

EXPLORE



*Starting
Monday 27th
April 2026*

**Season 3
2025-26 programme**

Explore Season 3 Programme 2025-26



We hope to welcome lots of new joiners to our member-led, volunteer-run organisation as we continue to thrive after more than a decade of independent learning. If you would like to become a member please [get in touch](#) or join our [mailing list](#) to find out more. You can also book a free place at our [Taster Event](#) on our first day of the season - all welcome!

This Season our background theme is 'Curiosity and Miscellany'; a celebration of all things interesting, including areas which defy the gaze of populist trends or simplistic tags. We recognise that variety is beautiful to a curious mind and that even the tiniest details can spark big ideas. We've got computer Bits and famous Bobs, plus a huge array of knowledge to discover and share.

Welcome to Season Three at Explore!

Thank you to the programming team and everyone else not listed who helped to organise the programme this Season:

Art History & Design: Helen Watson

Narratives (incl. Literature, Cinema & Music): Rita Prabhu

Perspectives (incl. Science & Mathematics): Pamela Denham, Rita Prabhu & Karen Gammack

Culture & Society (incl. History & Archaeology): Kath Smith, Lesley Pringle & Joan Oliver

Philosophy: Trish Hutson

With direction from Anthea Lang & Malcolm Grady.

We are grateful to our hosts Brunswick Methodist Church, Hatton Gallery & GNM: Hancock for our Face-to-Face lecture rooms, workshop & practical art spaces.

***'It is not knowledge, but the act of learning, not the possession but the act of getting there, which grants the greatest enjoyment.'* Carl Friedrich Gauss (1777-1855)**

Start of Season Three...

EXPLORE

FREE Taster Event

Monday 27th April from **10.30am**

Enjoy talks from expert tutors, meet the organisation and find out more.

We are happy to invite all to our special Taster Event, a welcoming opportunity to try sessions alongside our friendly members at the start of our new season.



Brunswick Methodist Hall

Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7BJ

Book your FREE place online [HERE](#) via [Eventbrite](#)

Explore Season 3 Programme 2025-26

How will sessions be delivered? Members will receive additional information about accessing different sessions, but if you're unsure [get in touch](#) and we'll try to help.

Face-To-Face Check Venue

Face-to-Face Sessions - our face-to-face sessions usually take place at Brunswick Methodist Church in central Newcastle, however we do occasionally hold sessions off-site or at Newcastle Arts Centre. Most sessions do not need to be booked however we do occasionally request members to register interest in advance (for example practical art classes or walks) to manage materials or group sizes.

LIVE ZOOM SESSIONS

Live Zoom Sessions - these sessions are online sessions using Zoom to create a live classroom environment remotely with a tutor and 'audience'/members actively attending the session. This allows an immediacy of interaction akin to being in the same room (but usually with audience member microphones 'muted' during tutor presentation) Zoom details (invite links relevant codes) will be sent to members in advance of the sessions. If you need assistance setting up Zoom on your computer/tablet click [HERE](#).

BLENDED (F2F & Zoom)

Blended Sessions - where appropriate we may combine methods and stream a live Face-to-Face session via Zoom as well. This is not available for all sessions due to the nature of sessions and available resources.

We will also send any additional resources via the weekly bulletin in advance

Monday

One-Off Culture & Society Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 11.30



Date	Tutor	Title
27 Apr	Gary Bankhead	Roman Sunderland
04 May	Bank Holiday	
11 May	Mike Greatbatch	Life in the Ouseburn 1840-1960
18 May	Malcolm Grady	A Lady of Letters—Harriet Martineau in Tynemouth
25 May	Bank Holiday	
29 Jun	David Faulkner	A House Through Time

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Monday

Philosophy Course: 27th April to 8th June (No Class 4th & 25th May)

Provocations: Aesthetics, AI & Philosophy of the Mind

Tutor: Ian Ground

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



In this discussion-based series, we will take 4 “provocations” over 5 sessions from a variety of sources with topics covering aesthetics, AI and the philosophy of mind.

Participants do need to view the relevant source before the session. It might take an hour or two and it would be a good idea to jot down a note or two for questions and discussion in the session. One spare session gives us some space to extend discussion as needed. I look forward to our discussions of some fascinating topics. Please be prepared to summarise for the group.

- * The Problem with the Problem of Consciousness - Matthew Ratcliffe (A Pdf will be supplied)
- * [The Score How to Stop Playing Somebody Else’s Game](#) w/ C. Thi Nguyen
- * [Forgery in Musical Composition: Aesthetics, History & the Canon](#) Frederick Reece (Oxford Uni)
- * Issues in AI - Choose ONE of the videos at www.ted.com - [Everything You Need to Know About AI in 2026](#)

As with all sessions, any details needed in advance will be sent out via the weekly bulletin.

