

# S tray News



# May 2025



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*Publicity Officer*

# What is a u3a?

Ian Munday

This is a question that I am often asked when I introduce myself as Chair of Harrogate u3a. I have never yet been able to provide a simple answer expressed in one easily remembered sentence – I always feel that I have been giving a long-winded description of our organisation, possibly leaving the impression that I am making it up as I go along.

I had one such experience last summer when I was kindly invited by a local Community Library to give a short talk on the National and Harrogate u3as. Even with the help of an amateurish 'PowerPoint' presentation and much forbearance on the part of my audience I don't think I managed to deliver the snappy answer they were probably expecting.

**Firstly, we are not** a 'university' as in terms of degree students, lecture halls and the like.

**So what do I say?**

**Secondly, we do not** require academic qualifications to enter our hallowed halls.

**Finally, I mention that** Harrogate u3a is part of a UK-wide movement of locally run interest groups that provide a wide range of opportunities to come together to **learn for fun**. Members **explore new ideas, skills and activities together**.

**I go on to point out** that we are one of over 1,000 u3as in the UK with a combined total membership of around 400,000 and that u3as are open to everyone who is not working full-time. I mention that the UK u3a movement was founded in 1982 (based loosely on the French model) and that Harrogate u3a has now been going for over 20 Years. At this point I remember that **the definition of 'the Third Age' is "that period in life of active retirement, following middle age"** and **our aim is to encourage groups of people who are no longer in full-time work to come together and continue their enjoyment of learning subjects of interest to them.**



**I explain** that **Harrogate u3a** is a self help organisation we currently have **over 1,000 members** mostly living in the HG post code areas; and most of our activities take place in venues located in **Harrogate** or **Knaresborough**.

**I estimate** that we provide **about 150 hours** of courses/activities in a month which are provided by **over 70 groups** running a wide range of activities. We have no paid staff and all group activities are self financing and as an autonomous organisation our ruling body is a committee of volunteer members working within a Charity Commission's approved constitution.

# Anything but Grey

## Choosing a colourful Third Age

We spent an afternoon at **Ripon Races** and on one of the coldest days of the winter we warmed ourselves at the **Turkish Baths**.



We rounded off 2024 with a **floristry** workshop, each taking home a **Christmas wreath** for our front door.



We took a **Dance Class** and learnt how to mix a **White Lady Cocktail**



We continue to challenge ourselves with new experiences. We have joined in the local **Park Run**, tried out **Archery** and **Go Karting**.



*Plans for the next few months include **Bowling, Horse Riding, Open Water Swimming** and **dancing the afternoon away at a Daytime Disco***

**Anything but Grey** welcomes all u3a members who are interested in trying out new experiences as well as those who can volunteer to share their own favourite activities with the group.

*Sue Howes*

## Walking with a Purpose in March

We set off from Harrogate by train to Horsforth to walk down Old Mill Beck, seeing where once there were many mills connected with the woollen industry from the 1700s and later 1800s.

There are **Millponds** left from those times including one which is now home to protected crested newts (we did not spot any!). The various mills changed hands many times and were repurposed. We saw the large **soaking tanks** left from the paper mills and then later used by dye manufacturers. One of the mills eventually made steel pins which, by the beginning of the twentieth century, became needles for windup gramophones.

The current owners of **Stephenson's Mill** came out to tell us about soap-making today, once used to wash wool and now to grace our bathrooms. There is little to see today of these old mills as we followed the beck through ancient woodland. From here we crossed the ring road and made our way through **Hawkswoods**, (another area of ancient woodland) and on to the **Canal** where we looked at **Pollard's Iron Bridge**, the second oldest one in the country. Here a fish ladder, one of a series, has been built to encourage salmon to swim up the **Aire** from the

*"The idea is to walk, usually no more than 5 miles, with the aim of visiting somewhere interesting of cultural, scenic or industrial heritage. It could be a mine, an ancient church, a bit of prehistoric architecture, the source of a river or even a beautiful bluebell wood."*

Humber to spawn. Watch this space!

We followed the canal towards **Kirkstall Abbey** where we stopped for refreshments and then visited **Abbey House Museum** which has just been reopened from closure. This is well worth a visit with its reconstructed Victorian Streets. The walk finished at Headingley Station and the train back to Harrogate.



The group has been a bit slow to get started but is now settling down, although with only about 20% of the members of the group participating! The object is to walk to sites of historical and cultural interest involving a distance of 5-6 miles and trying to use public transport. Future walks planned include the **lead mines around Grassington**, the **snickets of York** and the **Ripon Wetlands**.

