



March 2025

CRAVEN U3A NEWSLETTER

Thank you!

I want to acknowledge the contribution that Wendy and Keith Berrington, and Judith and Vic Edy, have made to our u3a over many years, as they move to pastures new. Apart from the various groups they have run Keith has served as Programme Secretary, and Judith and Vic have variously been Membership Secretary and Chair. Vic also conceived, organised and ran the Summer Programme. On behalf of the whole u3a I would like to express my heartfelt thanks, and wish you all the very best for the future. You will all be missed. Thank you.

Looking ahead

As most groups are now finishing until the new membership year, I would like to thank everyone for having faith in our u3a, renewing their membership, and group leaders for all their hard work in organising and running their groups. I also want to highlight the hard work of the Committee and all others who lend their help. I ask anyone who may be remotely interested in joining the committee to contact me or any committee member. You'll be more than welcome to observe a committee meeting and find out more.

Mick Richings, Chair

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Dates for your Diary:

12 April - Coffee morning with speaker at Champions, 10 for 10.30 am

10 May - Coffee morning with speaker at Champions, 10 for 10.30 am

14 May - Craven u3a AGM - 1.30pm at St Andrew's Church Hall

Enjoy a day at the races

A trip to the races means different things to different people. The glamorous blend of fashion and celebrity at Royal Ascot has undoubted appeal, while for others it could be a day over the jumps at Aintree which provides excitement.

But closer to home the rural charm of Ripon, known as Yorkshire's Garden Racecourse for its colourful flowerbeds and well-kept lawns, offers the chance of a fun day out with fellow u3a members as we reach our 40th anniversary.

Ripon's links to horse racing date back to the 1660s and history was made in 1723 with the first-ever race for female jockeys. The current racecourse was opened in 1900 on Boroughbridge Road and has won awards for its customer-friendly approach.



There is a varied programme of flat racing this summer and a broad range of hospitality packages to cater for groups - large or small. There are private boxes and suites overlooking the course and/or paddock area with food and drink provided.

I am proposing that any like-minded u3a members who would enjoy the experience of an afternoon's racing (maybe for the first time?) would join together to hire a box or suite.

Three possible dates are Thursday 29 May, Saturday 19 July and Tuesday 26 August. The final choice will be strongly influenced by the level of interest as these boxes/suites have wide-ranging capacities.

The estimated cost would be £45 to £55 a head and I will liaise with Ripon's hospitality office about the most appropriate venue size once I have a fairly accurate knowledge of numbers.

Please email me as soon as possible at mematters50@gmail.com if you are seriously interested in attending.

Mike Eaton

The life and music of Vivaldi - or a relaxing way to spend a morning

I love the music of the baroque, roughly 1600 to 1750. Over the years I have collected about 350 CDs of music from this era, including almost 150 of music by Handel and more than 50 of music written by Vivaldi – fortunately Judy shares my taste in music!. Over ten years ago I thought to find out if there was any interest in Craven u3a in learning about the music of the period, and so offered to lead a group looking at the life and music of Handel. This was well received, and so over the intervening years I have led groups on topics such as Early Opera, Sacred Music from the Mediaeval to the Baroque, of Handel’s Heroines, as well as repeating the talks on Handel and Vivaldi. In all these groups, the format is very much the same; I tell people something about the life and times of the composer, and play pieces of relevant music from my collection.

This year I re-ran the group looking at the life and music of Antonio Vivaldi, famous for the Four Seasons violin concertos, but in fact a composer with a much wider range than is sometimes realised. As well as hundreds of concertos, including over 200 for violin, (a quick search of “Vivaldi” on YouTube will produce a large number of videos), he wrote a considerable volume of both secular and sacred vocal music, (try searching YouTube “Vivaldi Gloria” for one of Vivaldi’s settings of the Gloria and the Dixit Dominus) and at least 49 operas (try YouTube for “Vivaldi Opera” for a large selection of individual arias and a few complete operas, although be warned, these can 2.5-3.5 hours, but some do have English subtitles so you -and I- can work out what is going on). Despite enjoying great success, both musically and financially, during his lifetime, he died in poverty more or less a forgotten figure, and the great bulk of his music was lost. The rediscovery of much of his music last century forms the main part of the story I told in the last meeting of the group.

What did participants get out of the group? If nothing else, they got to listen to some beautiful music. For myself, I got to listen again to pieces of music I thought I knew well.