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Monday

One-Off Art History Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face (except 15th Jun*)**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 11.30



Date	Tutor	Title
01 Jun	Alison Turnbull	Time Well Spent: The Work & Inspiration of the Artist
08 Jun	David Rosier	China Study Day See Page 8
15 Jun	Anne Sutherland	See Page 10 (*Zoom Only)
22 Jun	Howard Wilson	Tynemouth Photographic Society Archives

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Monday

Art History and Culture & Society: *8th June*

China Study Day (Morning, Lunchtime & Afternoon Sessions)

Tutor: David Rosier

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 15.30



This study day will trace the origins and evolution of Chinese silk, a product that at times was valued more highly than Gold or Jade and which created an insatiable global demand for the product plus the expertise to create the complex designs. Despite the loss of the global monopoly in the 4th Century CE the skills of the Chinese Weavers and Embroiderers would remain recognized as the pinnacle of this art form. We will explore how costumes and related items, created primarily with Imperial Silk, would represent designs that would visually determine the status and authority of the Emperor. Additionally, silk designs would define the framework and mechanics of Imperial Government and the bureaucracy of China's Military capabilities until the collapse of Imperial rule in 1911.

10.30 – 11.30 In the morning session we will look at:

The Origins and Evolution of Chinese Silk

Sericulture and technological advances

Earliest examples of surviving silk

Creation of Imperial Workshops

Skill development and deployment

See [Page 12](#) And [Page 15](#) for the lunchtime and afternoon sessions

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

One-Off Culture & Society Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 12.00 to 13.00



Date	Tutor	Title
27 Apr	Anthea Lang	J.B. Priestley: An English Journey
04 May	Bank Holiday	
11 May	Peter Jones	Roman Slavery
18 May	Malcolm Grady	The Cullercoats Collection: The Art of Winslow Homer
25 May	Bank Holiday	
29 Jun	Anthea Lang	Lewis Carroll in the North East

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Monday

One-Off Art History and Culture & Society Sessions:

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Times: Various



Date & Time	Tutor	Title
15 Jun 10.30-11.30	Anne Sutherland	Tom McGuinness Exhibition (<i>Art History</i>)
15 Jun 14.00-15.30	Paul Dryburgh	Plus ça change: Commemorating the Norman Conquest in the Twentieth Century (<i>Culture & Society</i>)
29 Jun 14.00-15.30	Theo Albano	The Scottish Colourists (<i>Art History</i>)

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Monday

One-Off Art History Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 12.00 to 13.00



Date	Tutor	Title
01 Jun	Olive Hogg	Ancient Egypt Painting
08 Jun	David Rosier	China Study Day See Page 12
22 Jun	Brian Rankin	Charlie Rogers: Pursued by Bulldozers - The Life & Times of a Gateshead Artist

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

Art History and Culture & Society: *8th June*

China Study Day (Morning, Lunchtime & Afternoon Sessions)

Tutor: David Rosier

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 15.30



This study day will trace the origins and evolution of Chinese silk, a product that at times was valued more highly than Gold or Jade and which created an insatiable global demand for the product, plus the expertise to create the complex designs.

12.00 – 13.00 In the lunchtime session we will look at:

Earliest examples of Court Costume and Decorative Textiles

The defining of Rank and Status

221 BCE to 1368 CE

Qin to Yuan Dynasties

See [Page 8](#) and [Page 15](#) for the morning and afternoon sessions

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

One-Off Art History Sessions:

Tutor: Peter Quinn

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face** and **live via Zoom**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 13.30 to 15.30 (Sessions start 13.30 & 14.20)



In each 'double-bill' the tutor will cover two talks within the slot and will negotiate breaktime with the group directly.

Date	Title
27 Apr	1.) Shadows (Blended) 2.) Debate and Discuss: Dark (F2F)
04 May	Bank Holiday
11 May	1.) Light & Space (Blended) 2.) Debate and Discuss: Sculpture & Form (F2F)
18 May	1.) Current Exhibitions (Blended) 2.) Debate and Discuss: The Visit to the Gallery (F2F)

BLENDED
(F2F & Zoom)

Monday

One-Off Culture & Society Sessions:

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face (Except 15th Jun*)**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00 to 15.30



Date	Tutor	Title
01 Jun	Keith Jewitt	Joseph Cowen and European Revolution
08 Jun	David Rosier	See Page 15
15 Jun	Paul Dryburgh	See Page 10 (*Zoom Only)
22 Jun	Jo Bath	Dragons, Stone Snakes & Fairy Bread: Interpretations of Fossils Before Modern Science

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

Art History and Culture & Society: *8th June*

China Study Day (Morning, Lunchtime & Afternoon Sessions)

Tutor: David Rosier

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 15.30

This study day will trace the origins and evolution of Chinese silk, a product that at times was valued more highly than Gold or Jade and which created an insatiable global demand for the product, plus the expertise to create the complex designs.

