



February 2026

## CRAVEN u3a NEWSLETTER

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***Dates for your diary:***

*14 February & 14 March – Monthly meetings at Champions, 10 for 10.30*

*21 March 2026 – 1980s Disco, Skipton Community Sports Hub*

*23 & 24 July – Summer Programme at Ermysted's.*

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### Craven u3a Summer Programme 2026 - Save the dates: 23 & 24 July

Planning is under way for the Summer Programme. It is hoped it will go ahead on the 23 & 24 July at Ermysted's Grammar School, Skipton **BUT** this will only happen if we can recruit enough speakers and facilitators. **If you would like to offer a talk, or lead a visit, please get in touch with me at lindahoole@yahoo.co.uk by 28 February.**

For those of you unfamiliar with the format, members have the opportunity to attend 4 sessions over the 2 days, plus various visits. There is always a wide range of talks and workshops on offer. Last year, we learnt about the amazing properties of seaweed; the music of George Gershwin; the golden age of Dutch art; the history of the magistracy and so much more! Members enjoyed organised tours of the Grand Mosque and Sikh Gurdwara in Bradford, guided walks round Skipton and Haworth Moor, and an energetic Latin dance session.

Morning sessions are from 10.00 - 12.30, with a tea/coffee break, and afternoon sessions run from 13.30 to about 16.00, again with a break. The cost for the 2 days is £12.00, no matter how many sessions you wish to attend. Tea, coffee and delicious cakes are available for a donation during the breaks.

So, do put the dates in your diary and please seriously consider if you would like to offer a talk. It is great fun!

*Linda Hoole*

## **Craven u3a Programme 2026/27**

This year we have over eighty activities on offer for our members, but the time has come to start work on our next year's programme, for 2026/7.

We are aiming to collect all group details by the end of March so Sandra Firm, our Venue Secretary, can get all venues booked by the end of April. Information on how we aim to collect the group details onto our database, will be explained at our Group Leader meeting on 2 March.

The Group Leaders will be informed when their bookings have been confirmed. The loss of some of our regular venues means that competition for room availability will be keen.

### **NEW GROUPS**

If anyone has a suggestion for a new activity, or might consider giving presentations on any subject, please contact myself or Wendy Brown. Currently we have no Crafting group, so if anyone is interested in facilitating a Craft group, please let us know.

The number of sessions is totally flexible as is the frequency of the sessions. A group could run weekly, fortnightly or monthly, and at any time of the year.

All the Committee members would like to say a huge thank you to all our wonderful Group Leaders, every one a volunteer.

Contact us:

[anne.f.macdonald@btinternet.com](mailto:anne.f.macdonald@btinternet.com) or [wendywoo.22@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wendywoo.22@hotmail.co.uk)



## Alpha Book Club

This is a friendly little group, whose aim is to broaden their choice of reading material. We chat together to create our list and try to include a wide range of genres. We meet once every month to talk about the characters, plot, our likes and dislikes - our discussions often end up being quite wide ranging but not too challenging. My favourite book so far has been 'Miss Benson's Beetle' by Rachel Joyce – a rip roaring adventure/comedy!

We would like to invite some new members who fancy coming along on Monday nights, once a month, at 6.15 pm, to join us. The next meeting is on Monday 9th March where members will be discussing, 'The Names' by Florence Knapp, in case you want to get a headstart with that.. Don't worry if you haven't read this book, do just come along to get a feel for what we do and meet the group. We meet at The McCarthy Building, Brewery Lane, Skipton, BD23 1DF. Please do get in touch and someone will meet you outside the building and guide you in!

It's not too late to join and if members wish we may continue over the summer.

We look forward to meeting you.

Lis Cooper ([lis\\_cooper100@hotmail.com](mailto:lis_cooper100@hotmail.com))

## 'History Happens'

But what is History? As Rudge said in the 'History Boys' film, "History is one bloody thing after another". Really? Graham Nolan put us right with his talk on 'What is history'?

Jane introduced us to 'Cabinets of Curiosities'. They originated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as collections that reflected the interests and wealth of their owners. They could be exhibited in small pieces of furniture or the collection could fill entire rooms with natural specimens, art, antiquities and curiosities from around the world. Could the Hermitage in St Petersburg be the ultimate 'Cabinet of Curiosity'?

