

NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It's that time of the year when elections are in the air. We have just had our own elections to the committee at the AGM. Earlier this month we had local council elections and the election for the Police and Crime Commissioner. The lucky people of Liverpool were able to vote for their mayor at the same time. Next month we will have the opportunity to vote in the referendum to remain, or leave, the European Union. We are being told that this will be one of the most important votes that we cast in our lifetime.

That's all well and good but I feel that I am ill informed to take such grave decisions. Despite 24 hour news coverage, the internet, Facebook and Twitter and numerous other media sources I feel that I am less well informed than ever before. The problem, as I see it is that everyone appearing in the media has an opinion about what would be best for us but reliable facts on which to base a decision are as rare as rocking horse poo. Statistics are bandied around by politicians and spin doctors. They only go to prove the old adage that statistics can be manipulated to prove anything.

I will be on holiday on the 23rd June so will not be able to vote on that day. We have asked for a postal vote but rather hope that it will arrive after Carol and I leave for foreign shores so that we cannot be blamed for making the wrong decision.

Colin Burkitt

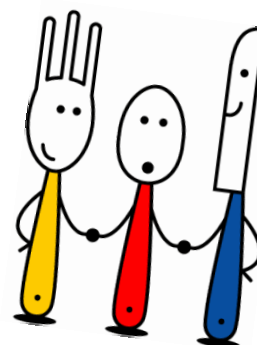
LUNCH CIRCLE

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 21st June 2016

12-15 pm for 12-30 pm

Pesto at The Dibbinsdale Inn

Dibbinsdale Road, Bromborough CH63 0JH



MEETINGS and SPEAKERS

Thursday 9th June 2016 : Grand Narrative and Lexical Priming – Mary Clinton

Thursday 23rd June 2016 : Our very own Kate Walton - Evacuee

SOCIAL OUTINGS

Full booking details available at meetings, please see your social organisers at the back of the hall OR e-mail barbara@oxtonu3a.co.uk

REMINDERS

Tuesday 7 June 2016

Arley Hall & Gardens
Cost £8-00 plus coach fare
Reserve List only Depart 9-30 am



EVENTS - NOW BOOKING

Friday 22nd July 2016

Cruise to Salford Quays
3 course meal on board (special dietary needs must be advised)
Coach departs 9-15 am
Cost (inclusive) £33-00
Limited availability
Special dietary needs must be advised



NEW

Wednesday 20th July 2016

Francis Bacon Exhibition (with History of Art Group)
Tate Gallery at 11-00 a.m
Cost to be advised



Thursday 8th September 2016

Safer Driving for Longer
Free session provided by Wirral Council
Session Room TWPG 9-30 a.m or 11-15 a.m
BOOKING ESSENTIAL



Monday 19th September 2016

Guided Tour of Albert Dock
Albert Dock Heritage Project
Free but BOOKING ESSENTIAL



DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES !!!!

Friday 16th December 2016

Christmas Lunch
Wirral Ladies Golf Club 12.00 for 12.30 pm
Cost to be advised, booking opening later in year.
KEEP THIS DATE FREE



THEATRE – BOOKING CLOSING

Tuesday 21st June 2016

Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme
Playhouse Theatre 7-30 pm £15-50

TICKETS READY FOR COLLECTION

Monday 6th June 2016

The Government Inspector
Everyman Theatre 7-30 pm £15-00

Monday 11th July 2017

Merchant of Venice at Playhouse Theatre

VISIT TO MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL

In the 13th century a large stone built parish church was erected in the centre of Manchester. Over the years it had many additional chapels added to it.

In 1847 it was created a Cathedral for the newly formed Diocese of Manchester.

During the industrial period, the population grew so rapidly that extra space was needed to accommodate the congregation. The building was extensively renovated in 1882, removing the chapels and creating one large space. This has resulted in it having the widest Cathedral nave in the country.

