

NORTHUMBRIAN CAMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

President: Prof. Heather Cordell www.northumbrian-cambridge.co.uk Hon. Secretary: Em.Prof. Gilbert Cockton

NCA 95th Anniversary Dinner



Blackfriars, Friars Street, Newcastle NE1 4XN

Thursday 27 March, 2025
6.30 pm

For our 95th Anniversary Dinner we are trying something different – we will dine in the ornate Banquet Hall at Blackfriars. Set within a former Dominican friary, which was established in 1239, Blackfriars is a rare survival of Newcastle's medieval past and has a fascinating history. The friars lived and worked on the site for 300 years, giving succour to the poor and needy, tending an extensive garden, and running an infirmary. Henry III stayed here when he was waging war against the Scots. The friary was forcibly closed and its contents stripped during the reign of Henry VIII.

Since then, the building has seen many changes. The 85-seat restaurant is believed to be the oldest purpose-built dining room in the UK and has won many awards including Taste of England, thanks



to its seasonal menu which draws extensively on local produce. It boasts authentic and bespoke banners, chandeliers, wall coverings, stained-glass windows, reclaimed wooden screens, large oak dining tables and matching chairs, all created by local craftsmen. The booking deadline is 5 February 2025.



Our new Committee member, Allan Colver, writes:

I was at Magdalene College 1967-70 and studied Natural Sciences. My final year was directed to psychology and from this I realised I would prefer a career working with people than in laboratories. After my degree I went to

London to study medicine at St Bartholomew's Hospital. In due course I decided to become a paediatrician with a special interest in community child health and this took me to a research project in Newcastle. After completing my training at the RVI, I worked in Northumberland. I always combined my clinical work with research and my academic career flourished, though I had not originally intended to become an academic. I was appointed Professor of Community Child Health at Newcastle University and retired in 2017.

I did not miss clinical or academic work, although both had given me an enjoyable and fulfilling career. After a couple of years, and at the onset of Covid lockdown, I started an undergraduate degree in music at Northumbria University and am now doing a Masters in Research at Northumbria. My undergraduate final year dissertation, *The Social Context of the Hurdy-gurdy (Wheel Fiddle) in England, 1700-1900*, is about to be published.

Red Priest

Morpeth Music Society

Thursday 10 April 2025



The final concert of the 2025/2025 season organised by the Morpeth Music Society (www.morpeth-musoc.org.uk) is by Red Priest, a baroque ensemble of recorders, various pipes, violin, cello and harpsichord. The audience can look forward to experiencing both classics of the baroque era, such as the Brandenburg Concert No 5, and less familiar works, all performed in the group's inimitable style. The musicians are renowned for delivering an exciting, virtuosic, musical experience.

If you are interested in attending the concert, please contact Allan Colver, who can reserve seats (£18). allan.colver@newcastle.ac.uk

Allan would also be please to welcome members to his house at Hepscott (about two miles from Morpeth) for a drink and a little to eat before the concert.

Spring visit

Ad Gefrin

Date to be confirmed

We hope to arrange a visit to Ad Gefrin and Lady Waterford Hall at the end of June. Look out for further details.

Discovered in 1949, the historical site of Gefrin (Yeavinger), was excavated by the archaeologist Brian Hope-Taylor between 1953 and 1962. The excavations revealed a large complex of large timber halls, a unique wooden grandstand, and ancillary buildings that make Gefrin one the most important archaeological sites in England. According to Bede, this is where Bishop Paulinus baptised Christian converts in the River Glen in 627 AD. Such was the importance of Hope-Taylor's work that he was permitted in 1958 to register at St John's College, Cambridge to undertake a PhD thesis based on his work, despite not having a first degree, never having been to university.



Brian Hope-Taylor on an excavation

Today the site is under the care of The Gefrin Trust which looks after the excavation finds and supports ongoing education and archaeological research. Many of these finds are displayed at Ad Gefrin, which manages the museum on behalf of the trust. The Great Hall recreates the royal palace of Gefrin and offers an immersive experience which aims to bring this rich but little known period of Northumberland's history to life. In addition to the core collection of finds, there are many exhibits on loan from national and regional museums, which highlight the intricate craftsmanship and creativity of 7th century Northumberland.



There is also a distillery on site and we would hope to incorporate a tour and tasting in our visit.

After visiting Ad Gefrin, there will be an opportunity to visit Lady Waterford Hall at Ford. This Victorian 'model' village's schoolroom is home to a series of astounding Pre-Raphaelite murals which were begun by the Marchioness of Waterford in 1860 and took 21 years to complete. The murals feature the faces of people who lived and worked on the Estate – the neighbours, tenants and local children.