See [Page 8](#) and [Page 12](#) For the morning and afternoon sessions

14.00 – 15.30 In the afternoon session we will look at:

The creation and deployment of complex Court Costume Regulations

Costume and iconography for Imperial Nobility

Mandated costume and iconography for Civil and Military Officials

1759 'Huangchao Liqi Tushi' (Illustrated Precedent of Ritual Paraphernalia of the

Industrialisation of costume production

Imperial Court)

The C19th decline of Imperial Authority and resulting abuses of the regulations

1368 – 1911 Ming and Qing Dynasties

Post Imperial survival of selected costume design

Reproducing costume of previous dynasties



Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Monday

Culture & Society Course: *1st to 29th June*

A History of Ireland - The Age of Conquest: The Normans to the Stuarts

Tutor: David Burke

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 18.00 to 19.30



In this series, we will explore the long, drawn-out process of the conquest of Ireland.

From the rise and fall of the Norman Lords, "more Irish than the Irish themselves", to the Wyldde Yrishe causing dissent at Oxford, from tentative Tudor colonisation to the calculated Stuart Plantation of Ulster, it is in this period that we find the roots of the modern Troubles, Anglo-Irish relations, and the many identities of the peoples of Ireland.

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

Science Course: *28th April to 26th May*

The Mineral Wealth of the North

Tutor: Derek Teasdale

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



Although we are famous for coal-mining, there are metal mines all over our region.

This course will explore the large-scale lead, silver and fluorspar mining of the North Pennines, the iron mines of the Cleveland Hills, gold in the Southern Uplands and copper in the Lake District.

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

Face-to-Face Film Special: *2nd June*

My Dinner with Andre (1981)

Tutor: Peter Quinn

Format: This session will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 12.30



Struggling playwright Wally dreads having dinner with his old friend Andre, whom he has been avoiding since Andre gave up his career as a theatre director in 1975 amidst a midlife crisis and embarked on an extended hiatus during which he travelled the world.

Set in New York, directed by Louis Malle, written by and starring André Gregory and Wallace Shawn as fictionalized versions of themselves.

In this one-off session, Peter will introduce the film 'My Dinner with Andre' and discuss some of the creative & thought-provoking themes and ideas with the group.

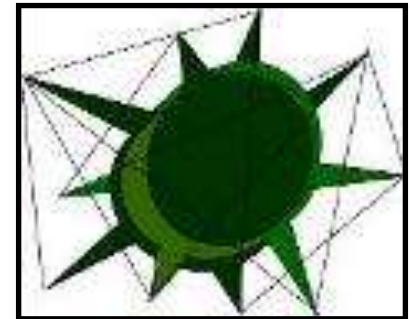
**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Tuesday

Genetics Series: 2nd to 30th June

Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 10.30 to 11.30



This season we welcome back Dr Kasia Pirog, from Newcastle University Centre for Research Excellence in [Rare Diseases](#) and [Biomedical Engineering](#) and her colleagues to give us talks on the different areas of genetics currently being researched and that could well improve our life in the future. Join us via Zoom and find out.

Date	Tutor	Title
02 Jun	Prof Jordi Diaz Manera	Application of AI to the Diagnosis and Follow-up of People Living with Neuromuscular Diseases
09 Jun	Prof David Young	Epigenetics: One Way in which Genetic Changes Cause Disease
16 Jun	Dr Kasia Pirog	Deciphering the Molecular Mechanisms of Osteoarthritis
23 Jun	Dr Priscila Melo	Exploring the Link between Irritable Bowel Disease and Joint Disease Using Advanced 3D In Vitro Modelling
30 Jun	Dr Annette Pantall	Turning a Genetic "Flaw" into a Life-Saving Edge

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

Philosophy Course: *16th to 30th June*

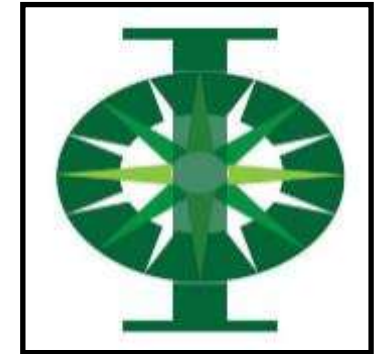
Ovid's Philosophical Poetry

Tutor: Jordan Bayley

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



This short course will explore the use of philosophy in the poetic works of Ovid (43 BC-AD 17/18). It will consider how Ovid used Greek and Roman philosophy to explore the themes of love, change, and sorrow. It will also consider how he combined common philosophical and literary themes with his own experiences with both comic and tragic results.

- | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------|
| 16 Jun | Ovid and the Art of Love |
| 23 Jun | Ovid in Exile |
| 30 Jun | Ovid and the philosophy of change |

This course will be suitable for those who are new to the subject of Ovid and philosophy as well as those who have some grounding in the topic. All members welcome.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

Art Course: 2nd to 30th June

Practical Art & Craft Studio - Weaving

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Art Room, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8QB

Time: 13.30 to 15.30



This term, we will explore *weaving* - both the traditional craft technique of interlacing yarns under and over one another to create a fabric, and also utilising other art media to explore this term in a broader way.

In session one, your tutor Jenny will share inspiration images and ideas for your weaving project, and show you how to create a simple fabric weaving on a handmade cardboard loom, giving an understanding and feel for the basic principles of the craft.