It suffered heavy bombing in 1940 and it took almost twenty years to complete the repairs. All the Victorian stained glass was destroyed in the blitz and has now been replaced with modern designs – The Healing Window, The Revelation Window, and The Christian Signs and Symbols.

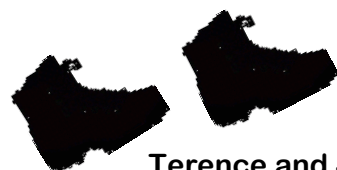


My personal favourite was The Fire Window in the Chapel of the Manchester Regiment. It was designed to commemorate the cathedral's rebuilding after the blitz. It was reconstructed after it was itself destroyed by an IRA bomb in 1996.

We were lucky enough to have a lovely sunny day to show the windows at their best.

Thank you Barbara for organising the trip, and the weather!

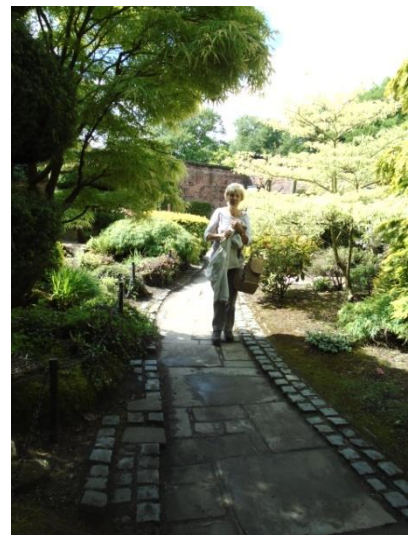
Pauline Pinnington



WALKING GROUP

Terence and Judy are leading this walk in Southport on Friday 24 June - just over 5 miles / 8 km, all on level paths or grass. The route is a long loop around the marine lake and along the seafront, there will be several opportunities for anyone overcome by fatigue or thirst to leave the walk early and go straight to the pub (the Victoria on Stanley Terrace). Meet at Liverpool Central on the Northern Line platform just after 10:00 to catch the 10:08 to Southport. Please sign up at the Welcome Table.

In beautiful Calderstones Park May 2016



THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY
MANCHESTER

Several members of Oxton U3A recently enjoyed a most interesting day out in Manchester. The morning having been spent in Manchester Cathedral, the group were then bussed to The John Rylands Library on Deansgate for lunch in their splendid cafe. The first impression I had when stepping down from the coach was the complete contrast between the stunning gothic architecture of the Cumbrian sandstone library building and the modern glass architecture of the adjacent Emporio Armani building. Our guide for the day, John, was extremely knowledgeable about the library.

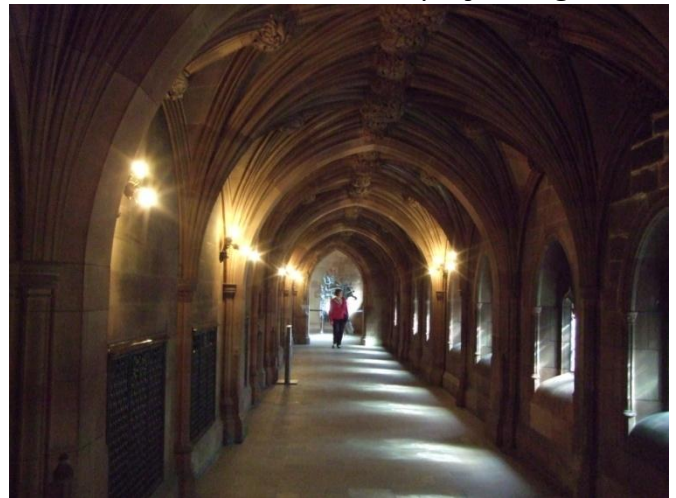


The library's outer appearance of gothic arched windows and magnificent doorways, along with the stained glass windows, high roof arches and many galleries, would perhaps lead one to imagine that the building was originally intended to be a church, and it

