



# CRAVEN u3a NEWSLETTER

May 2026 (no 2)

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***Dates for your diary:***

*13 June & 11 July – Monthly meeting  
at Champions 10 for 10.30*

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

*12 August – Open Day at Skipton  
Town Hall (group sign up is 13 Aug)*

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## **New Committee Line-Up at Craven u3a**

There was a good turn-out at the AGM on 13 May, held at Skipton Community Sports Hub. Your Committee was voted in and introduced:

*Linda Hoole* – (new) Chair

*Mick Richings* – Vice-Chair and Business Secretary

*Lesley Perkins* – Treasurer

*Anne MacDonald* – Programme Secretary

*Sandra Firm* – Venue Secretary

*Wendy Brown* – Asst. Programme Secretary

*Maggie McLellan* – Inclusion Officer

*Adrienne Gilchrist* – Member

*Sheila Thompson* – Member

## Key points from the AGM:

Linda becomes Chair, replacing Mick who has served a total of 7 years (with a 3 year gap in the middle). The meeting expressed its appreciation for all Mick's work. Anne provided an update on the 2026/27 programme, which should be published in June. Lesley summarised our financial situation. We have a healthy surplus, with over 1000 members, but venue fees are anticipated to rise significantly so the ordinary membership fee will remain at £20 for the next year (a hardship fund is available). Some venue surcharges will rise to £10 per 10 sessions. The website has been improved so that it will be easier to see what groups are on offer. Maggie is our first Inclusion Officer – if you have any views about how to make our u3a more accessible and inclusive she is the person to contact.

Membership renewal will be open online as from 1 July. In-person help with renewing will be available (details of dates etc. to follow). The Open Day will take place on 12 August, but with limited exceptions, it will not be possible to join a group until the following day.

Here's a photo of the new Committee:



**Mick, Linda, Wendy, Sandra, Maggie, Sheila, Anne, Adrienne, Lesley**

## Don't Miss This – History of Art

I don't know why it took me so long to sign up for Ian Adams' History of Art. I joined his other group (Art and Architecture, which concentrates on the 19th and 20th centuries) ten years ago and loved it. But somehow I only made it to History of Art last October. What a delight it was. Ian covered everything from Bronze Age Greek art to Post-Impressionism. Of course that included Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rubens, Caravaggio, Hals, Vermeer, Rembrandt, Stubbs, Gainsborough, Turner, Constable, Monet, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin and Van Gogh.....and a lot more too.



Ian is engaging and knowledgeable, the group was small and friendly and we all had a brilliant time. But this is a warning. Ian intends that his two groups will run again this coming year (starting in October), but then he will stop. So if you're at all interested in art and architecture sign up this summer, before it's too late. You won't regret it.

*Vera Brearey*



## Musical Theatre: A History

What is musical theatre?

For a definition, Judith Barras started with a clip from the witty, energetic musical 'Something Rotten'. The dictionary definition is far less entertaining, but both seem to say musical theatre can include whatever you wish.

The antecedents of the musical can be traced to a number of forms of entertainment: music hall, comic opera, burlesque, vaudeville, variety shows, pantomime, minstrel shows. It combines elements of theatre, music and dance to tell a story. While plays primarily rely on spoken dialogue, musicals integrate songs and dance numbers to express emotions and advance the plot. Operas are set to music with characters singing their lines. Musicals offer a blend of spoken dialogue and musical numbers.



Over the weeks, the story unfolded with many clips from the shows, some already known, others not so. Interwoven with examples of musicals was a fascinating story of the individuals involved in the creation of the shows, and how events and social conditions are reflected in style and content. From Gilbert and Sullivan, Gershwin, Noel Coward, Ivor Novello, Rodgers and Hart, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Irving Berlin, Sondheim, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Cameron MacKintosh, Bouil and Schonberg, to modern shows starring pop stars, there was something for everyone. The creators noted for their successes also produced flops and financial disasters.

Much of American popular music in the early 20th century was written by European immigrants such as George Cohen and Sigmund Romberg. The production of 'Show Boat' in 1927 was a marked change from earlier musical comedies. It was the first musical to provide a cohesive plot, based on a novel covering American themes such as racial prejudice, and incorporating music derived from folk melodies and spirituals.

The age of rock and roll and technical developments produced musicals with wide ranging subjects and pure spectacle. 'Cabaret' dealt with anti-Semitism and fascism in Germany. 'Hair' was one of the first rock musicals. 'La Cage aux Folles' tackled same sex relationships. Special effects and choreography changed musicals like 'Cats', 'Phantom of the Opera', 'Les Miserables', and 'Miss Saigon', and these are among some of the longest running musicals. 'Hamilton' has offered a hip-hop rendition of the story of founding fathers of the United States.

The number of musicals adapted into film, and film into stage productions, means there are numerous versions available to compare. For someone who enjoys the atmosphere of live theatre, the film version of 'Cats' was a poor interpretation for me, and filming 'Les Miserables' lost the idealism and passion of the students. Revivals have often involved re-writing songs, deletions and additions, to make them relevant to a changing world, and social conditions.

The clip from 'Something Rotten' brought the course full circle. Ten weeks tracing its history demonstrated musical theatre has something for everyone, so much entertainment and social history woven together with such skill.

What a treat. Thank you, Judith.

*Janet Catling*

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**Note from Editor:**

For some unknown reason I managed to label the mid April newsletter as May 26 – apologies. The next newsletter will not be published until the end of June as I am away for a few weeks. Please send me any contributions by 22 June.

## Roll Up and Join the Fun at Whinfield Bowling Club's FREE Open Day!

Members of the Craven u3a's Crown Green Bowling group already know what a wonderfully sociable, relaxing and enjoyable sport crown green bowling can be. Now we have a great opportunity to share it with grandchildren, family, friends — and anyone who has never tried bowls before!

