Charity Number 1080264 www.whickham.u3asite.uk

WHICKHAM AND DISTRICT u3a OCTOBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

Learn, Laugh, Live

Whickham and District u3a Mission Statement

Our mission is to raise awareness of Whickham and District u3a, celebrating lifelong learning, friendship and community spirit. We aim to encourage new connections and showcase the varied opportunities available within our u3a.

Hello all members,

Whickham and District u3a's Publicity Team have put together photos of all our Interest Groups. These will be the backbone of our 2027 Calendar. This Calendar will be for sale at the main meeting on October 14th and again at the November meeting. A banner has been devised, which will be outside Sunniside Club, Blaydon Library and any venue we use advertising our u3a.

Ian Crawford, the outgoing Treasurer and Colin Grimley, the incoming Treasurer have changed banks. Whickham and District u3a is now with **Metro Bank.** They have an office on the Team Valley Trading Estate and are open 7 days a week.

The new bank details for those paying by bank transfer money for events and subscriptions etc is

SORT CODE 23-05-80 ACCOUNT No 58480398

Our Membership Secretary, Peter Gorringe has had quite a few enquiries about our u3a Blaydon, Winlaton and Ryton adventure. **The first coffee morning at Blaydon Library is on October 13th 10.30 -12 noon. Everyone is invited to come along** and support people walking through the door wishing to find out more details of u3a. Every member of Whickham is welcome to attend, all the coffee mornings and speaker events in October, November and December at Blaydon Library. Please come along and support us. ***Cecilia, Chair***

The next main meeting at Sunniside Club is on Wednesday October 14th at 2pm.

The presentation: 'The Wheel of Time'. The Speaker, Val Scully is a local author.



The Wheel of Time is about the history of Stella Hall, Blaydon Burn and Path Head.

'In 2022 I explored the 'Underwoods' archives and wrote 'Path Head Water Mill' in order to preserve the story of the restoration of the mill and grounds, so to raise funds for a special place. It is now a thriving hub at the top of my street in Blaydon. I finally finished my 'magnum opus' a book called The Wheel of Time' in May 2024.'

u3a is coming to

Blaydon, Winlaton and Ryton.

For all those who are no longer in full-time employment

SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES WITH u3a.

Come along and have a free taster coffee morning at the first meeting on Tuesday October 13th 10.30 - 12 noon at Blaydon Library.

Thereafter, monthly coffee mornings will be held at Blaydon Library 10.30 – 12 noon on Tuesday November 10th and Tuesday December 8th.

Also, monthly speaker's meeting will be held at Blaydon Library 2pm-4pm

Wed October 21st - 'Del Boy Remembered' by Ben Haddon
Wed November 18th –'Cobbled Streets & Penny Sweets' by Yvonne Young
Wed December 16th – 'The Top 100 Geordies' by Anthony Atkinson







Whickham and District u3a includes Blaydon, Winlaton and Ryton. A small charge will be made to cover the costs of speaker and venue hire.

CONTACT: Membership Secretary, Peter Gorringe for more information

phone: 07764 237457 email: pgorringe158@gmail.com

Facebook: Whickham u3a Website: www. whickham.u3asite.uk

u3a Learn, Laugh, Live Charity Number 1182934

Up and coming events

Monthly Coffee Morning

Our next coffee morning will be on Tuesday October 27th 2026 at Spoors Memorial Church Hall, Front Street, Whickham.

(We have decided to move to this venue for several reasons. The main one is Health and Safety. In the Church Hall the kitchen is next to the seating area, so we don't have to carry trays full of hot coffee and tea through a public area)





Cost £2 includes a coffee /tea and homemade scones and cakes. Please come along, make new friends and enjoy some homemade cakes. **Every u3a member is welcome.**

The November main meeting is the last time you can hand over any completed knitted garments for the Salvation Army.



Don't forget all you knitters out there that items eg knee blankets, scarves, hats, jumpers and cardigans for adults, toddlers, babies are gladly received by the Salvation Army. I will be taking them through to Anni Humes, Community Coordinator in early November. The Salvation Army works with the health visitors in the Sunderland Road area. The health visitors know families who are in need of help.

I put 4 pictures of knitted items on Whickham's Facebook page last week. It received 7,128 'hits' and a few positive comments. Facebook is a fantastic tool, which we now use weekly to promote our u3a. If you are on Facebook please 'follow' us. By Cecilia Coulson

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Willow Weaving Workshop– Christmas Decorations



Thursday November 26th 1.30 – 4pm in the back room of Whickham Library. This workshop is being run by Lorraine Griffiths, a member of Cramlington u3a. You are paying only for the cost of the materials. **Cost is £20**

To reserve a place please contact Jenni Crawford phone: 07799590987 or email: jennicrawford@icloud.com



Christmas Party

Wednesday 9th December 2026. 2pm - 4.30pm in Sunniside Club.

Tickets will be available at the October and November main meetings. Group Leaders will have a few to hand out to their members.

Cost £10 per ticket. The entertainer is Jessica Irving. There will also be a buffet and raffle.