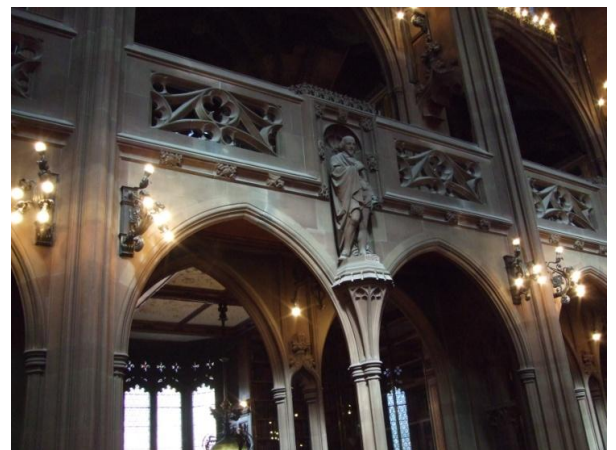
seems that it has been described by some as a "cathedral for books", so it was somewhat of a surprise to learn that it was opened as late as 1900, by Mrs Enriqueta Rylands, in memory of her late husband John. Mrs Rylands, a Cuban by birth, was an admirer of Sir Basil Champney's work and she commissioned him with the building of this library, which houses many ancient works including a Gutenberg bible, along with works by William Caxton and Charles Dickens. It was originally intended to house only theological books and texts, and one notable display is a glass case housing papyri fragments of St John's Gospel, written in Greek, and reputed to date back to around 125 A.D. These fragments are thought to be the earliest surviving pieces of the New Testament.

Housed within the walls are also several collections of rare books purchased by Mrs Rylands prior to the building of the library. There are also ancient illuminated manuscripts and Egyptian scrolls. Personal papers once belonging to Elizabeth Gaskell are also stored here.

Statues of Mr and Mrs Rylands are on display in the reading room as are busts of some of our most notable literary, theological and philanthropic names.



The library has been extended in more modern times and a bridge provides a seamless link between the older and newer parts. The modern part houses the cafe where we had a lovely lunch which had been pre-prepared and was served to us promptly upon our arrival. This part of the building is also home to a well-stocked bookshop, which was well worth a browse after our tour had ended.



The John Rylands library became part of Manchester University in 1972 and it forms as rich a source of knowledge for today's students, and members of the public on guided tours, as it has to previous generations

Linda Fisher

A.G.M. 2016

Many thanks to all our members who attended our recent AGM, and a big thank you to Colin (our Chairman) for the very interesting DVD about Birkenhead Park, which he showed to us afterwards. We elected a new Treasurer (Ken Jackson) and a new Secretary (Jean Mawdsley) and also welcomed Corinne on board as our newest Committee Member. I thought it might be useful for new members to view the mug shots of our team, now you know who we are, come and say hello to us, we don't bite!



**COLIN BURKITT
CHAIRMAN**



**SANDRA LAKIN
VICE CHAIRMAN**



**JUDITH WHALEY
VICE CHAIRMAN**



**BARBARA LLOYD
SOCIAL SECRETARY**



**KEN JACKSON
TREASURER**



**GWYNETH WILLIAMS
MEMBERSHIP SEC**



**JEAN MAWDSLEY
SECRETARY**



**BRIAN GILL
SPEAKER SEC**



**COLIN STREDDER
WEBSITE**



CORINNE WHITHAM

Our very own 'Thought for the Month'

What a fascinating life begins to present itself once one starts to get involved in the Oxton and Prenton U3A! Like any organism that is alive and well there will inevitably be moments of tension. All gardeners know that even the most treasured plants are subject to attack. June is supposed to be the month of roses but, if this is true, there can be times when one is made more aware of the thorny bits than the actual blooms. It is the plant itself that goes on the offensive. Even so, we are assured that biological as well as psychological defence mechanisms are necessary; though I can think of roses that seem to manage without thorns very well.