In the following weeks, you will have the opportunity to either continue weaving with yarn, paper or other materials of your choice, or to explore the concept of 'weaving' in different format entirely (such as in painting, drawing or printmaking) allowing you to tailor the project to your own chosen media and interests

02 Jun	Introduction to the theme by Jenny
09 Jun	Peer led
16 Jun	Jenny to offer advice and support
23 Jun	Peer led
30 Jun	Critique led by Jenny

All members welcome! No experience required. Come and have a go!

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

Art History Course: 28th April to 26th May

Renaissance Artists: Continued Exploration of Art of the Renaissance

Tutor: Peter Quinn

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face*** and **live via Zoom**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00 to 15.30



In this new series, we will continue to explore renaissance artists and examine key works:

- 28 Apr Giotto
- 05 May Donatello (***ZOOM ONLY**)
- 12 May Titian
- 19 May El Greco
- 26 May The Renaissance in Popular Imagination

**If you need any help downloading & using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

BLENDED
(F2F & Zoom)

Tuesday

Literature One-Off: 16th June

Exploring the Elegy in English: Renaissance to Present Day

Tutor: Frank Wilson

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00 to 15.30



In this session we welcome Dr Frank Wilson to chart the evolution in form and theme, beginning in the 17th century and concluding with contributions by Millay, Heaney, and Duffy.

The featured texts (below) will be provided via the Members' Weekly Bulletin

Ben Jonson's 'On My First Son'

Ann de Vere's "Had with the Moorning the Gods left their Wills undone"

Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"

Edna St Vincent Millay's "Time does not bring relief; you all have lied"

Seamus Heaney's "Midterm Break"

Carol Ann Duffy's "Prayer"

You might also enjoy the suggested wider reading:

John Milton: 'Lycidas'

John Donne: "A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day"; "Elegie on Mrs. Boulstred"

Percy Shelley: "Adonais"

Alfred Lord Tennyson: *In Memoriam* [particularly sections 54-57]

Edna St Vincent Millay: "Dirge without Music"; "Lament"

W. H. Auden: "Funeral Blues"; "In Memory of W. B. Yeats"

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Tuesday

Literature One-Off: *30th June*

Ivan Turgenev – Three Sketches from a Hunter’s Album

Tutor: Tim Crocker

Venue/Format: This session will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 14.30 to 16.00



Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) is best known for his novel of intergenerational strife, *Fathers and Sons* (1862), but arguably his most important work is his set of stories *Sketches from a Huntsman’s Notebook* (1852), which was foundational in the form taken by the short story in Russia and elsewhere, and also of major political importance, being the first occasion that peasants and peasant life were made the subject of fiction for Russian readers. It can be argued to have been instrumental in the liberation of the serfs by Alexander II nine years later.

We will look at the following stories:

‘Khor and Kalinych’

‘Yermolay and the Miller’s Wife’

‘Bezhin Lea’

Tim will be using the Richard Freeborn Penguin translation with that wording, available in Kindle. It is also available for free with an older translation on Project Gutenberg.

Please Note: Extracts from the Project Gutenberg version will be provided in advance

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Tuesday

Music Series:

Venue/Format: This session will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 18.00-19.00 or 19.30



Date	Tutor	Title
02 Jun	Michael Ayton	Passion and Poignancy: Monteverdi's <i>Lamento d'Arianna</i> and <i>Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda</i> (18.00-19.30)

The famous lament of Arianna deserted by Theseus is all that has survived of Monteverdi's musical tragedy *Arianna* of 1608 – one of music's greatest losses. We'll explore how the composer was at this time forging a powerful new declamatory style – and how this was to take on even more urgently dramatic form by the time (c. 1624) of the thrilling *Combattimento*, whose libretto, drawn from Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, movingly depicts a fatal encounter in battle between a Christian knight and a female Saracen warrior.

09 Jun	Michael Ayton	Liszt in Weimar: <i>Prometheus</i> , <i>Orpheus</i> and the Creation of the Symphonic Poem (18.00-19.30)
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It's well-known that during his years as Music Director in Weimar Liszt evolved a new musical form, the *symphonische Dichtung* or symphonic poem, but what exactly did he understand by it, and what did he see as its relationship with the symphony on the one hand and dramatic music on the other? We'll attempt to answer these questions with the aid of recent scholarship, along with stirring video recordings of two of these twelve Weimar works, both celebrating mythical figures with strong meaning for Romantic artists.

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

*If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)

Tuesday

Music Series:

Venue/Format: This session will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 18.00-19.00 or 19.30



Date	Tutor	Title
16 Jun	TBC	TBC
23 Jun	Amélie Addison	Fiddles, Flutes and Flower Shows, from Paxton House to Blaydon Burn: The Musical Lives of Colonel Cowen's Gardener (18.00-19.00)
		Dr Amélie Addison reveals insights into a 19th-century family's labour and leisure from a bundle of donated manuscripts held in Northumberland Archives, and questions how sources like this can prompt us to reconsider historical assumptions about culture and class.
30 Jun	TBC	TBC

**If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Wednesday

Literature Course: 29th April to 13th May

What is Film Noir?