Full details and a booking form will be available shortly on the NCA website.



Past events

Barbecue Saturday 31 August 2024



We held our second summer barbecue at the house of NCA President Heather Cordell. The event was well attended, the weather was good, and an enjoyable time was had by all.

Freshers Event Thursday 19 September 2024

We welcomed a group of students from the North East to the Literary and Philosophical Institute for this informal gathering prior to them taking up their places at Cambridge.



Autumn Concert Thursday 31 October 2024

A small group of NCA members met at the Glasshouse to enjoy a thrilling performance of the soundtrack to Hitchcock's classic film Psycho.

AGM & annual lecture.

Wednesday 2 October 2024

Professor Martin Ward, currently the Emeritus Temple Chevallier Professor of Astronomy at Durham University, shared results from the James Webb Space Telescope, launched on Christmas Day, 2021. Since then, it has provided us with spectacular new information on the early Universe and on planets beyond our solar system. The search is now on for evidence of life elsewhere in the Universe. Professor Ward gave us a flavour of these results, and also the prospects of what is still to come.

Professor Ward has been engaged in research in astronomy for 50 years, and he has been a consultant for both NASA and The European Space Agency. His research interests include understanding Black Holes, what happens at the very centre of galaxies, and the development of Space Science missions. He is also interested in the search for evidence of life beyond the Earth.

Christmas Events

Friday 29 November & Saturday 14 December 2024



Our Christmas lunch was held at the County Hotel in Newcastle. A great time was had by all, with drinks in the bar before sitting down for a convivial and leisurely lunch.

Our festive tea and film this year featured Elf, screened once again in the Digital Lounge at The Tyneside Cinema.

A visit to Madingley Hall and the IWM Duxford

NCA Committee member Andrew Young writes:

Most summers we visit our holiday home in the French Pyrenees travelling towards the Channel Tunnel close to Cambridge along the A14 from the A1M to the M11. Often we see WWII aircraft flying in the Duxford area from the Imperial War Museum branch based there. Having often said that it would be a good idea to have a stop-over en route to pay a visit to the museum, finally we did this September.

I booked a room in advance at Madingley Hall on the north side of Cambridge. It was a change from staying at my College (Jesus), providing University run, easily accessible and reasonably-priced accommodation (alumni discount with Camcard applies) in a pleasant sixteenth century setting with its own gardens. I would certainly recommend it (madingleyhall.co.uk)



The entrance to Madingley Hall

Visiting Duxford, we found the museum was very extensive and with displays actively flying above us, well worth the pricey entry fee. Imagine my surprise when in the first main hangar close to a Handley Page Halifax four-engine 1940's bomber was a display board with a photograph showing my Dad (sporting a plaster by his left eye) and a couple of other crew members sitting over a hole in the fuselage of a Halifax close to his mid-upper machine gun turret. The prosaic commentary below stated that this was a plane which had been damaged in battle over Germany. The truth was in fact rather more interesting as I knew and this report sets out.



"The crew of this 158 Squadron aircraft took off from Lissett, E Yorkshire at 23.24hrs on 28th June 1943 to undertake an operational flight to bomb Cologne. The aircraft was attacked by an enemy aircraft on the approach to the target area and was slightly damaged; the pilot took evasive action and the night-fighter was lost. While over the target area at 02.05hrs and while flying at 20,000 feet this aircraft was flying below other bombers that were releasing their load. One 1,000 lb bomb released by a higher flying aircraft struck the fuselage of HR837 just in front of the mid-upper turret and passed right through the Halifax. The mid-upper turret was damaged and despite the huge hole that was left in the aircraft the crew were able to bring it back to England. They landed at Lissett at 04.46hrs. The aircraft was repaired and went on to serve until early 1945."

So not the Nazis, but rather 'friendly fire' and had the bomb fallen centimetres in another direction this baby boomer would not have been writing this piece!

A message from our President

NCA President Heather Cordell writes:

I am pleased to report that in the past year (2024) we have continued our usual full programme of in-person events, all of which have been announced via email or through Cambridge University's Development and Alumni Relations office website: <https://www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/group/northumbrian-cambridge-association>

Although we have struggled to find new volunteers to join the Executive Committee, I am happy to say that Allan Colver agreed to stand - and was elected - at the AGM as a general (ex-officio) member. The other current Committee members are all willing to continue for another year, but most (including the President, Secretary and Treasurer) would prefer to stand down within the next year or two. This brings the long-term viability of the society into question. We have a full programme of events planned for 2025 – our 95th anniversary year! – but if we are unable to find replacements for the President, Secretary and Treasurer positions, we may need to consider winding down the society – or perhaps putting it into some kind of "hibernated" state (to be resurrected in the future if there is sufficient interest) during 2026. In that case we would need to discuss arrangements for disposal of the funds e.g. should they be shared out among the current NCA membership or passed on to Cambridge University's Development and Alumni Relations office?