***New members are welcome particularly if they are prepared to contribute either with a walk or with some ideas and research. Contact Phil Johnston***

*We've now moved to a larger room at St Paul's URC, Harrogate, where the doors are opened for us at 1.45 pm and we can seat loads of people.*

***So do join us when you can!***

### Recent speakers include

**Tony Lewis**, who gave an excellent talk on the UK gas industry, including his experiences of working on the mind-blowing project to put a 5km tunnel under the river Humber.



*Tony suggests readers visit the National Grid website, where there's a good story about the Humber Tunnel*

<https://www.nationalgrid.com/world-record-breaking-pipeline-insertion-river-humber-gas-project-now-complete>

*Apart from Alan and Jonathan, all of our speakers are group members.*

***A big thank you  
to you all!***

*Val M.*

**Tony Wren** gave us pause for thought about **contradictions and contentions in Physics.**

**Alan Greenwood and team from SSE** enlightened us about **renewable energy and battery storage in Selby.**

### Coming up are

**Rosalind Dechant** with some predictions for **Innovations in 2050**

**Ady Dawson** on **the timeline of Cat's Whiskers to FFTP**

**Roland Caulcutt** on **the scientific approach to research into business performance**

**Jonathan Denniss** from **Leeds Uni**, is coming back to update us on his **glaucoma research.**

# Mindfulness

Margaret Garner, Mindfulness Group Leader

It was good to see an article on Mindfulness in the latest u3a magazine, along with other articles encouraging us to look at ways to enhance our own wellbeing.

Part of my job as a therapist for 30 years was teaching Mindfulness. I have found the technique useful in my own life, and after the death of my husband, I thought what better way to use some of my time than to try and start a Mindfulness Group in our u3a.



The situation within the NHS means that for many of us it could be helpful to learn and use anything that may benefit our general health and approach to life, rather than wait until we have a life crisis.

Learning and practicing Mindfulness, such a valuable Life Skill, means we have a tool within us when unexpected difficulties arise. Some have used the term "a holiday for the head".

For the last 18 months our group has been meeting every second and fourth Tuesday morning.

For myself it has been a privilege to lead a warm and supportive Group, introducing them to the necessary techniques to use and understand Mindfulness.

On occasion we also enjoy going for Mindfulness Walks and Mindfulness Coffee.

**Some comments made by members -**

*"When I had to have lot of work done in the house, I realised how calm I was. In the past I would have got myself into a "stew". Mindfulness did help."*

*"When in a traffic jam, instead of getting frustrated and uptight, I found myself enjoying looking at my surroundings."*

*"I'm starting to take some time out to breathe myself calm."*

**Anyone who would like to join our group, whether new to the discipline or with experience, please get in touch via the u3a website Groups Section.**

# Exhibition of Paintings organised by Brian Graham at the Central Library

(a few examples shown here to give  
some idea of the variety of styles)



"Autumn Walk"  
by Linda Thompson  
Acrylics £25



"Desert"  
by Linda Thompson  
Acrylics £25



"Plant"  
by Linda Thompson  
Acrylics £25



## Exhibition of Paintings

by Members of the Painting Group of

**HARROGATE U3A**

If you wish to purchase a painting,  
please contact the Librarian



"Vineyard"  
by Linda Thompson  
Acrylics £25



"Sunflowers"  
by Linda Thompson  
Acrylics £25

## **"Come, share your love of poetry in all its forms"**

A piece about the Poetry Group in the style of the current Poet Laureate

*This was 'written' by ChatGPT*

*I don't think Simon Armitage has anything to worry about!*

### Reading Poetry (after Armitage)

It starts with a book I didn't mean to pick —  
just sitting there, spine out, smug as anything.  
Probably smelled of dust and leftover teenage angst.  
I open it anyway.

Page one:

some bloke talking about a field,  
but not in the farming sense.  
More like — the field as metaphor,  
the field as a feeling.  
I read on.

There's a girl made of salt.  
A clock that forgets to tick.  
A heart like a pint glass  
cracked on the rim but still holding.

And I'm thinking,  
this isn't a poem.  
This is a bloke in a pub,  
three drinks in,  
telling me how the world  
once broke him  
gently.

And that's it.