Tutor: Roger Mitchell

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 12.30



The term film noir refers to a cycle of American thrillers that were made during the 1940s and 1950s, predominantly by European émigré filmmakers. It was first used by French critics who noted how dark these films were, both in terms of form and content. With their morally suspect characters, bleak urban landscapes and stark, high contrast visuals, these films reflected a world-weary fatalism brought about by the traumatising effects of the war.

- 29 Apr *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944) was part of the first wave of films noirs and helped to establish the cycle's key characteristics. Starring Gene Tierney and Dana Andrews, *Laura* concerns an investigation into a murder, but all is not as it seems...
- 06 May *Out of the Past* (Jacques Torneur, 1947), stars Robert Mitchum, Kirk Douglas and Jane Greer and has noir's classic flashback-driven plot in which its 'hero' is forced to face up to past events...
- 13 May In *a Lonely Place* (Nicholas Ray, 1950) stars Humphrey Bogart as an embittered and washed-up screenwriter who is gradually suspected of murder by his romantic partner played by Gloria Grahame.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday

Culture & Society Series: *13th & 20th May*

Delving Beyond the Display

Tutor: Sally Waite

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Ground Floor, GNM: Hancock, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 12.30



The Delving Beyond the Display programme focuses on the objects from the Shefton Collection that are not displayed in the Shefton Gallery in the Great North Museum: Hancock. This year, taking inspiration from the Contrasting Lives: A Man's World case, the short course focuses on objects related to the Greek drinking party (symposium).

In the first session, Sally will introduce the symposium, and we will look at the vases used during it.

In the second session we will turn our attention to the images which decorated symposium pottery.

There will be plenty of opportunity to handle and discuss objects from the Shefton Collection linked to the symposium. To conclude, an optional art-based activity drawing inspiration from the objects handled will set out to produce creative responses to the objects and the information discussed about them. Absolutely no artistic skill or prior knowledge is needed!

Notifying interest in advance via [the Explore office](#) is preferred if possible, but not essential.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday

Narratives Course: *3rd to 17th June*

The Hero Wins the Hoard. Wagner's Siegfried – Deep, Not Just Macho?

Tutor: Michael Ayton

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Time: 10.30 to 12.30



Wagner originally envisaged *Siegfried* as a light comedy between two towering tragedies, but it didn't quite work out that way. His need to connect the story with the wider plot of the *Ring* required him to create more than a few weighty, sombre moments.

We'll explore how, picking up and running with the Grimm brothers' retold tale of a boy who didn't know the meaning of fear, Wagner interwove this story with material from the Norse *Eddas* to construct, scene by scene, an unforgettable series of opposing-character confrontations. By the time he'd written all the music, his understanding of the whole *Ring* project had changed so much that his original comic intentions had become history.

Siegfried arouses controversy, and we'll address head on the contended and troubling aspects of Wagner's depictions, no less than his dramaturgical skill. We'll also consider the extraordinary history of Wagner's life during the work's creation, as in the long gap between the composition of Acts 2 and 3. Wagner immeasurably deepens his musical mastery, and fathers two other astonishing new operas, along with two daughters, and a son on the way – to be named Siegfried, of course.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday

Culture & Society Series: *24th June & 1st July*

The Genius of Bob Dylan: 1941 to Present

Tutor: Mike Fraser

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 12.30



24 Jun 1941-1970 - "I was so much older then"

Mike will consider some key Dylan songs to illustrate the development of his career from folk singer in Greenwich Village to the maelstrom of Rock stardom, followed by the retreat to family life and music-making in Woodstock. Whether you are a Bobcat or somebody wondering what the fuss is all about, come along to join the discussion, but please do not shout Judas.

01 Jul 1970 to the present - "Keep on Keeping on"

Since the sixties Dylan's career has involved extraordinary creative peaks and lows. Mike will consider his development from 'Country Bob' to his wonderful late career renaissance. Along the way Dylan has created both works of genius and a few works which can only be described as dire. Mike will discuss the Blind Willie McTells and ignore the Wiggle Wiggles. He will also address the controversies – 'Christian Bob', 'Plagiarist Bob', 'Sinatra Bob' and of course 'Nobel Laureate Bob'. Are there more 'Bobs' to come? Mike has no idea, but he will address why Dylan transforms his back catalogue at almost every concert.

Please Note: There is no need to have attended the first session to join the second.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday

Culture & Society Course: *29th April to 27th May (No session 13th May)*

Connections 2

Tutor: Anthea Lang

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00 to 15.30



Connections 2 is a further five-week course of local history miscellanea with a journey which begins and ends at the Central Station...

.... after some interesting detours ...

... and not a few rabbit holes!