I have been up and down the garden path several times lately and each time have been badly mauled at both ends (of the path!) by over exuberant manifestations of the species. But then I never stopped and took stock. It seemed that by doing nothing and simply being more careful I could avoid the infliction of further pain. This was not to be. I needed to look at the situation and find a viable solution. It was by no means a simple matter of pruning shears and basically I did not want to harm the plants or go against their basic natures. Suffice to say that, having taken thought and the minimum of action, I now go up and down the path unmolested.

People alas are not always so compliant! Psychology proves that the more we try to manipulate them the worse they get, even if they do not actually suspect anything is going on. Withdrawing and taking stock is always a good strategy; though not always possible in the heat of the fray. One might come back to it later when things have quietened down a bit. BUT may I warn against continuing the fight internally. Back to the garden; it teaches me a lot. Yes we do a great deal to manipulate plants but it is their basic nature within their preferred ecology that attracts us and we do not need to violate this. Trying to bend people to our will and to subdue their exuberance or even aggression, can create stress for all concerned. So often I come back to the basic fact that it is the gardener that has to change in order to be able to adapt to the conditions that prevail if one wishes to avoid unnecessary conflict.

Of course ones pride can be hurt both with plants and people. When a valuable plant will not thrive one can blame the vendor and feel cheated or a failure to respond adequately to its needs can evoke depression. With people as with plants, if one changes ones expectations and adapts to what is really possible within the given ecology, understanding their needs, something quite different, unique and unexpected might happen instead. Of course plants, like people, can be bullies. They will, almost invariably, be attempting to hide their vulnerability with a display of aggression. Handle with care! The Duchess of Northumberland has a garden of poisonous plants which attracts many visitors and as far as I am aware no one has yet died as a result.

Brian Gill

TEA ROTA FOR THE NEXT 4 MEETINGS

9 th June 2016	Jean Peters	Gill McCloy	Ian McCloy
23 rd June 2016	Maureen Jones	Mary Hamilton	Kathleen Pugh
7 th July 2016	Joan Parfect	Lillian Evans	Helen Roberts
21 st July 2016	Bernadette Hamilton	Elianne Davie	Rowan Bligh

Please ring me (Joan Benton) on 608 6226 if you are unable to do a duty

The Wet Sleddale Story

In general I dislike shopping, particularly for food or clothing. There are few things worse than wandering round a supermarket unable to find anything including not being able to find anyone who might help. Clothes are equally tiresome especially if a changing room is involved. In both cases I soon feel the will to live ebbing from me. Contrarily I cannot walk past a charity shop without popping in to have a browse, usually for a jigsaw or a book but occasionally to glance at whatever else may be on offer. This has become even more enjoyable since I retired and time is not quite so precious.

So it was recently in Henley. I had a little while before the parking ticket expired so took myself down High Street where I knew there were one or two shops. As you can imagine, charity shops in Henley are a cut above the average and I cannot help recalling an occasion in the past when, having searched for weeks for a shirt with a wing collar, the first shop I went into in Henley had a choice of three! But I digress.

As usual I headed straight for the jigsaws. I'm quite particular. The picture must not be of humans or animals of any age, nor of thatched cottages nor stately homes. Castles, cathedrals and bridges or other feats of engineering are welcome as would the occasional land or seascape but nothing doing that day. The books must be in alphabetical order by author so that I can look quickly for favourites. But no luck there either.

Still having time to spare I began looking round at the old furniture, pots and pans, glasses, cutlery and other bric-a-brac. My eye was caught by what looked like three or four notebooks high on a shelf. I reached them down to take a closer look. They were unused and one of them had such an amazingly colourful binding that I had to buy it though for what purpose I didn't know but at 25p it was a bargain.