Richard Cyster  
Poetry Group

## In Conversation Group

We now meet in Harrogate (evenings) and Knaresborough (afternoons), with members choosing the location and timing that suit them best. Discussion topics are chosen by members in advance, thereby giving a bit of time for research!

The Harrogate group has recently delved into

“Democracy and is it working?”

“Why people who can, don’t work”

“Why do men leave their family?”

Artificial Intelligence

Assisted Dying

Foreign Aid

There is no topic fixed for our May meeting, but to quote a very eminent member, *“it will be topical and often an ethical dilemma with no simple solution!”*

The **Knaresborough** group’s discussions have included

“Christmas – what’s the point?”

“BBC news gathering, provoking and falling standards”

They have **The cost of Social Care** and **“Big Pharma”** lined up

and possible future topics include **Tariffs** and **British Steel**

**My thanks to Jan Nolan for her hard work in holding the Knaresborough group together.**

*If you’re interested or need any more info, please get in touch with **Val Michie***

## Painting for Pleasure

The Painting for Pleasure group has increased in membership and now has a waiting list.

Members of the **oil group** have been producing oil paintings of buildings, animals and portraits. They have grown in confidence and techniques with the assistance of Juliette. We are looking forward to oil paintings in our exhibitions.

Members of the **mixed media group** have produced watercolours of landscape trees and flowers and I have encouraged them to exhibit them in our exhibitions.



Members of the **drawing group** have increased in number thanks to Pat who has guided their drawing techniques. Pat has shared her experience and expert knowledge in using pastels and charcoals in which the members have drawn trees, landscapes and sheep. Group members have learnt various drawing techniques and now look at art in a different way. Who would have thought trees or sheep could be so complex?

I have planned a workshop in July for **Collages**. Also, days out will be planned for the summer to practise our newly learnt skills. Greta works very hard to organise and plan our art exhibition in Woodfield Library while Brian encourages the group to submit paintings for his art exhibitions in the main library.

We are looking forward to more great painting and drawing. Our themes for this year are **Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter**.



*Many thanks to Janet, Ann, Juliette and Pat for assisting me with the management of the group and to all the members who support the group.*

*Liz*

## What the Naturalists group did in 2024

*Isobel Beard*

During the winter months we meet indoors and have a variety of speakers.

Subjects last year included 'In the Realm of the Polar bear', 'Geology of some of Yorkshire's beauty spots' and 'Wildlife of Crete'.



otter at Wildfowl Centre

Our coach trip last May was to **Washington Wildfowl and Wetland Centre** where we saw various exotic birds and the otters; we then enjoyed a meal together on the way home.

In spring and summer we go out and about. In June we visited **Malham Tarn** and walked around the boardwalks looking at various wildflowers in the specialist habitat.



Malham Tarn

Visits were also made to **Upper Nidderdale** on a very windy day where Brian Wood discussed the recovery of nature; and to the **Hoffman Kiln** near Settle followed by a picnic lunch beside the **River Nidd**.



marsh orchid & yellow rattle



Hoffman Kiln



Upper Nidderdale on a very windy day



elephant hawk moth caterpillar



ragged robin



picnic lunch by the Wharfe

# “Auf gut Deutsch”



When German school teacher Christiane Heinen was visiting German Group leader John Barton recently she took time out from her holiday to lead the group’s regular Monday morning meeting. She had prepared a presentation about **Martin Luther, especially the way his translation of the Bible influenced the development of the German language.**



In Luther’s day Germans spoke a range of sometimes mutually incomprehensible regional dialects. Luther chose language that was comprehensible across the different dialects and in so doing promoted linguistic unity and standardisation laying the foundations for German as it is spoken today.

Thanks to the recently invented printing press, half a million copies of Luther’s Bible were printed and distributed in his lifetime, promoting literacy in the German population.

We were impressed to learn that it took Martin Luther only 73 days to translate the entire New Testament; we were surprised to learn that he also wrote songs and fables and rather taken aback to read a couple of rather scurrilous quotes from him about farts. –

“Aus einem verzagten Arsch kommt kein fröhlicher Furz.”  
“Von einem toten Hund kann man keinen warmen Furz verlangen.”



*'No happy fart comes out of a despondent arse.'  
'You can't expect a warm fart from a dead dog.'*

Luther was a man of the people who spoke their language; he also seems to have had a belligerent character, going to great lengths to ensure that his translation of the Bible really would be accessible to all., no matter how crude. So, no more high-falutin words to express incomprehensible ideas; instead, simple words combined to convey a familiar everyday situation pictorially.

