



CRAVEN U3A NEWSLETTER

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Dates for your Diary:

10 February – Coffee morning with speaker at Champions, 10 for 10.30 am

9 March – Coffee morning with speaker at Champions, 10 for 10.30 am

Looking back to Christmas

36 members and guests enjoyed an early Christmas evening meal at Craven College Bistro on Wednesday, 29 November. It was nice to return to a tradition from before the Covid pandemic. The Three Peaks Bistro is now part of Aireville Campus. It was a cold and frosty evening - just right for a Christmas meal - but we were given a warm welcome, assisted by a virtual roaring fire!

There was a choice of starter: soup or smoked salmon. The main course was turkey, sea bass or chestnut risotto and, for dessert, traditional plum pudding or pavlova. The food was perfectly cooked and presented by trainee chefs and we were served by students, with the assistance of a tutor. Conversation flowed and a pleasant evening was had by all.



The carol concert at Christ Church on 13 December was very well attended and u3a members were in fine voice, backed by the magnificent organist Robert Marsh, who kept up the tempo between the readings. Delicious tea and cakes followed. We left feeling cheerful and festive.

A cautionary tale

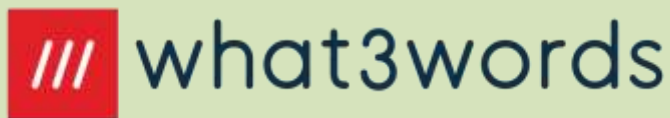
Whilst staying at Rosedale Abbey near Pickering in early December a heavy snowfall overnight blocked many roads including the main road between Pickering and Whitby. Sensible people would have hunkered down, and waited for the roads to be cleared, but not this numpty. I was determined to get to either Sandsend or Saltburn to walk the dog on the sands (oh yes).

Heygate Bank from Rosedale Abbey to the Whitby coastal road (some 15-miles) was still open and off I went; common sense left the room. The snow became even more hazardous with the temperature well below zero, and yes, you've guessed it, the car glided into a ditch ending at a 45-degree angle with no chance of getting out without help.

After contacting my rescue service, almost the first question was 'Do you have **What3Words** app on your phone?' and Yes, I did. I quickly found the unique three word combination for my location and the call handler immediately knew just where I was in this remote moorland area. Three hours later I was on my way and amazingly with no damage to the car, just relief.

The reason for sharing my embarrassment is: if you only have one app on your phone, please make it **What3Words**.

Anonymous



What3words divides the entire world into a grid of 57 trillion 3-by-3 metre (10ft x 10ft) squares, each of which has a unique three-word address. It is free for anyone to use. The company states that its revenue comes from charging businesses that benefit from its products. Download from the App Store for iPhones or from GooglePlay for Android phones. Quiz aficionados may be interested to know that one of its founders is Jack Waley-Cohen, who dreams up the questions on Only Connect (BBC2). Ed.

Improvisation classes - jazz and popular music

Would you like to develop your creative side? I am hoping to start a new Musical Improvisation class in September. You would be able to learn how to improvise around a melody and its chord sequence; jazz based but also the music styles – Smooth Jazz, R&B, Soul, Pop, Blues.

Any instrument would be fine, but you will need to have about 5 years' experience on your instrument, already be playing in a band or orchestra and have some practical knowledge of scales and arpeggios.

The classes will be aimed both at beginners to improvisation or those with some experience/competency. The content would be a mix of theory, practical demonstration and individual session.

The theory will cover the subjects of harmony and chord progressions including:

- Major and minor scales,
- Dominant 7th and Sustained chords
- Diatonic and Pentatonic scales
- Creating motives
- Cycle of 5th
- Jazz articulation
- basic chord progressions



The Practical session will include Pre-recorded backing tracks and/or Guitar or Piano accompaniment.

In addition, and to support this course, if there are any **piano and/or guitars players** out there who would like to be involved, please let me know.

If so, it may be possible to get a rhythm section together and so also wanted are a **drummer and bass player**.

If you think you may be interested in these classes, please let me know. I would like to try and gauge the level of interest.

Chris Brown - chriswbrown1000@outlook.com

Coffee mornings

Monthly meetings on the second Saturday of each month continue in 2024. In December u3a member Bunty Leder returned to regale us with her hilarious experiences as a BOAC air hostess in the 1960s.



Then last Saturday Richard Handscombe told us all about Yorkshire Air Ambulance, which has progressed from a tiny start-up in 2000 to a state-of-the-art service, flying 4-5 times each day and training others. All without Government funding, and entirely reliant on donations.