On arriving home the first thing I did was to take another look at my new notebook. It really was rather splendid. I riffled through the pages not expecting to find anything but something fell out. The shock hit hard. I sat down with a bump and just stared. It was impossible. I couldn't believe it but there was the evidence. I blinked several times but it didn't go away. There on the floor was a photograph of myself as a young man. How could it possibly have got into the notebook? Recovering, I picked up the photo and turned it over. That was another shock. The words I read immediately brought back a whole raft of memories, enough to fill my mind to overflowing. It said:

“Mike – Wet Sleddale - 29th June 1963”

That was a day. I sorted the jumble of memories into chronological order. That *was* a day.

I was standing on Platform 1 of Carlisle Citadel station watching the Birmingham train approach. As it slowed and came to a standstill I could see that it was quite full. Fortunately I had reserved a seat, a window seat and found it easily. It was in an open carriage with a table for books and papers between opposite seats. I threw my bag up onto the luggage rack and sat down. Here I was, leaving home, going to a new job, surrounded by strangers. I felt excitement tempered by a little apprehension. I looked round at my fellow passengers, nearly all of them older men but in the seat opposite sat a woman of about my own age. She had looked up from her book as I sat down and nodded an acknowledgement then returned to her book but, from that brief glimpse of her face, I thought she was the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen.

I had a book and a newspaper myself and began to read. It was a good book but I couldn't help glancing up from time to time. My travelling companion never stirred. Hers must have been a *really* good book or, more likely, she just didn't want to get involved in any conversation. I, on the other hand, was desperate to start a conversation but didn't have the courage or impertinence to interrupt her reading. I went from book to newspaper and from reading the news to trying the

crossword. Still she didn't stir. By now we had passed Penrith and were beginning to climb Shap Fell. She may get off at Lancaster or worse still Oxenholme. Things were becoming urgent. What was I to do?

One option was to do nothing, just accept that she was content with her book. Or I could try writing her a little note. She might be curious enough to read it. And if she did read it, what if the note were a poem? That would be different. A more subtle chat-up line than usual. It was certainly worth a try. It took a while but eventually it was done. Somewhat reluctantly I tore a blank page from my book and wrote:

West lies Wet Sleddale's unsuspecting fell
Which, soon flooded, will become another well
To slake rapacious Manchester's thirst
Poor Thirlmere, ravished, now a sterile fake.
Haweswater's dam drowned Mardale in its lake
And Manchester has done its level worst.
Ullswater's beauty, immeasurably intense.
Saved by Lord Birkett's rousing eloquence
Cannot compare to yours. You are the first.

I slid the piece of paper nervously across the table. She must have seen my hand out of the corner of her eye. She looked up, picking up the poem. At least she was reading it. I waited expecting her to go back to her book or kick me in the shins or maybe at least she would ask who Lord Birkett was.

She looked across at me smiling and said "Thank you. May I keep it?"

"Please do. It's for you." I stammered.

We talked for a while introducing ourselves and saying where we were going and what we were doing. She was called Freya, a name I hadn't heard before. She was being met in Birmingham by her boyfriend. I asked his name. "Peter." she said. Lucky Peter I thought to myself. I told her I was changing trains in Birmingham and off to a new job in Oxfordshire and she wished me well. It was all rather superficial chit-chat. We made a joint effort, quite successful, with the crossword and went back to our books from time to time. The difference was that I now felt able to interrupt her if I thought of something worth saying or to remark on some feature of the countryside as we passed by. But somehow I felt that the initial sparkle was fading.

"What would you say to coffee and a sandwich?" I blurted out.

"Yes, good idea. A beer would slip down nicely." I could hardly believe my ears.

Since Preston the train was even more crowded and we made our way slowly to the buffet car where it was standing room only but Freya didn't seem to mind. I asked her what she would like and joined the queue at the counter. Eventually I was served with two beers and a couple of sandwiches that might have been made yesterday or possibly the day before and carried them gingerly back to Freya.