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday

Literature Course: 29th April to 3rd June (No Session 27th May)

A Choice of Scottish Literature 1990-2007

Tutor: Clare Jackson

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 14.00 to 15.30



In this course, we will discuss a range of poetry written in English and Scots by Scottish authors, together with the novel *Beside the Ocean of Time* by the Orcadian writer George Mackay Brown. From the satire of Liz Lochhead and the more lyrical writings of Kathleen Jamie and Douglas Dunn, we will reflect on a range of questions. What common themes do we find arising from these texts? What is each author's intention? These are writings from the turn of the 21st Century: what is the impact of the Scottish social & national context on their work? What distinctively Scottish voice arises out of the language & structure of these writings?

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 29 Apr | Liz Lochhead 's 'Bagpipe Muzak' (1991) & Edwin Morgan's ' A Gull ' (2002) |
| 06 May | Carol Ann Duffy's Originally (1990), Douglas Dunn's 'Long Ago' (1993) & Jackie Kay's ' Pride ' (Extract from A Glimpse of Red Dust Road (2007) |
| 13 May | Kathleen Jamie's Skeins o Geese (1994), Tom Leonard's ' Touching Your Face ' (2004) & Aonghas MacNeacail's 2012 'gaelic <i>is alive</i> ' (An interesting 'extra' poem in a week focusing on dialect) |
| 20 May | George Mackay Brown's <i>Beside the Ocean of Time</i> (1994) |
| 27 May | NO CLASS |
| 03 Jun | <i>Beside the Ocean of Time</i> George Mackay Brown (1994) (<i>cont'd</i>) |

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

*If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)

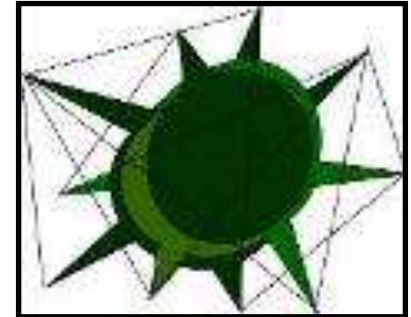
Wednesday

Perspectives Series: 3rd June to 1st July

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00 to 15.00 or 15.30*



In this series we welcome a different speaker each week, to talk about their work, research and projects. Each session focuses on a different area of scientific study (medicine, data, horticulture, environmentalism and evolution) to offer a new perspective on life and human activity.

Date	Tutor	Title
03 Jun	Dr CK Foo	GP – Past & Present (*14.00-15.30)

Dr C K Foo is a recently retired GP who had been a GP Partner at the same practice for over 30 years. This talk is a memoir giving his perspective on how General Practice has changed over those years and will hope to provide answers to the following three questions:

- What do GP's do all day?
- Why it is so difficult to get an appointment with your GP?
- How much do GPs get paid?

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

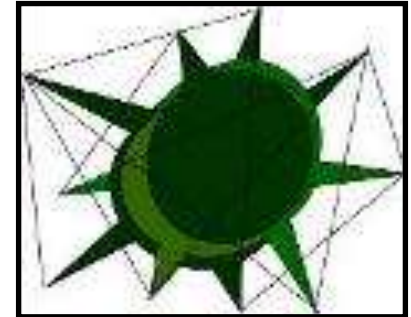
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Date	Tutor	Title
10 Jun	Peter Brewis	SonOrbitUs Project

Peter Brewis is a music maker based in Sunderland, perhaps best known for his work with the band, Field Music, producing nine albums, two film soundtracks and many other collaborative projects since 2005. SonOrbitUs is Peter's latest project; a year-long musical composition developed with Gateshead based composer, Ed Carter. The piece is, in essence, created by the city of Sunderland itself. Sounds and gestures found within the city are manipulated by a continuous flow of data coming from the population & environment over the course of a full year. For instance, population data might be used to generate a melody. The tempo and pitches of the melody might then be changed by traffic data and temperature respectively. Peter will explain the compositional process & system used for the piece.

17 Jun	Karen Dobson	Wellbeing & the Environment at Scotswood Garden
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Karen Dobson is the CEO of Scotswood Garden, an environmental, community charity in the west end of Newcastle. Karen has led the charity for 13 years having previously worked as a primary school teacher. Scotswood Garden celebrates its 30th birthday this year. Hear about how the charity has developed from an abandoned school playing field to a thriving community resource. Based in the heart of an area of high disadvantage, the Garden uses nature to improve health, confidence and skills, and enables people to forge connections. It is a community growing together, and a beautiful place.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

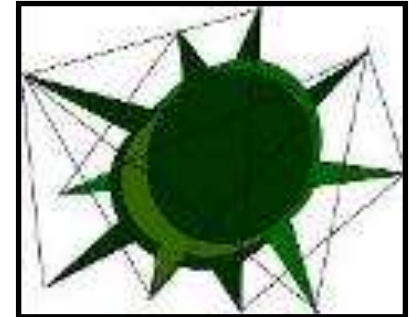
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Time: 14.00 to 15.00 or 15.30*