On 10 February there will be a speaker from NHS England, and on 9 March Robin Taylor will talk about working as a shoe designer.

Get Fit!

John Dixon still has a couple of places available in his Aerobics Strength & Fitness Group, Wednesdays 2pm at Sandylands Gym. Weight training, body flexibility and aerobic exercise. Contact John on 01756 461494

A 'Rubbish' Day out

I have arranged a community group tour of the Allerton Park Waste Recovery Park near Knaresborough on **6 March 2024** at 2 pm. This is where all our household rubbish ends up, instead of going straight to landfill. What happens there really is pretty amazing... Please let me know if you would like to come along. The tour lasts up to 2 hours and is free of charge. Numbers are limited, so first-come first-served. Car-sharing will be organised.

Liz Morrison

elizam2207@gmail.com



Byzantium: Bright star in the Dark Ages

An autumn term 2023 course led by Nigel Holden and Jane Houlton, this overview of over a thousand years of Byzantine history was rapidly booked up.

Who is this course for? You can start knowing little or nothing of the history of a state that existed as a separate entity from the early fourth century until the conquest by the Ottoman Turks of Constantinople in 1453. Even if you have some background, you will still add to your knowledge of an extraordinary civilisation, effectively the last survivor of the ancient world.

Nigel and Jane aimed to provide a mixture of a chronological progression and thematic lectures. With a multiplicity of emperors, some occupying the throne for the briefest of times, Nigel started in 284 with the problems of the late Roman empire and smoothly took us through the rise of Constantine I and the consolidation of the separation of the eastern and western empires. Of course, there are stars – Justinian and his consort, Theodora, who jointly presided over the revival of the extent of the empire, supported by their general Belisarius and were responsible for the construction of Hagia Sophia, a jewel among churches.

The Justinian panel from
Basilica San Vitale,
Ravenna. Date 547.
Attribution to "Image via
Wikimedia Commons
©The Yorck Project"



Constantine began the rise of Christianity and its impact is well covered by Jane, including the importance of icons, the reactionary iconoclastic movement and the continuing debates on the nature of Jesus. Thematic coverage included the icon paintings and mosaics and an exploration of the relative conservatism of Byzantine art. All the course PowerPoint

presentations were well illustrated, but the images of icons, cameos and jewellery are especially stunning.

Gradually the Byzantium empire came under increasing pressure. Successive Popes did not see themselves as the equals of the Byzantine patriarchs and the successive church councils which set out to resolve the nature of the Trinity, proved problematic to the bishop of Rome. The rise of the Frankish empire and the invention of the Donation of Constantine, assigning temporal control of Italy to the Pope preceded the final schism in 1054.



Blachernitissa
cameo, Byzantine
11th-12th centuries,
Kremlin

Writing this in November, still to come is the full impact of the rise of Islam, but Jane neatly connected the influence of building forms in Byzantine churches on mosques as well as later Orthodox churches through eastern Europe, Ukraine and Russia.

Any disappointments so far? Only one very minor one. One of my early introductions to Byzantine imagery was the stunning mosaic images of Justinian, Theodora and their court in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, which haven't made it into the presentations. Perhaps a future year. So, any repeat of this course is definitely recommended!

David Mander

THE NIGHT SKY IN CRAVEN - Keith Berrington

Look out for meteors in early January. This Quadrantid meteor shower is among the strongest of the year, with 40-100 meteors per hour on a clear night.

Jupiter still shines very brightly, in the south at 8 pm. Venus is a bright star in the morning, but rather close to sunrise. Other planets seem elusive at present.

To the left of Jupiter we have the pretty Pleiades star cluster, the 'seven sisters'. Although six stars are clearly visible, there are hundreds in the Pleiades cluster. They are young hot stars, formed when dinosaurs roamed the earth, and are already halfway through their heavenly lives.

The Earth is closest to the Sun now, as it is every January, due to Earth's elliptical orbit. This may seem paradoxical, given that it is midwinter. If you want to know more about our place in the universe, join us in the u3a Astronomy group.

A DISCOVERY - A TRUE STORY OF A COCHLEAR IMPLANT

"You'll probably find that you can hear environmental sounds very quickly", said Jill, the Speech and Language Therapist at the BRI. Mentally, I brushed it aside. Not interested.

"Speech will be harder, Vera, because it takes the brain longer to get used to. It takes practice, but you'll get there".

Speech. That's what I wanted. It was all I wanted. I wanted to be able to talk to my husband over supper again, in our own kitchen. I wanted to be able to talk to a friend, without having to drag her to a quiet place, sit her opposite me and concentrate feverishly. If speech took hard work I'd put in hard work. If it took patience I'd be patient. If it took practice then let's start now.