We learnt about Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1800-1859. A historian, poet and [Whig](#) politician who served as the [Secretary at War](#) between 1839 and 1841, and as the [Paymaster General](#) between 1846 and 1848. He played a substantial role in determining [India's education policy](#), bringing in English as the official language used in secondary education.

Another talk was about NASA's human computers, particularly black female mathematicians performing complex calculations by hand before the advent of electronic computers. They had to overcome significant social and racial barriers to contribute to the space race. Their work included calculating trajectories, launch windows and emergency return paths for spaceflights. Even after the introduction of electronic computers, John Glenn asked black Katherine Johnson to manually check the calculations before his flight orbiting the world, the first American to do so.

We heard of the Gowrie Conspiracy in which the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Gowrie, a Scottish nobleman, and his brother attempted to kill or capture King James VI of Scotland in 1600. The king's retinue killed both brothers during the attack, and the king survived. The reason for the attack is shrouded in mystery. Could it be that the King owed money to the Gowrie family? Getting rid of Earl Gowrie would clear the King's debts. The Gowrie Conspiracy has implications for us today. Had the Earl succeeded in killing King James, we would not be having 'Guy Fawkes' nights!

What was the 'Year without summer'? In 1815, Mount Tambora, in modern-day Indonesia, produced one of the most powerful eruptions in recorded history. Gas and ashes released by the volcano led to a sustained period of extreme weather. Small sulphate particles were released into the

stratosphere blocking solar radiation and absorbing heat. The reduction in sunlight cooled the lower atmosphere, causing a winter that dropped temperatures in some parts of Europe by 3°C on average. Consequently, in 1816 crops failed in the northern hemisphere leading to widespread famine, food riots and migration. Are there any climate change lessons we should learn for today?

Who were the Protagonists who fought the battle of Bosworth Field? Firstly, Richard III, the last English King to die in battle, who schemed his way to the throne and even possibly murdered his nephews (the princes in the tower) along the way. The other, Henry Tudor, who despite being descended from a Welsh peasant, managed to become the last Lancastrian heir who could legitimately claim the crown. This battle ultimately changed the course of English history, ended the Wars of the Roses and was the beginning of the mighty Tudor dynasty.

Above are just some of the topics we have covered so far this season. 'History Happens', what an inspirational title! It offers so many opportunities for topics to explore.

Many thanks to Jane for all her work in providing this excellent course.

*Nick Jarvis*

### **Don't miss out – a note from Jane**

Because the 'History Happens' course from the autumn was much oversubscribed, we have arranged a **short extra course in April/May 2026 - History Extra** - for people who missed out. There are still a few places remaining; you can enrol via Beacon. There will be 5 weekly sessions, on Thursday mornings at the High Street Hub, Skipton, comprising some but not all of the original course talks.

*Jane Houlton*

## Photography group

Our photography group is a small, friendly, informal gathering of people who enjoy taking photos and sharing ideas. We have a broad mix of experience – from complete beginners to more confident photographers – and that variety is very much part of the group’s charm. There is no pressure to own specialist equipment: mobile phones are just as welcome as “proper” cameras, and everyone is encouraged to work with what they have.

We usually meet on a Friday morning once or twice a month. Sometimes we choose a theme to inspire our photography; at other times we head out on a photoshoot at a particular location. A recent example was our visit to Skipton Woods last October, which produced a wide range of images, from close-up details to atmospheric woodland scenes.



Taken by Roger

Between meetings, we stay connected by sharing a selection of our photographs on WhatsApp and Google Photos. When we do meet, we spend time looking at each other’s work and talking about it from many different perspectives. Discussions range from aesthetics and composition through to some (slightly) technical aspects, for example depth of field and length of exposure, always in a supportive and encouraging way.

Taken by Sheila





Taken by Chris

The group is friendly, relaxed and fun. If you enjoy taking photos or simply want an excuse to get outside and be creative, you would be very welcome to join us.

*Christopher Bowley*

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And here's the latest entry in our 40 word poetry challenge, which must be sung and danced to for a full appreciation!!