Ideally, we would like to attract new and younger members. Many of our current members have said that do not feel they have the energy or capacity to take on such roles. Indeed they may have already carried out these roles in the past, and do not feel inclined to take them on again. With this in mind, we are continuing to try to improve our Social Media presence on such platforms as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter/X.

Another idea is to make these roles "joint" roles – to be held by several people simultaneously (to share out the load). If anyone would be willing to consider taking on one of these roles on a joint/shared basis, we would be very glad to hear from you.

Round the world in 106 days

Former NCA President Bill Telford writes:

As most of you will know, my dear wife, Andrena, known to you for being NCA Secretary for many years, died on May 19, 2022. We were both enthusiastic and seasoned, travellers, and so ended, among other things, some fifty-two years of intrepid and companionate globetrotting. Having seen most parts of the world, Andrena and I had decided a few years before the outbreak of Covid to give up travelling outside of the country in favour of visiting the parts of Britain that we still had not seen. Then, on the first anniversary of her birthday (March 1, 2023), two remarkable things happened. First of all, my Facebook reminded me that ten years before (4-25.2.13), Andrena and I were in South America on the final stage of a five year project to circumnavigate the coast of South America and on a trip that took us to Ecuador, into the Amazonian rainforest, to Quito, thence to the Galápagos islands, and on to Peru, to Cusco and eventually to Machu Picchu. By one of these strange and curious coincidences, Fred Olsen (with whom we have sailed a number of times, including on HMS Balmoral for the Titanic Memorial Cruise of 2012) sent an email to me that day with a heads up on a four-month world cruise that they were planning for January to April 2025 and which they were shortly planning to advertise to the general public.

This 'voyage of exploration', designed for people interested in maritime history, would retrace the route of the early 15th, 16th & 17th century marine explorers. Leaving from Southampton, it would sail to Lisbon, from where so many of the famous Portuguese navigators of the 'Age of Discovery' departed, thence to Tenerife and the Cape Verde Islands, cross the Atlantic to Brazil, follow the coast of South America to Uruguay, Argentina, Tierra del Fuego, pass through the Strait of Magellan to the Pacific, proceed north along the coast of Chile as far as Valparaíso, then strike westwards across the Pacific to French Polynesia and subsequently Tasmania and Australia, from there across the Indian Ocean towards Madagascar and South Africa and finally sail up the West African coast to



Namibia, Senegal and the Canaries before returning to Britain again via Portugal.

This remarkable voyage would even include some places that Andrena and I never had a chance to visit (Easter Island, Tahiti, Bora Bora, St Helena, etc.). One special element would be a visit to Robinson Crusoe island, where Alexander Selkirk, the shipwrecked mariner, whose story forms the basis for Daniel Defoe's novel of 1719, was marooned. Selkirk was born in Lower Largo, a mere 12 miles along the Fife coast from where I was brought up and hence is a local hero. The novel was a favourite of mine when I was young.

Although I shall be 78 years old this year, I took the bold step of immediately booking one of the limited solo cabins on board and so, dear NCA friends, I have now embarked on what will doubtless be my final journey round the world! As I write this, I am sailing across the Atlantic for Rio, Brazil, after stops in Lisbon, Tenerife and Praia (Cape Verde Islands). When (if?) I return, I'll look forward to telling you all about it, but, in the meantime, if you are on Facebook, and would like to send me an invitation (William Rodgers Telford), I'll be making regular posts on progress made and places visited.

In Memoriam

Former NCA President Bill Telford remembers Margaret Wilkinson, who died in July 2024:

It was a great sadness to all of us to learn of the death of Dr Margaret Wilkinson who died a short while after attending a family wedding in Surrey, where her funeral took place last November. Margaret was a Cambridge graduate (Hughes Hall, 1951-52) and a longstanding member of the Northumbrian Cambridge Association, serving the group in many ways over the years and tirelessly attending our functions and events. She was also devoted to her family and particularly to her husband, Fred, who died in 2002. A well-known figure in the Northeast, he was for many years headteacher at Dame Allan's School in Newcastle. Although I frequently met her at SCR events held by St John's College, Durham, this was illustrated for me when I shared a table with her (for the last time) at the annual NCA Christmas Lunch held at the County Hotel, Newcastle, in December 2023. After the lunch, I drove her back to her beautiful home in Elgy Road, Gosforth. She invited me in, showed me the book she had just had published, *Just Fred* (Hexham: Ergo Press, 2023) and proceeded to sell it to me, in support of All Saints Church, Gosforth, to which she also devoted her time and energy (serving, for example, as a trustee of St Hilda's Trust, which supports charities and organisations that work with disadvantaged children and young people within the boundaries of the Diocese). A memorial service for Margaret was held at All Saints Church on December 14, with the reception afterwards at the Grand Hotel, Gosforth Park. The service was conducted by Canon Andrew Shipton and members of Margaret's extensive family gave the scripture readings and recited appropriate and moving poems and tributes. The music, chosen by Margaret herself, was exceptionally beautiful. At the reception, I introduced myself to Adam, Margaret's grandson, and David, her son, conveyed the condolences of the NCA to them, and talked of Margaret's long connection with the group. We shall all miss her.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome four new members:

Nigel Porter, Fitzwilliam 1969-72 (History)

J. Beatrice Ollerenshaw, King's, 1976-79, 1979-80 (Classics, PGCE)

Stuart Corbridge, Sidney Sussex, 1975-1978 (Geography), St John's, 1978-1986 (Ph.D)

Colin Self, Downing 1977-83 (Medicine)

Competitive tiddlywinks turns 70

In January 1955 a group of students at Christ's College co-founded the Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club (CUTwC). This was the start of a process that led to tiddlywinks becoming an internationally recognised competitive game. Officially registered with the University, the Club set about establishing the competitive rules, which introduced a new element of strategy to the game, and organising their first matches. After challenging other universities, nearby airbases, and even the House of Commons, the Daily Mirror accepted a challenge, and a match was played in the Cock Tavern in Fleet Street in June 1955.

When, in 1957, an article with the headline "Does Prince Philip cheat at tiddlywinks?" appeared in *The Spectator*, the Club challenged him to a tiddlywinks match to 'defend his honour'. The Duke of Edinburgh appointed The Goons as his champions. The Royal Tournament was held at The Guildhall, Cambridge, on 1st March 1958, with 600 spectators. The game ended with a win for Cambridge by 16 games to nil.

The first Varsity tiddlywinks match took place later that year, when the Cambridge team beat their Oxford rivals. Subsequently clubs sprang up around the world, and the first British Universities Championship took place in 1961, when the Duke of Edinburgh presented the trophy he had gifted, the Silver Wink, which universities still compete for today.

The Social Context of the Hurdy-gurdy (Wheel Fiddle) in England, 1700-1900

NCA Committee member Allan Colver has recently completed a dissertation about this fascinating musical instrument. He writes:

A musical instrument is not just a wooden or metal object made to sound; rather, it functions within a social context that imparts meaning to its status and sound. My paper set out an unreported social context for the hurdy-gurdy in England 1700-1900. One of my main sources was the digitised British Library Newspaper Archive.

Hurdy-gurdies have strings sounded by a disc turned by a crank held in the player's right hand. Some strings are drones, others are played like a violin but depressed by keys played by left hand fingers. Hurdy-gurdies differ from mechanical barrel organs (sometimes called hurdy-gurdies)



A ceramic figure showing a woman playing a hurdy-gurdy, from the collections at the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham

In 1700-1900, the hurdy-gurdy was partly an instrument of streets and other open spaces, with main appeal to those in the lower socio-economic classes. French and Italian itinerant children and adults played it, but unexpectedly so did English people. I found the names of forty English players, presented for the first time. Across England, hurdy-gurdy players featured in reports of crimes, accidents, fairs, sporting gatherings and parades. Hurdy-gurdy players were important to public house culture because they provided music for singing and dancing, brought custom to the publican, and tips for players. In contrast, the upper-middle classes heard the hurdy-gurdy played at concerts and masquerades in fashionable London gardens and theatres. Porcelain figurines, manufactured at all the famous English potteries, of romanticised, peasant hurdy-gurdy players, were valued for their sentimental and erotic associations. Hurdy-gurdy players featured in children's stories.

In England, 1700-1900, people of all ages from all social classes from across England would have known about and heard the hurdy-gurdy.

Annual Membership subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2025 are due on 1 March.

Please pay £10 by standing order, bank transfer or cheque. An email reminder will be sent out in due course, but you might like to get ahead!

If you have already set up a standing order for £10 from 2025 onwards, you don't need to do anything.

For bank transfer, pay **Northumbrian Cambridge Association**, Lloyds Bank, sort code **30-98-97**, account number **87980962**, with Surname/Subs for reference.

For a Standing Order form please email susanmaustin@hotmail.com

For cheque, please make it payable to Northumbrian Cambridge Association (not NCA) and send to Sue Austin, Church View, The Dene, West Rainton, Houghton le Spring DH4 6PR