As part of the exciting Bowls Big Summer Campaign, Whinfield Bowling Club is hosting a FREE Open Day on **Sunday 12 July**, welcoming people of all ages to come along and discover this fantastic outdoor activity.

Two fun-filled sessions will be available:

10am – 12 noon: Families and children

(children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian)

1pm – 3pm: Adult session

Whether you are a complete beginner or simply curious to see what crown green bowling is all about, everyone is welcome. No experience is needed — just come along, have a go and enjoy yourself in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.



Bowling is a sport for all ages and abilities. It's gentle exercise, great for balance and mobility, and a wonderful way for retired people to stay active, social and mentally stimulated. Many people are surprised at how enjoyable and addictive the game can be once they give it a try!

All equipment will be provided, so the only thing you need to bring is a pair of flat shoes or trainers. There will also be free refreshments available throughout the day.

If you already bowl with Craven U3A, why not invite your grandchildren, family members or friends along and help introduce them to our great sport? So come along, enjoy the fresh air, meet new people and maybe discover a new hobby for life!

Venue postcode: BD23 2RJ

what3words location: Mills.Moon.Freed

For more information, or to register your interest please contact Carol on 07969 851633 or email [WhinfieldBowling23@outlook.com](mailto:WhinfieldBowling23@outlook.com)

## Podcast news

Spring is in the air and it's a good time to get out for a walk, or a spell in the garden, and then curl up with a good book. We have a nice selection of all three in new podcasts for you to listen to this month:



Phil Lawler: Phil talks to Carol Wilkinson about Life as a Mountain Guide in Spain:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6F6q2FujzRT3OctPt3ULM?si=6ad59bc727a2451b>



Allotment: we join the Allotment group for a chat during their Sunday morning coffee break, pod-bombed by a friendly local blackbird:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/2Ezfxffeq0byLnn1IbiRqo?si=3027a104f7684409>

Craven Island Books (Desert Island Books is the copyrighted name of an independent bookshop). Jacqui Eames talks to Alison Gadre about her upbringing on a Manchester council estate and subsequent progress to being a head teacher, all of which influenced her choice of books to be marooned with:



<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6MeEu6tWhzzgWEAlbObd9v?si=b89f4f0f4a434ef8>

All these podcasts are accessible on the Craven u3a WhatsApp News channel:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6MeEu6tWhzzgWEAlbObd9v?si=478c5756885d4907>

You can also access the most recent podcasts on the Craven u3a website under "Events" → [Craven u3a podcasts and the spotify links - Craven u3a](#)

I need volunteers for podcasts. If you would like to do a podcast please contact me: [doug.hirst@btinternet.com](mailto:doug.hirst@btinternet.com). All you have to do is talk. I look after all the techy bits.

*Doug Hirst*

## Walking Group – Trip to Alnmouth

35 members of the Walking Group enjoyed a 3 night trip to Northumberland in April, based at HF Nether Grange in Alnmouth. Spring was certainly in our steps, with fine if rather breezy weather for the whole weekend. We sprang into action from the get-go with an introductory circular route between Alnmouth and Lesbury before our check-in time at the accommodation.

HF houses provide generous hospitality and Reuben and his team at Nether Grange lived up to that reputation with cooked breakfasts, packed lunches and 3 course dinners every day. Evening entertainment consisted of quizzes and videos featuring places of interest in the area, and there was a nightly forum for suggestions for routes for the next day.

Saturday saw two principal offerings in which most of the group took part. Those who favoured a longer and more strenuous route took on the challenge of an ascent of Simonside. It was colder at height but the 9 stalwarts were rewarded with extensive views across Coquetdale to the Cheviots. A larger contingent took the bus to Tugston and trekked across muddy terrain to Warkworth with a picnic lunch by the river and the stunning castle as a backdrop. From there it was a walk along the beach and through the dunes back to Alnmouth.



On Sunday a small band of 4 tackled a route through a picturesque gorge from Eglington up Harehope Burn. The majority headed to Craster to enjoy the superb scenery of the coastal path. Some headed straight for home on Monday morning, while others opted for a more leisurely return with several visiting the stunning Alnwick Garden.

Cherry blossom in Alnwick Garden



Thanks to Geoff Wilkinson for overall organisation of the trip, and the members who led our walks. It would be lovely to go back another time and experience more of what this stunning border county has to offer.

*Fran Valiant*

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## **Opera DVD Group**

A group of us had the pleasure of being the guests of Con and Geoffrey in their home to watch and discuss a variety of operas over the spring term. We watched Madam Butterfly by Puccini, Carmen by Bizet, Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky. Le Nozze de Figaro by Mozart, Der Rosenkavalier by Richard Strauss and Akhnaton by Phillip Glass.

It was a very interesting and enjoyable selection covering a wide range of different styles.

Thank you both for your hospitality and knowledge.

*David Jones*

## The National u3a Festival Fringe

### Events from 25 June - 10 July

Take part in the fun of *u3a Festival 26* from home with *u3a Festival Fringe*. This series of online events will take place in the lead up to, and following on from, the Festival in York on 1-3 July. The programme includes a mixture of talks and interactive activities, giving all u3a members a chance to be part of our celebration of learning and fun. You can find them all [here](#).

Here are some of them:

**Wessex versus the Vikings** – Thurs 25 June at 2pm

**The role of wind energy in the UK's electricity system** – Tues 30 June at 11am

**The technology built into modern cars and trucks** – Wed 1 July at 11.30am

**Mrs Charles Dickens Tells her story** – Thurs 2 July at 2pm

**Watercolours with Tony (interactive painting)**– Mon 6 July at 2pm

**Artemisia** – vision or vengeance – Thurs 9 July at 2pm

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