"Thanks again." she said.

"Again?" I questioned.

"First the poem and now this." Freya explained.

"The pleasure is all mine." I replied tritely cursing myself for not thinking of something more original to say. But it didn't matter.

In that somewhat smoky and noisy atmosphere we talked more freely, both of us being aware that we couldn't be heard never mind listened to. We spoke of childhood, growing up, past loves, favourite films, books and music, even star signs and I had to say that I didn't believe a word but if I had to have a star sign then a scorpion was a pretty mean beast. We spoke of our future plans and Freya told me how she had first met Peter when they both lived in Glasgow but since he now lived near Birmingham she was moving south to be with him. They were thinking of emigrating. I told her more of my boring old job in an insurance office and the exciting new job working with computers, something I'd wanted to do for ages.

Time passed quickly and all too soon we were approaching New Street. I didn't want to arrive.

"It's a shame for me that you're meeting Peter." I said, half smiling. "I might have persuaded you to come to Oxford."

Freya laughed. "That would be silly." she replied; then after a minute or so continued. "Actually, right now, at this very moment I too feel it's a shame that I'm meeting Peter."

To say that I was surprised would be a gross understatement. Right then, at that very moment I wanted to kiss her and would have done had we been more private. I'm sure she would have responded. As it was, we just looked at each other for a few moments, fingers touching, each knowing what the other was thinking. I asked Freya for her address but she said "No, it wouldn't work." and I had to agree. Then she surprised me again.

"If you have a photograph, that would be nice."

"What, for you to keep?" I was incredulous.

"Yes, please."

By chance I had three passport type photos that I needed for security reasons with the new job. So what if I were one short. I could easily get another and I fished one out of my inside pocket. Putting it face down on the table I wrote on the back:

Mike – Wet Sleddale - 29th June 1963

We parted company with a hug in New Street station. Freya walked off to meet Peter without a backward glance. I caught my train. I could think of nothing else but Freya. For some time Freya was uppermost in my mind but with a new job, new friends and new places to see, thoughts of her gradually faded until there came a time when I did not think about her even once.

Fired by the memories, I went back to the shop in Henley the next day. The same man was standing behind the counter.

"I bought a rather colourful notebook here yesterday."

"Yes, you did." he said "Is there something wrong?"

"Not at all. I know it's a long shot but do you remember who brought it in?"

He paused, then:

"Yes, I think I do. It was a lady who comes in from time to time, usually to browse but occasionally with something to give. Rather a striking lady actually."

"I wonder if I wrote her a note would you give it to her the next time you see her in the shop."

"Hmm, not something we would normally do but if I may read the note first, just to make sure it's all right etcetera, I don't see why not."

“Thank you. No reason why you shouldn't read it.”

I even cadged a piece of paper from him and wrote:

'If you remember Mike and Wet Sleddale please ring me on 01229 883987'

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WHERE'S GRANDMA?

The computer swallowed Grandma, yes, honestly it's true!
She pressed 'Control' and 'Enter' and disappeared from view.
It devoured her completely; the thought just makes me squirm.
She must have caught a virus or been eaten by a worm.
I've searched through the recycle bin and files of every kind;
I've even used the Internet, but nothing did I find.
In desperation, I asked Mr. Google my searches to refine.
The reply from him was negative, not a thing was found 'online'.
So, if inside your Inbox, my Grandma you should see,
please 'Copy', 'Scan' and 'Paste' her, and send her back to me

A huge 'thank you' to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter, from the story writers to the travel guides, the photographers and the philosophers amongst you all. I very much appreciate your input, without you all there would be NO newsletter. What wonderful members we have and what outstanding talent, you all never cease to amaze me. I mustn't forget Ann who proof reads the final version for me. THANK YOU ONE AND ALL.

There will be a newsletter in July before our August break so don't forget to keep sending me your articles (by the 20th June please).

sandra.lakin@talktalk.net