He had a great talent as a story-teller and introduced many new words and idioms which are still used in everyday German (*and English*).

### Das Maul halten

*keep one's mouth shut*

### Im Dunkeln tappen

*grope in the dark*

It's always a very special lesson when we are able to learn from a native German speaker; at other times we find our topics from German language news media. In recent months we have looked at **mass tourism, homeopathy** and **driving in old age**.



*Fräulein Lieser  
Bild von Gustav Klimt*

**Feuer + Eifer = Feuereifer**  
*fire + fervour enthusiasm, zeal*

**Sünden + Bock = Sündenbock**  
*sins + buck scapegoat*

**Schand + Fleck = Schandfleck**  
*shame + stain blot*

**Morgen + Land = Morgenland**  
*morning + country Orient*

**Gewißen + Biße = Gewißenbiße**  
*conscience + bites remorse*

**Macht+ Wort = Machtwort**  
*power + word word of command*

**Denk + Zettel = Denkart**  
*think + note lesson*

**Herz + Lust = Herzenslust**  
*heart + pleasure heart's desire*

**Lock + Vogel = Lockenvogel**  
*lure + bird decoy*

**At our next meeting we shall be looking at the auction sale of a recently rediscovered portrait by Gustav Klimt.**

# History of Art

Brian Souter, History of Art Group Leader

By the time you read this, the History of Art group will be on their summer break until 10<sup>th</sup> September. The 2024-25 programme looked at **contemporary art**, including the Turner Prize winners **Grayson Perry, Tracy Emin, Damian Hurst** and **Antony Gormley** with his **Angel of the North**, the most viewed artwork in the world.

Standing proudly beside the A1 motorway it is seen by one person every second, 90,000 per day, 33 million per year. It is "A focus of hope at a painful time of transition for the people of the Northeast, bearing witness to the hundreds and thousands of colliery workers who had mined coal beneath the surface for over 300 years, and to Tyneside's engineering and ship building."



We also looked at **Banksy's Graffiti art**, perhaps the most controversial and well known artist at the present time with his politically cutting edge images, who has made art relevant again.

The group's away day this year was to Bradford, to see the work of local boy made good **David Hockney** at **Cartwright Hall** and **Salt's Mill**. The impressive Cartwright Hall opened as an Art Gallery in 1904 and is free to enter. It has a gallery devoted to Hockney's early works from his schooldays, but it also has a **Lowry** and a **Turner** and a work by **Joshua Reynolds**.

David Hockney said, "I used to love going to Cartwright Hall as a kid, it was the only place in Bradford I could see real paintings."



On a bright and warm sunny day, the group enjoyed the gardens as well before moving on to **Salt's Mill**, which houses some