Vic Edy

Good to go - with Craven u3a



Wharfedale Walking



Stretching/ Movement

Badminton



Crown Green Bowls





Table tennis



2- Hour Hikes



Aerobic fitness training



Walk to Lunch

Walking Group



Racketball



Walking Netball



Geology Walks



Stretching/Yoga



Croquet



Allotment

E-Biking



Latin Dance



Coming up

Monthly meetings – on **Saturday 12 April** Steve Warren, a local caver and geologist, will talk to us about Hidden Gems in our Landscape

Craven u3a AGM – will be held on **Wednesday 14 May** starting 1.30pm at St Andrew's Church Hall, Newmarket Street

At a bit of a loose end now classes have finished? Why not consider the National u3a online interest groups which continue year round. If you look at this link it explains how to join, how to find groups /days that might suit you. There is an amazing choice on offer, and membership costs just £12 per annum.

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/interest-groups-online/interest-groups-online-groups>

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BANG A DRUM?

Then consider joining the Craven u3a Drum Circle.

We are sounding out members to see who would be interested in joining a drum circle. No experience necessary. Drum circles have grown in popularity in recent years as a means of enjoyment whilst at the same time improving people's wellness.

The circle would involve playing a mixture of simple rhythms mainly on hand drums from African to Latin. It would be led by an experienced drummer who will help you to play. Some drums will be provided but if you have your own, please bring it along. If you already play drums and would like to assist that would be great too.

So if you fancy beating out some Afro or Latin beats please contact Anne MacDonald on anne.f.macdonald@btinternet.com

We would expect to start either Sept 25 or Jan 26 but would like to get an idea of numbers first.

Charles Green

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Railway Study Group 2023-24

Since reporting on our 2022-23 season the Railway Group continued strongly into the following season, this being our third since returning to normality after the covid pandemic. Our total membership and the weekly attendance are both about ten down on the peak figures of the pre-covid years, but we still attract a membership in the mid sixties and a weekly attendance in the mid forties.

Our 2023-24 season followed the well established formula of talks on a wide variety of railway and related topics, some given by group members and others by invited guests many being either active or retired members from the railway or related industries.

Yorkshire Railways figured strongly. We were given an account of how and why Hellifield, an extremely rural location, became a major junction on the railway network. Other talks covered a detailed account of the Grassington Branch, the explanation of Bradford's failure to ever achieve a through railway, the operation of the modern day 'Hull Trains' and reminiscences of a signalman, whose career took him to various Yorkshire locations, principally around York itself.

A little further afield we journeyed to the Lake District. We learned about the long closed lines of the Coniston Branch and the Solway Junction Railway; the latter including a huge iron viaduct, over a mile long, crossing the Solway Firth.

Historical subjects looked at various aspects of several pre-grouping railways. A conclusion to the comprehensive history of the Midland Railway was followed by an account of the Great Eastern Railway. This Company developed a significant monopoly in East Anglia and we heard how the contrasting rural, agricultural traffic and the most intensive East London suburban system were managed. The Great Central Railway's signalling system came under the spotlight, as did the Horwich Works of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. Under the intriguing title of 'Wormwood Scrubs, Cathedral of Steam' came the story of the Great Western Railway's Old Oak Common Locomotive Depot and its London area predecessors.

The modern railway scene was covered by an account of Chiltern Rail, one of the most successful companies of the privatisation era and the story of Hull Trains a successful open access operator. Something of a coup was the visit



Members of the railway Group line up in front of the P2 Locomotive



View of the P2 from the overhead gallery - substantially complete, but lacking its boiler!

of Alex Hynes, Chairman and Managing Director of Scotland's Railway. He gave an interesting and optimistic review of present Scottish Railway operation and in a lively question and answer session outlined some possible future developments.

Overseas railways were represented by the Japanese bullet trains whose origins and development were explored.

Tramways were not neglected, the session starting with a description of a special commercial promotional tour undertaken in 1910 in the USA by an inter-urban 'tramcar'. The USA inter urban network, to which we had been introduced in 2020 was a tramway system with some railway characteristics. It built up quite extensively up to the 1930s, but declined rapidly due to unsound economics and competition from road transport. Tramways then figured in our final talk which described Yorkshire's tram systems from the early horse trams through to the modern super tram systems.

For our Spring outing a sizeable coach party set off for Darlington on 10 April 2024 to view and hear about the P2 project, a trip long delayed by covid and a change of location for our hosts. The trip proved extremely interesting and was completed by visiting the NRM subsidiary museum at Shildon. Look out for a future newsletter for full details, but the pictures above are included to give a flavour of the day.

Ian Appleyard