**U-OO-3A**

(to the tune of YMCA, with apologies!)

Old man, there's no need to feel old  
I said, old man, you can make  
yourself bold  
I said, old man, because Skipton's  
your town  
There's no need to be on your own  
  
It's fun to play with the U-OO-3A

Old man, there's a group where we  
play  
I said, old man, and we're 40 today  
With other like-minded souls, you can  
Hike, or dance, or even play crown  
green bowls

It's fun to play with the U-OO-3A

*Paul Currah*

## The Lost Music of Country Churches at Craven Museum

Diligent readers of the newsletter may remember an article in 2024 about the resurrection of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century “west gallery” tune book from Katharine Cheney’s family piano stool. The book is now on display in the Community Case at Craven Museum, together with other items from the period including an ophicleide (a large brass instrument the forerunner of the tuba), a pitch pipe used for giving the note, and a clarinet played by Janet Gregory’s great uncle at the wakes in Alstonefield Derbyshire.

Margaret Benson has loaned her quill pen and Bill Haigh a sketch plan of St Peters, Rylstone, as it may have looked with its gallery and singers in place before rebuilding in 1850.

The display will be on for three months – do call in to see it. The Community Case is available to local organisations with something of interest to show. My thanks are due to Charlotte Craig, Museum Curator, who has been immensely helpful in sourcing material and setting up the display.

Sue Jackson



## Art Forum has gone live!

For the first time since Covid, our discussion group has forgone Zoom. We now enjoy a cuppa in each other's homes. It has been a refreshing experience. One of our sessions was in a member's home studio where we enjoyed the privilege of Janet Allsebrook describing her practice and later curating examples of her *Artists Books*. The books take various forms and several combine images with text.



In Janet's studio

Like most of you, we are now part of Craven u3a Community on WhatsApp. This is paying dividends as we share information and images about local and regional exhibitions we visit between meetings.

Most recently Karen told us about *Hockney Paints the Sky*, an event for Bradford City of Culture, using 600 drones in the night sky above Saltaire. The icon of Hockney must be the first self-portrait to be painted with drones!

We still enjoy MIX & MATCH when we agree a common theme and each presents one image. The variety of subjects, styles and periods chosen is inspirational. Under the theme of *Landscape*, Jenny introduced us to 'The River Bank' by Henri Matisse, exploring how he used his palette to convey the feeling of the sun's heat and light. In contrast, Gill chose 'Making a New World' by Paul Nash, taking us through a devastated landscape during WW1. For the theme of *A British Portrait*, Chris chose *Kofi (2024)* by Michelle Yui, the winner of the Young Portrait Artist of the Year award, at the National Portrait Gallery.

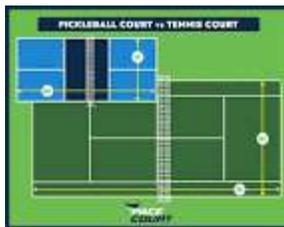


We also choose to focus occasionally on one artist. Margaret guided us around an exhibition of the work of Emma Talbot from her visit to Compton Verney. This proved to be prescient because the artist is featured in *Plant Dreaming* until April at Leeds City Art Gallery. I am due to present the work of Caroline Walker, a contemporary British painter whose focus is on the paid and unpaid work that women do. I look forward to hearing what our members see.

*Ginny Wilkinson* - group leader

## Pickleball group

How about learning to play Pickleball, a sport that is increasing in popularity? A fun way to start the Spring! Our new Pickleball group starts on Wednesday 15 April at 1 pm (changed from 12 noon), at Skipton Tennis Club, Engine Shed Lane, Skipton.



Pickleball is played on a smaller court with paddles and a perforated plastic ball, emphasising dinking and strategy, making it easier to learn and less physically demanding than tennis, which uses larger racquets, a pressurized ball, and a bigger court.

The Tennis Club will provide bats and balls, and induction training for the first two sessions, so beginners are very welcome. We have two outdoor courts booked for the 90 minute sessions. You must wear flat soled pumps to protect the tennis court surfaces. The Clubhouse is available to use between games.

Please go on Beacon to join, or email me, and I will add you to the group.

*Anne MacDonald*  
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