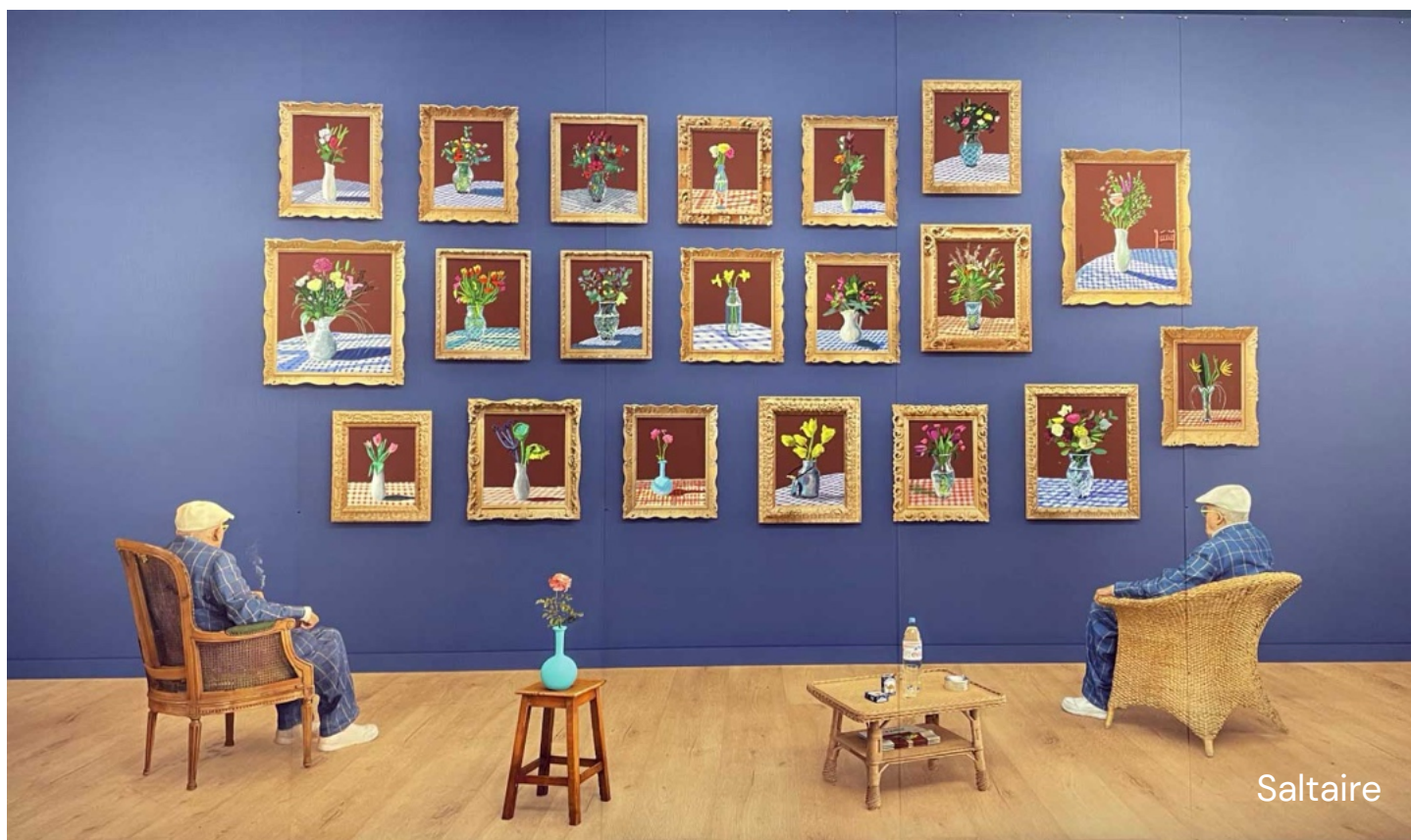
of Hockney's latest works. **Jonathan Silver** was nine years younger than David Hockney who also attended Bradford Grammar School. Silver worked on the school magazine and when he met Hockney, in his father's Burger bar, he persuaded him to design a cover for the magazine. They became friends and when Silver acquired Salt's Mill, in 1987, he had the idea of setting up a gallery dedicated to displaying Hockney's work. Silver died in 1997, aged 48, having helped turn **Saltaire** into a **World Heritage site**.

**Since starting, in October 2006**, the History of Art group has had a total of 218 meetings, but this 'academic' year has seen the largest attendances with a 103 turning up for the talk on **Munnings, Lowry and Heath Robinson**. With 134 members, and an average attendance of 80, the group is possibly one of the largest in any u3a in the UK. We are fortunate that we can meet at Gracious Street Methodist Church (COGS) in Knaresborough, which is large enough to accommodate us, and enables us to sit and chat, after the talks, over teas, coffee and biscuits, in the building's Coffee Bar. With such large numbers we can keep the subscriptions low, so £10 will get you 14 talks including refreshments. We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month from September through to the end of April.

**Starting in September** we will turn our attention to the **Renaissance**, but no renewals or joiners are available until Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> August. Look on the Harrogate u3a website for details on how to join, or renew, in August when the programme will be confirmed.



Cartwright Hall



Saltaire

## Photography Group

The Photography Group have planned their monthly programmes for 2025 where members submit images for topics such as **Night Photography** and **Leading Lines**.

There will also be presentations on subjects of interest such as **Backlighting** and **Composition**. Events such as a treasure hunt and photo challenge are included in our programme, together with practical sessions.





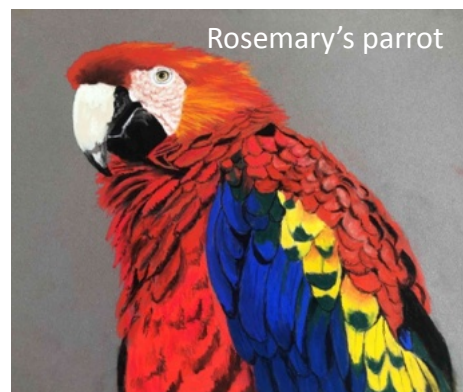
The highlight of our year is always **our annual exhibition at St Peter's Church from 11th to 16th August 2025**. Visitors will be given the chance to vote for their favourite images to be included in our calendar for 2026.