I didn't care about birdsong, which was the environmental sound most often cited. My lovely husband Nigel kept me updated on the goings-on of birds (the curlews returning, a thrush singing) and I was pleased that he did, but the loss didn't bother me. Losing speech hurt horribly, like a massive kick in the gut.

Then the operation and, three weeks later, switch-on. We went home, my right ear full of high pitched squeaks and screeches. I went to the kitchen to make a cuppa. I stirred the cup. TINCKLE, TINCKLE, TINCKLE it went. I stopped and looked down. Stirred again. TINCKLE TINCKLE - the sound a teaspoon makes when you stir a cup of tea. I'd completely forgotten it did that. In my recent world it never had. More a THUD, THUD, THUD.

In the kitchen the light switch SNAPPED when you turned it on. A very loud BEEEP let you know that the washing machine had reached the end of the spin cycle (who knew? I didn't...). Out for a walk on a frosty morning my dogs paws SQUEAKED on the grass.

And do you know what? I made a discovery. I did care. Quite a lot. I cried, whenever a sound came back. When Spring came and the birds astonished me. Had they always been so LOUD? Up on the moor above our house when I heard skylarks. And one day I dashed back home to tell a delighted Nigel that I'd heard a b***** CURLEW. My own curlew, Nigel, I heard it myself!!

By then I had speech too. It hadn't taken as long as we feared it might. Brain had been mighty confused but very quickly worked out that the mysterious squeaks were consonants. (CONSONANTS! Who'd have thought it?) I'd practised but it hadn't been that hard. And before long I could chat to my beloved in the kitchen and hear friends in noisy cafes. It was all I'd longed for and hadn't dared hope the cochlear implant would give me.

But every year when Spring comes I remember that discovery – that birds sing their hearts out and I really, really care.

(If you're interested in cochlear implants I had a blog from February 2016 to April 2019, covering the period when I got mine. You can find it at www.morethanabitdeaf.com).

Vera Brearey

2-HOUR HIKING: a new u3a group

Exciting plans are afoot to start a new group dedicated to 2-hour hikes in Skipton's lovely surroundings. The idea is to have regular group hiking that only takes the morning, allowing you to do other things in the afternoon.

Initially the hikes are planned for Tuesday mornings from 30 January to 19 March, 10 am to 12 noon, up to 5 miles, at a pace both exhilarating and companionable. Led by Keith & Wendy, we take in the usual Dales environment of ups and downs and variable footpaths. Each hike has a goal, a point of interest to aim for. We will match with bus connections from Skipton in the Gargrave, Carleton, Embsay and Grassington directions. As these hikes finish before lunch, you do not need to bring a picnic, just something to drink. We email you details of each event a few days beforehand, and you reply if you are coming.

The 2-Hour Hiking Group would especially appeal to those who haven't time for all-day walks, and yet would value the friendship and fitness opportunities of a 2-hour group hike locally. Come and join us, via Beacon, or email Keith & Wendy Berrington at walkwalk.keith@gmail.com

GEOGRAPHY FORUM

Travel broadens the mind, they say, while curiosity fills it with wonder. And it is that curiosity and wonder which leads us to Geography Forum every Wednesday morning. The speakers are usually u3a members who have been to and researched places (sometimes not far away), and who then convey their knowledge to the rest of us in the class.

Several of the talks this autumn featured islands, ranging from Svalbard (Philip Sugden), Faroe Isles (Jo Prowse), Sri Lanka (Nick & Maggie Jarvis) and Skyros (Keith Berrington).

Other talks covered some of the many facets of England, such as hills of the Dales (Bernard Peel), Hackfall and the Picturesque (Jane Houlton) and the life of Sir Robert Peel (Graham Nolan).

Adventures in very different parts of the world included the Kumano Kudo Trail (Vic & Judy Edy), the Black Sea (Ray Bartlett) and Glass Mountains and other marvels (George Mackley).

Join us and make friends with curiosity and wonder, and with like-minded people, at St Stephens church hall 10 am Wednesdays.

As usual the **National u3a** website provides all sorts of entertainment for a cold winter day when you might want to stay indoors. For instance:

Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk One -24 Jan at 2pm

Holocaust Memorial Day-
The story of a survivor – 26 Jan at 2pm

Monthly Laughter Yoga –
30 Jan at 3.30 pm

Introduction to the Air Fryer with Simple Recipes –
8 Feb at 11.30 am

David Hockney and the Theatre – 23 Feb at 2 pm

All accessed from [here](#)