Please contact - Anne Arnell phone: 07767 821931 or email: annearnell@btinternet.com or Pat Williamson phone: 07803 589062 or email: williamsonpatricia864@gmail.com

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The Play Reading Group are presenting



‘Snow White and the 7 Menopausal Giant Dwarfs’.

Please come along and join in the fun.

(This is a radio presentation adapted for Play Reading Groups.)

On Friday December 4th 2026 10 am – 12 noon at Spoors Memorial Methodist Church Hall.

The presentation takes about 45 minutes in the upstairs room. After the performance refreshments will be available in the downstairs room.

Cost £2 to cover cost of room hire and refreshments. There is limited availability of 25, so please give your names to either Anne Arnell or Pat Williamson, group leaders of the Play Reading Group. …contact details are above.

Have a laugh





What have we been getting up to?



Regional Committee Meeting at Whickham Golf Club.

A Regional Committee Meeting was held at Whickham Golf Club on Wednesday 23rd September 2026. Four members of Whickham and District u3a attended this meeting. Patricia Williamson, Anne Arnell, Cecilia Coulson and Arthur Coulson.



u3a North East Region is comprised of 44 u3as in the Region, from Berwick to Saltburn. Twenty nine members came along to this meeting from 16 different u3as eg Guisborough, Seaham Harbour, Gateshead, Cramlington. These meetings enable members to network with others, hear about new initiatives that could help their own u3a and much more. **Any member of a u3a can attend. It is not just for Committee Members**.

Kathy Clegg and Jane Mathieson, our two North East Regional Representatives talked about updating the Networks in our area. There are already Interest Networks eg Geology, Creative Writing, Art Appreciation and more as well as Role Networks eg Chairs, Group Coordinators (our very own Jenni Crawford attends this Zoom meeting, when she is able)

Cecilia spoke about the practicalities of setting up a Satellite u3a. Whickham is the first u3a to ever done this in the North East Region. After the 'business' side of things lunch was provided and then we had a good sing song led by 'Old English'. This twosome sings North East songs that get your feet tapping and you can join in the chorus. **Old English will be coming to Whickham's AGM in April 2027.**

Behind the Scenes at the Little Theatre, Gateshead

A merry band of Whickham members visited the Little Theatre, Gateshead for a 'Behind the Scenes' Tour and Talk on September 28th We learnt about the history of the theatre built during World War II, land purchased by the Dodds sisters Hope, Ruth and Sylvia. We went under the stage, on the stage, visited the control room where lighting and sound is computer controlled. Popped our heads into the three dressing rooms, archives and library. We then saw the props room…soooo many donated objects are given to them eg 1930s glass cabinets, WWI and WWII soldier uniforms, 1950s handbags and so it goes on.









KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE



Every family has treasured possessions, a connection with the past, however often some links with your family history are lost.

This is a story about a mining lamp, a successful man and an important connection with the past. **There is joy and sorrow**.

Let me set the scene

My Great-Grandfather was a product of his time. His outlook on life seemed to make him harsh, stubborn and demanding. A man of opinion. He was called Jackson Swindle.

A lot of men were self-made in the latter half of the 1800's and early 1900's, as mining was at its peak and the cotton mills were a force to be reckoned with. Fortunes were garnered on the backs of their workers, some only being children.

Great-Grandfather was in a way a self-made man. He burned with ambition and fulfilled his greatest desires. This was a man who would live in a big house, not a workers' earth floor dwelling. On all accounts Jackson Swindle was a prominent British coal mine manager. He spent decades overseeing major collieries in County Durham and what is now known as Tyne & Wear, during the height of the industrial era.

He started out as a miner at 18, and at the age of 23, he was an onsetter – the person responsible for managing the cage at the bottom of the pit shaft. Men came down as did machinery, but a very precious commodity went up. Looking back and hearing snippets of his story it must have been at this time when he decided he wanted to climb the ladder further.

Apparently as he rose through the ranks he showed immense technical and leadership skills.

In 1891 he took The Certificate of Competency as an **Under Manager** of Mines.

In 1899 he took the Certificate of Competency as a **Manager** of **Mines,** and success brought his first managerial post at **Trimdon** Colliery.

In 1901 he became the Manager of three collieries **Dunston, Norwood and Swalwell Garesfield.**

In 1901-1902 he became a Member of the Institute of Mining Engineers.

Right up until 1914 he managed the three mines then reduced the work load to one which was Swalwell Garesfield. He had at this time two sons who went to fight in World War 1.

In 1916 he was made a Member of the Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers. This however was not a time for celebration as news came that Jackson Swindle Jnr. 2nd Lieutenant with the Durham Light Infantry had died of wounds on the battlefield, of the **Somme**. He was 22yrs old. Then in 1917, Matthew, who was 21, and Jackson's youngest son was killed outright, during the battle of **Passchendaele.** Matthew was in the R.A.M.C. and as a Private he may have been a stretcher bearer, which was a very precarious job, running back and forth to the front line to pick up the wounded. I can imagine great sorrow and the weight of enormous grief sweeping through my grandmother's family. While great-grandfather kept working until 1921, great-grandmother was nursing a broken heart and never seemed to come to terms with the loss of her sons. She ailed and swiftly went downhill and died in 1927.