## Painting and Drawing Group

Sue Huskins, Group Leader

The last few months have been busy and productive ones for the group which has been up to capacity continuously, having welcomed some new members after the Showcase last September and again after Christmas. We keep a small waiting list for those we cannot fit in. The size of the group is limited by the size



Rosemary's parrot

of the room which we use at Community House, but the venue has many advantages including being reasonably close to Harrogate town centre and being accessible; there's also a conveniently located kitchen for making our afternoon tea as well as being somewhere we can wash our paint brushes!



Kate's self portrait

During the 11-week autumn term we worked in a variety of media with members encouraged to get out of their "comfort zone" and try out something different from their usual preferred approach. However, some kept happily to what they know and produced some very satisfying work anyway! Five people (**Carol, Kate, Margaret H, Rosemary and Sue**) produced finished work which they were happy to submit to the **December exhibition in Harrogate Central Library**, organised by Brian Graham. Pastel drawings and watercolour paintings were the firm favourites with flowers, fruit, birds and animals portrayed. The term ended with a Christmas lunch at Al Bivio on Hornbeam Park, kindly organised by Helga.



self portrait

We had a longer than expected break through December and into January because of the week of snow then icy conditions which kept many of us confined to home. However, the extreme weather did provide plenty of inspiration for winter themed artwork and then the desperate desire for signs of spring provided further inspiration.



Margaret H's butterfly



Rosemary's blue budgie

When we got back together in the middle of January there was lots of discussion about the merits of different types of colour pencils and pencil sharpeners and comparison of newly acquired art materials post-Christmas. Once we got down to work a favourite topic of the term was "**self-portrait in the style of...**" with Picasso and Van Gogh being favoured. Spring flowers, landscapes, sunsets, snow scenes and a beautiful butterfly also featured (thanks to **Rosemary, Margaret M, Carol, Sue and Margaret H**).



hellebore and snowdrops

Now that Spring has arrived so gloriously, we will be looking ahead to the summer term and topics reflecting heat and holidays, flowery abundance and coastal delights, all to be rendered in pencil and pastel,



Rosemary's tulips

acrylic and watercolour on paper or board as desired. And we won't be forgetting composition, colour and form or the inspiration of favourite artists.



Margaret M's houses on the hill



boys with snowman



boys with sledge



Carol's Sunrise



Kate's Dubrovnik



Carol's Antarctica

# Fake News and AI

Artificial Intelligence

- The opportunities
  - To be a trusted source of information
  - To adapt to new technology
  - To have global reach
  - Younger generations expect to pay

The fragmentation of news content ...

- The 'truth' is now found through multiple sources
- Explosion of politically partisan news outlets
- A loss of balance

**“Cole Porter - his life and music”  
a mixture of anecdotes and music”**



Social Media:

- The birth of algorithmic content
- Anonymous or fake accounts
- Anyone can spread 'misinformation' - information that purports to be fact that isn't.

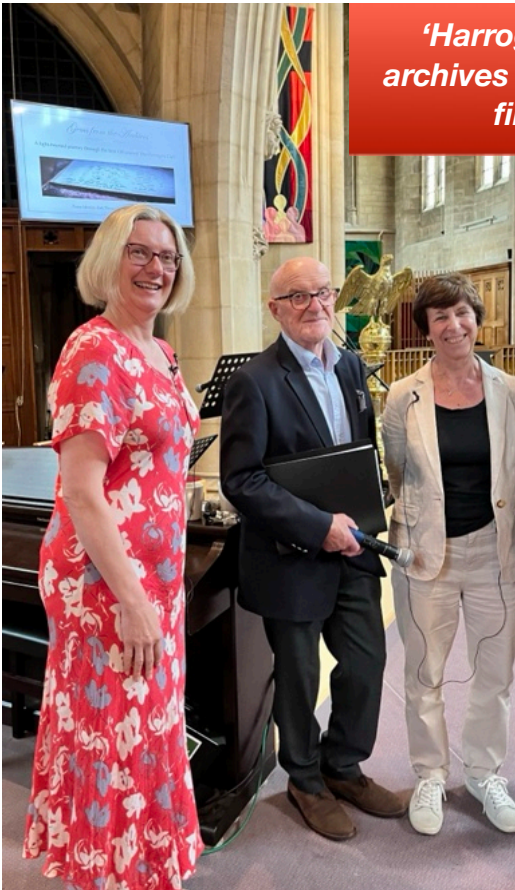


**YORKSHIRE DIALECT SOCIETY**

ESTABLISHED 1897

[www.yorkshiredialectsociety.org.uk](http://www.yorkshiredialectsociety.org.uk)