Date	Tutor	Title
24 Jun	Annie Tindley	<p>A Nobility of Trees: The Dukes of Buccleuch & Forestry in the C19th</p> <p>Annie is Professor of British & Irish Rural History and, since 2020, the Head of the School of History, Classics & Archaeology at Newcastle University. Annie's research interests lie in the history and contemporary legacies of land and environmental issues, including landownership, land reform, land use & management. She has worked on the aristocratic classes landed estates and their management from the mid-eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries in the Scottish, Irish, British & imperial contexts. This talk explores a 300 year history of trees and woodlands in northern Britain, taking as a case study the pioneering activities on the Buccleuch estates in southern Scotland and their wider influence. It examines this history from economic, political, cultural and environmental perspectives to understand the evolving perception of trees and woodlands in the modern period.</p>
01 Jul	Wallace Arthur	<p>Evolution of Animal Intelligence (*14.00-15.30)</p> <p>Wallace is an evolutionary biologist with a PhD from Nottingham University and now Emeritus Professor of Zoology at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Over the last 300 million years, certain evolutionary lineages have produced animals that are considerably more intelligent than any of those that went before. Such lineages can be found in mammals, in birds, in cephalopod molluscs, and (though with more ifs & buts) in certain arthropods. He will cover all these lineages, but with a particular focus on mammals, including hominids.</p>

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Wednesday

Culture & Society Walks: 3rd June to 1st July

Tutor: John Griffiths

Venue/Location: Various

Time: Meet 19.00



Date	Title
03 Jun	The Forth and Stephenson Quarter Meet Central Station portico. Note: involves climb
10 June	Jack Common's Heaton Meet Chillingham Road Metro
17 Jun	Sheriff Hill Meet War Memorial, Durham Road, Low Fell. Note: involves climb.
24 Jun	George Gibson's Newcastle - Urban Development, Corruption and Attempted Murder Meet Manors Metro
01 Jul	Sunderland Old and New Meet St Peters Metro

NOTE: Two cases, involve climbs - ascent from the Quayside area to the centre of town and Low Fell to Sheriff Hill is a bit longer; Please be confident this won't be a problem for you before deciding to join the walk. More details will be provided nearer the time.



Thursday

Art History Visit: *7th May*

Journey of a Century – From the Forbidden City to the Palace Museum

Tutor: Qin Cao

Venue: Durham Oriental Museum, Elvet Hill Rd, South Rd, Durham DH1 3TH

Time: Please meet at the venue to start at 11.00



We have arranged a visit for Explore members to The Forbidden City Exhibition at Durham Oriental Museum. Qin Cao, who gave us a talk in November last year has agreed to give us a brief introduction to the exhibition as well as the museum.

The exhibition is entitled “**Journey of a Century – From the Forbidden City to the Palace Museum**”

Members who intend to join the visit should let the office weareexplore@gmail.com know, so we can advise the museum of numbers ahead of the visit. There is likely to be a limit on the numbers permitted. This will be confirmed nearer the time.

We will not be organising special transport but suggest members who are driving down arrange carshare with those who need a lift and allow time for parking as there is limited car parking near the venue.

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Thursday



**Joseph Cowen
Lifelong Learning Centre**
A Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Thursday 14th May

10.30 - 12.30

Brunswick Methodist Church Hall

Joseph Cowen LLC CIO AGM

Join us for the Joseph Cowen LLC CIO Annual General Meeting, to discuss the organisation's position currently and in relation to the financial year ending August 2025.

We are looking forward to getting together in person at Brunswick MC as well as via Zoom, and hope many of our members can attend to discuss our activity and achievements.

**BLENDED
(F2F & Zoom)**

**If you need any help downloading & using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)*

Thursday

Culture & Society Series: *21st May to 11th June*

Politics in a Changing, Challenging World

Tutor: Malcolm Grady

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



It seems a given that each age lives through some form of political upheaval and we have had it in boatloads over the past decade on a domestic front alone. We are now entering a different phase of political upheaval, domestically *and* internationally.

These lectures will examine the forces that are driving political change, the emerging effects of such change and the consequences for the future.

The sessions will look at the concept of the 'Politics of Personality' and how that is becoming a significant factor in understanding political change as well as the role of AI in influencing political decision making in the different generations of the electorate.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Thursday

Culture & Society Series: *18th June to 2nd July*

Three Newcastle Victorians

Tutor: David Saunders

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



After several series on Russian history, David Saunders now offers talks about three nineteenth-century local people whom he has come across in the course of his Russian studies:

- 18 Jun Charles Mitchell of Jesmond (1820-95),) the shipbuilding partner of Lord Armstrong who also erected the Admiralty Shipyard in St Petersburg
- 25 Jun Sir Walter Scott of Elswick and Riding Mill (1826-1910, not the novelist!), building contractor and publisher of a famous novel by a Russian terrorist
- 02 Jul Robert Spence Watson of Pilgrim Street and Bensham Grove (1837-1911), solicitor, President of the National Liberal Federation, and long-term friend of Russian revolutionaries.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Thursday

Literature Short Course: 30th April to 28th May (No Session 7th & 14th May)

How to Approach the Poems of Lord Byron

Tutor: Tim Crocker

Venue/Format: These sessions will be delivered **live via Zoom**

Time: 14.30 to 16.00



Mad, bad and dangerous to know, as Lady Caroline Lamb famously put it, Byron (1788-1824) was a notorious figure in his day. His work still has power to shock and startle – but for modern readers, the sheer voluminousness of his output (1000s of pages of the collected works) makes it hard to know where to start.