During this time like all miners, great-grandfather had a miners' lamp, but because of his status his lamp was presented to him with his name on. This lamp was lost to the family for generations, in fact, forgotten about, as my generation never gave it a thought as it wasn't previously mentioned. It turned out that the lamp had travelled the world and even reached Australia. All these years the lamp was missing.

Almost five years ago a chap contacted me and said that both him and I had accessed material about Jackson Swindle. He then dropped the bombshell as he was in possession of the lamp and it had Jacksons name on it. I asked if he would sell it and he said no. In fact, I asked him several times without success. Then at Christmas 25/26 he contacted me to say that he was thinking of selling a few lamps in the new year, and great-grandfather's lamp may be one of them. (talk about being dangled on a string). In July/August of this year he emailed and asked me to make an offer for the lamp. I hadn't the least idea. What had he paid for it? This lamp after all was part of my family, not his! I contacted Anderson and Garland for advice and they said that mining lamps are" two a penny" as there are so many. The seller refused two offers, but I wanted this lamp so I said £150 was my last offer. He accepted.

Soon it was in the post. When it arrived, as I unwrapped it, it was an emotional moment. Think of all the people who would probably have held it, great-grandfather, great grandmother, my grandmother and her sisters and brothers, perhaps even our great-great grandparents being proud of their son.

About ten years ago I sent for Commemorative Certificates for both Jackson Jnr and Matthew. Obviously, I never knew them but they were my great-uncles and grandma's brothers, and she had loved them and missed them. These Commemorative scrolls are framed and hang on the wall, one each side of a shelf. When great-grandfather's lamp was back with us I placed it on the shelf between them.

Jackson Jr and Matthew were killed in the slaughter in the war of attrition and died in a sea of mud By the time great-grandfather died he had been separated from his sons' for over 22 years, they were lost and gone forever OR were they? Certainly, gone but not lost as they will live in my heart.

The lamp is a single object of brass and glass and yet it represents so much more. It speaks of hard work, ambition, loss, remembrance and family. For decades it was on its travels and out of reach, yet somehow it found its way back.

Jackson Jnr and Matthew can never be returned to the family who loved and mourned them, but their memory endures through my sister Pam and I, and all my words will be passed down to my daughter, granddaughter and great grandson.

As the lamp stands between the two brothers' scrolls it seems fitting that father and sons have been reunited. **They are all gone, but never truly lost.** By Pat Williamson.

Do any other members have memories of times gone by? If so let me know please. I could take some notes or record your story.

HOT OF THE PRESS Our very own 2027 Calendar

The 2027 Whickham and District u3a Calendar is now available at the October main meeting. An ideal stocking gift for family and friends. The calendar shows photos of all our Interest Groups.

The calendar costs **£5.** All the money raised will go towards W & D's funds. We would like to thank Newcastle Building Society, Whickham, Martin Rankin, Funeral Directors and Jamdani Indian Restaurant who have all donated to the cost of the printing of the calendar. **Please see Ian Crawford phone: 07415 277088 or email metrocrawford@gmail.com to purchase a calendar.**

W & D u3a Groups available:	Group Leader/ Contact Person
Lunch Group	Ian Crawford: metrocrawford@gmail.com /07415277088
Whist	Maureen Ward: 0191 4885055
Carpet Bowls	Marjorie Tait: 0191 4882037 or Moya Forster: 0191 4883020
Indoor Bowls	Marjorie Tait: 0191 4882037 or Moya Foster: 0191 4883020
Walking Group	Jean Thompson: jeanthompson73@btinternet.com /07814750289
Natty Knitters	Sheila Young: 07938712876 sheilayoung51@hotmail.co.uk
Play Reading Group	Anne Arnell: annearnell@btinternet.com/ 07767821931 or Pat Williamson: williamsonpatricia864@gmail.com /07803598062
Pie n Pint Group formerly Men's Group	Arthur Coulson: arthurcoulson@hotmail.co.uk/07760447574
Genealogy	Shirley Fall: shirleyfall53@gmail.com /0191 4887001
Scrabble	Anne Saint: 0191 4884506
Culture	Jenni Crawford: jennicrawford@icloud.com / 07799590987
The Past n Present (History)	Cecilia Coulson: 07881768301 / cecu3a@gmail.com
Creative Writing (Zoom)	Cecilia Coulson: 07881768301 / cecu3a@gmail.com
Strollers	Sheila Young: 07938712876 sheilayoung51@hotmail.co.uk
Fighting Fit with Alex	Jenni Crawford: jennicrawford@icloud.com/ 07799590987



If you would like to attend one of our Committee Meetings or Whickham Events Team meetings to get a flavour of what we do please contact Cecilia. I know everyone wants to make being a member of our u3a a positive experience and to do that we all work as a team.