Together with her husband Ralph, she ran The Swan Inn at Picktree. Far from being the "lazy" woman described in parts of the song, historical accounts suggest she was a hardworking and enterprising businesswoman. The inn became a popular meeting place for travellers, pitmen, traders and local characters, and much of its success was attributed to Elsie's lively personality and hospitality.

Her reputation spread well beyond County Durham, and she became such a well-known local character that songs and dance tunes were written about her during her lifetime. The famous folk tune *Elsie Marley* is still played across the North East today, keeping her memory alive more than 250 years later.

Sadly, Elsie's story ended tragically in 1768 when, after a period of illness, she drowned in a flooded pit near Vigo. Yet her name has endured, not through grand monuments or titles, but through music, folklore and local history. She remains one of Chester-le-Street's most colourful characters, a reminder of the strong, resourceful women who helped shape life in County Durham long before their achievements were widely recognised.

Treat yourself one night over the Christmas Holidays when you are sitting by the fire, and colour the Elsie Marley picture in…….

Christine Logan……..



Elsie Marley has grown so fine,
She won't get up to serve the swine;
But lies in bed till eight or nine,
And surely she does take her time.

The Northern Regional Quiz took place on **Wednesday 7 October** at **Sunniside Club**.

This popular annual event brings together teams from u3as across the region for an enjoyable afternoon of friendly competition, teamwork and fun. It is always a great opportunity to meet members from other groups, test your knowledge and represent our u3a.

Even though there were a few of the regular teams missing this time, that didn't make the competition any easier for Steve, Judith, Jennifer and Christine, the Cestria team. As always we put in a good effort, and supported the event with a lovely homemade apple cake made by Judith.



The winning team was the Quizzical Quizzers, and a close second the Foggy Brains (which they obviously weren't).

We look forward to the next quiz, hopefully in the Springtime……

To Members of Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street

This letter gives notice of the Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street 21st Annual General Meeting.
The date of the AGM will be Wednesday **3rd February 2027** at our regular monthly meeting on that day.
A Nomination Form for committee positions is attached together with the Agenda for the meeting.

Appointment of Officers and Trustees - as set out in the Cestria 2018 Constitution

At every Annual General Meeting, the serving Officers shall retire from office and the members shall elect from amongst the membership, individuals to serve as Officers. The term of office is one year from the date of that meeting until the next Annual General Meeting. A retiring Officer may be re-appointed provided they remain a member of The u3a and subject to the limits on periods of service as set out below.

Chairman four years. Treasurer six years. Secretary four years.

Those up for re-election or replacement are:

Mike Parker – Chairman (Served 3 years)
Tony Morrell - Treasurer (Served 7 years)
Angela Hamilton – Secretary (Served 2 years as secretary 6 years as a committee member)

Appointment of Non-Officers and Trustees - as set out in the Cestria 2018 Constitution

At every Annual General Meeting the Non-Officer members of the Executive Committee shall all retire. A retiring Executive Committee member may be re-appointed provided they remain a member of The u3a. A person may not serve more than six consecutive terms of office as a Non-Officer member of the Executive Committee.

Those up for re-election are:

Kathleen Atkinson (Served 8 years)
Rachel Burton (Served 4years)
Margaret Chilver - Speaker Secretary **(Served 10 years and is standing down)**
Anne Lanigan - Groups Coordinator (Served 9 years)
Christine Logan - Newsletter Editor (Served 11 years)
Pat Rule - Membership Secretary (Served 7 years)
Steve Willan - Website Administrator (Served 3 years)
Lorna Thompson (served 2 years)

If you are interested in joining the committee and feel you would like to know more, please contact me or another committee member to get more details.

Mike Parker our current Chair is standing down at the next AGM; we do have a member who has volunteered to fill the post but another member can also volunteer. We do also need a speaker secretary.

Angela Hamilton: u3asecretary4cestria@gmail.com Secretary of Cestria u3a at Chester le Street

Registered Charity Number 1163334

Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street

Annual General Meeting - No.21
Wednesday, 3rd February 2027

Agenda

- Chairman's opening remarks
- Treasurer's report
  - 2026 Accounts
  - Appointment of 2027 Auditor
- Election of Officers and Committee members to February 2028
- Any other business
- Date of next AGM - Wednesday 2nd February 2028
- Close of meeting

Charity Number 1163334

Nomination Form

Nomination of members to stand for election as Officers and Non-Officers of the Cestria u3a at Chester le Street

The form below is to be used for nomination of members of Cestria u3a at Chester-le-Street to stand for election in the role of Officer and Non- Officer as described above for the period of one year from the date of the A.G.M.

Members nominating any Cestria u3a member for election to the Committee in the roles shown in the below form must obtain the signature of the nominee, which will serve as the nominated members acceptance of his/her nomination for that particular role.

Nomination forms received without the nominee's signature will not be considered.

In the event that there is more than one nominee for any of the committee positions shown in the table below then an election by ballot will take place, the winner will be declared by a simple majority of the vote.

Position	Nominee Name	Nominee Signature	Proposers Name and Signature	Seconders Name and Signature

Prior written nomination of any candidate for appointment as an Officer or a non-Officer of the Executive Committee at an Annual General Meeting shall normally be required, made by a proposer and seconder from amongst the membership of The u3a (not being themselves Officers or non-Officer members of the Executive Committee**). Form to be in the hands of the Secretary of Cestria u3a at least 28 days before the meeting.**

Charity Number 1163334

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 https://cestria.u3asite.uk

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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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