These sessions will cover three different aspects of his work – some short lyrics, extracts from *Childe Harold* (little read now but of huge importance in terms of his influence here and abroad) and from canto 1 of the scintillating 17 canto *Don Juan*.

30 Apr	Early poems and lyrics
07 May	NO CLASS
14 May	NO CLASS
21 May	Selections from Childe Harold
28 May	Selections Don Juan Book 1

NOTE: Texts will be provided via the Members' Bulletin nearer the time. Although the course is an integrated whole, the reading for each week can be treated independently, so if a member could not attend one or more sessions, they would get something from those they could attend.

*If you need any help downloading and using Zoom there is an information sheet [HERE](#)

**LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS**

Thursday

Literature Course: *4th June to 2nd July*

Form and Theme in Poetry (6)

Tutor: Bronwen Calvert

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 14.00 to 15.30



For this latest version of Bronwen's poetry course, we will examine a range of poetic forms and look at how poets engage with these frameworks. From sonnets and sestinas to limericks and more, we'll see what a wide response is possible within the apparent confines of poetic form.

04 Jun	Sonnets
11 Jun	Repeating structures
18 Jun	Short forms
25 Jun	Ballad and hymn structures
02 Jul	Free verse

NOTE: Texts will be provided via the Members' Bulletin nearer the time.

**Face-To-Face
Check Venue**

Friday

Culture & Society Course: *1st to 29th May*

Encountering the Supernatural in Tudor and Stuart England: Witches,

Tutor: Jo Bath

Ghosts & Fairies

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face**

Venue: Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle upon Tyne

Time: 10.30 to 12.00



After the Reformation, the supernatural world was theoretically simplified, leaving God and the Devil as the only players. But if anything, in practice things grew more confusing.

Except in times of crisis, the law cared about deeds, not devilish deals. Cunning folk called on the Virgin while they made protective "witch bottles"; the ghost of Hamlet's father could be "a spirit of health, or goblin damned".

Con artists pretended to be fairies to fleece the gullible, and a Royal physician investigated a toad "familiar".

Welcome to the post-Reformation supernatural mash-up.

Face-To-Face
Check Venue

Friday

Culture & Society Course: *5th June to 3rd July*

Beyond the Foundations: The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of the British Empire

Tutor: Nick Cott

Format: These sessions will be delivered **Face-to-Face** and **live via Zoom**

Time: 10.30 to 12.00

(See full text [HERE](#))



In 1815, Britain emerged from the Napoleonic Wars as the world's undisputed naval & commercial superpower. Over the following century and a half, it built the largest formal territorial empire in history, governing roughly a quarter of the world's land surface and population at its peak. Yet within a single generation of WWII, that empire had dissolved with a speed that astonished the world. And in 2026, its legacies remain sharply present across former colonising & colonised nations alike, continuing to provoke debate, controversy and soul-searching on a global scale. This series traces that extraordinary story.

We begin with the era of Pax Britannica, when Britain preferred to exercise power through trade & naval dominance rather than formal conquest, before examining the dramatic shift to territorial imperialism in the late C19th: the Scramble for Africa, the consolidation of India, and the ideological machinery that sought to justify colonial rule to both rulers and ruled. We then turn to the enormous strains that two World Wars placed upon the empire, tracing the growing resistance movements across Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean that would ultimately make the formal empire untenable. The final lectures follow the rapid & often violent process of decolonisation across the globe, before asking a question that refuses easy answers: did the empire really end, or does its shadow still fall across the world today?

The series places human experience at its centre, examining the lives and voices of the colonised as well as the colonisers, the resisters as well as the rulers. Each talk is followed by open discussion and members are warmly encouraged to bring their own questions & perspectives to the conversation. No prior knowledge assumed & all members are welcome.

BLENDED
(F2F & Zoom)

Coffee Morning, Lunch or a Catch Up with Friends of Explore

Once we've settled into this season, we might want another get-together, perhaps a group meal or a walk, or a quiet coffee and a chat between sessions.

If you'd like to help organise a social event, or would appreciate a friendly natter over a cuppa (face to face or via Zoom) get in touch.

We'll announce more details of any social events **via the weekly bulletins** so keep an eye out for events and news from [Friends of Explore](#).

If you would like to join us or have any suggestions for a meet-up please email friendsofexplore@gmail.com



Face-To-Face
Check Venue

LIVE ZOOM
SESSIONS

The End of Explore Season Three

**Season One 2026-27 will start
Monday 5th October 2026**

JOIN

Would you like to join Explore?
Contact us, join or find out
more about our Annual or
Termly memberships
via the link above

TEACH

Are you a researcher, artist,
practitioner or tutor who would
like to speak at Explore?
Contact our programme team
via the link above

DONATE

Did you know that Explore
is a member-led,
volunteer-run charity?
Find out more and donate
via the link above