**‘Harrogate history told from the archives of the Harrogate Club by its first female president’**



**“The Trials and Tribulations of a Theatre Director”**





**Brian Souter**  
**“Why Art and History of Art are Important”**



**Robert Ogden**  
**“Pharaohs, Royalty and Harrogate”**  
**A history over five generations of the family firm**  
*The founder of the Harrogate jewellery business, James R Ogden was a friend of Howard Carter, the discoverer of the tomb of Tutankhamen. Hear about his invitation to the Valley of the Kings to value and weigh the gold found there and being one of the first people in 3,000 years to enter the tomb.*

**“Why Putin thinks Ukraine belongs to him and why he is wrong”**  
*“from Vlad the Great to Paddington Bear”*  
*apparently in previous life the Ukrainian president voiced Paddington Bear*

**with thanks to all the smiling volunteers!**

**... without them there would be no tea or coffee offered on arrival, no opportunity to sit down for a chat or even find out more about other Hu3a activities.**



# Going Gently

## Planning Ahead for Old Age and Afterwards



*"Course was well prepared, practical and conducted with sensitivity"*

*"The two leaders showed gentleness, wisdom and calmness and appeared both caring and*

*"My knowledge is much greater and it has enabled me to look at my affairs objectively and focus on what is important"*

*"Good title for course - it was all about "Going Gently"*

Picture a courtroom and in the dock is sitting a large, glum-looking elephant being harangued by a lawyer. The lawyer is saying:

*"If you were in the room the whole time, how come we cannot find a single witness to corroborate your story?"*

This course aims to ensure more talking in the rooms of Harrogate, and far fewer elephants!

**A new course starts on 26th September**, meeting every other Friday in central Harrogate.

This course covers the following:

- Planning for Death and Talking Through with Your Family
- The Question of Care
- Wills, Powers of Attorney & Advance Decisions
- After Death and Probate
- Funeral Planning
- Our version of a 'Wake'

*I have run 6 courses so far (plus one on-line) and am also about to start a course for members of Ripon u3a.*

*Richard Cyster*

## Breakfast Group 2

Jenny Moore and Jon Egerszegi

We are a new breakfast group, open to anyone who would like to join us. We aim to try a different venue each month, either in town or slightly further afield. We visit independent cafés only – and there are so many to choose from!

The group meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 9:30am, allowing us to make use of our bus passes to get into town.



Our first breakfast outing was to **Quirky Farm Bistro** in Harrogate, where we enjoyed an excellent meal. Group members tried everything from salmon and avocado sandwiches to a full English breakfast.

At our next meeting, on the 7th of May, we'll be visiting **Baltzersen's Bakeri** for a Scandinavian-style breakfast. The group decides where to go next, so we look forward to a lively discussion over breakfast on the 4th of June.

**Welcome to our Breakfast Group!**

*Hello everyone*

*I'm **Jonathan Doherty** and I am the **U3A Subject Adviser for Ageing and Learning**. Both topics underpin all activities we do in Harrogate U3As. The "golden threads" you might say and ones I am passionate about sharing with you. Research tells us that as a nation we are living longer. Members in their 50s, 60s, 70s and 80+ years are challenging misconceptions about reduced capacities accompanying getting older. Instead, we see plenty of evidence of members turning back their biological clocks by engaging in activities such as walking, gardening, Tai Chi, etc celebrating creativity, adaptability and wisdom.*

*Lifelong learning is the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of ageing of the World Health Organisation and I believe learning is for life! The u3a model of non-formal learning is the one we use in our group activities and is a really powerful way of learning. Read more about this in the **Learn to Live report** available at [u3a - Learn to Live](#).*

*In my page at [u3a - Ageing and Learning](#) I am building up examples of the above and backing this up with evidence from research. I'd love to hear your story. Tell me what group you belong to; why you like it and what you learn from it. A photograph of you doing this would be great but not essential. I'd very much love to hear from you!*

*Please contact me at my **Subject Adviser page** at [u3a - Contact the adviser, Jonathan](#)*

## On the one hand ...

### Reading Group 3

*"interesting and well-written if not enjoyable given the subject matter"*

*"Applebaum's attempt to understand the psychology of those who turn to far right nationalism was interesting as were the some of the reasons she suggested for people's attraction to simple ideas (so they don't need to deal with complexity), nostalgia for times that were (supposedly) better, and an apocalyptic world-view coupled with deep pessimism."*

*"chilling - I started to read it on the day that Trump was inaugurated - many of the points made in the book were playing out in real time with the comments about truth and lies particularly resonating"*

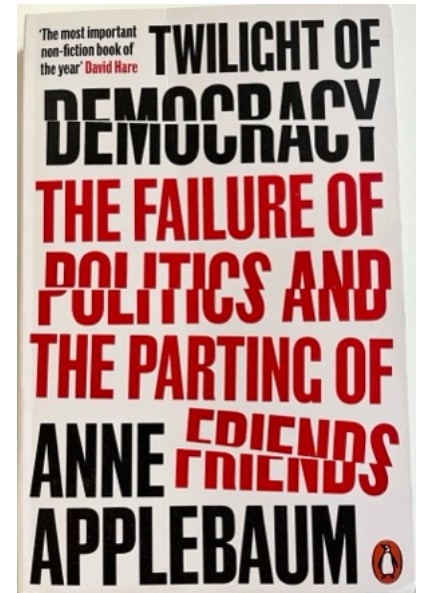
*"This is a book I'd never have read had it not been for the reading group but I'm glad that I did - sadly, it has a resonance with the political direction we seem to be going in in the UK and other parts of the world".*

*"I found the book calming in many ways"*

*Were the guests at the New Year's Eve Party actually good friends or good working acquaintances given the multinational context in which the author worked?*

*"Is it possible to maintain friendships as individuals' political views change or diverge over time?"*

"There was also a brief discussion of some tools mentioned by the author - **continual discrediting of the media** to a point where nobody believes that what they are saying is truthful  
**"whataboutism"** = an argument for moral equivalence giving licence to treat people badly as opposed to behaviour based on



*"I found it fascinating given that Trump often makes no sense when you actually listen to what he says, often sounding illiterate, simply just repeating what the last person said to him."*

**Applebaum's quote from Plato was noted:**

**"democracy is nothing more than a staging point on the road to tyranny."**

"The book will stay with me for a long time."

"Message of following your dreams is strong for any generation, whatever they are."

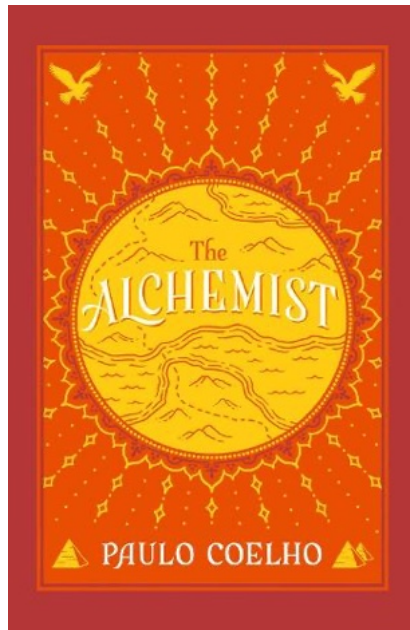
"Plot seemed to meander."

"It was easy to read, short and you could glide through it."

"I found it difficult and confusing."

"liked the end - comfortable symmetry."

"full of meaningful life lessons - wonder at the beauty around you, persevere, welcome interactions from others no matter how different they are to you."



"It was a balance of power tale with the fight in the desert- once the men had sorted it out it would be OK again."

"moralising and obvious."

"simple-thinking."

"characters were not named and seemed two-dimensional.."

"Recipe for a happy and successful life was pie in the sky."

"Why was it called The Alchemist?"

"Why was Fatima the only named character?"

"Was it aimed more at young adults/teenagers?"

"Would you give it to a teenager nowadays?"

"Is it set in a particular time?  
Seems timeless and little context.  
True for all people."

"Why were the pyramids significant as he seemed to turn round as soon as he saw them?"

**Paulo Coelho's** book was originally published in 1988 in Portuguese and was translated in 1994ish. It was picked because **Ebony Rainford-Brent** (first black England Cricket player) chose it for her book on Desert Island Discs - every time she reads it, she finds something new.

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**with many thanks to all the Harrogate u3a members who  
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*Catherine S, Jean T and Beulah C*