

December Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

As we approach that very special time of the year, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our Members a Very Happy Christmas and send everyone my very best wishes for 2018.



As most of you are aware I was only elected your Chairman in April 2017 and to date it has been a very challenging experience. Without the encouragement of so many members I am sure it would have been far worse, so I would also like to send my thanks to you all for greeting me so happily at the Thursday morning meetings and for smiling back at me when I stand there with fingers crossed hoping that all will go well.

It has been a super year for our U3A and we are justifiably proud of reaching our 10th Anniversary and we are very pleased that so many of you celebrated this occasion with us. Most of you have chosen to renew your membership and whilst we are always very happy to welcome new members it is so very satisfying when older members choose to remain with us.



So a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed in any way to the success of our U3A in 2017 and let us all look forward to 2018 when I, hopefully, will still be standing before you with my fingers crossed.



Sandra Lakin
Chairman

BRIAN'S MUSINGS

Each year I look out for the first signs of Christmas so that I can enjoy being suitably shocked and appalled by the fact that they seem to come earlier every time. This year has to be some sort of record, though it will no doubt be beaten next year. Selfridges opened a Christmas department in August, claiming that overseas visitors demanded it. I refuse to register emotion at this news and have decided to accept philosophically that this is the way some people are and given the collective psychosis under which we all labour, it is one of our more innocent manifestations. For my own part I find it difficult to entertain thoughts related to festivities associated with the Winter Solstice until Halloween and Bonfire-Night are well behind us. And then what!?



Christmas is a time of rich pickings for psychologists. There is no end to the amount of stuff that the festival is capable of throwing up in the human psyche and plenty of books and papers are written to support the learned opinions this annual crisis generates. When I ran therapy groups in a psychiatric hospital I remember that we tried to get as many people as possible home for Christmas. By Boxing Day they were mostly back again, having had as much as they could manage of festive good cheer. But I suppose that Christmas is very much like the rest of life: much depends on how we relate to it. The collective psychosis presents us with an abstract ideal with which, for cultural and commercial reasons and above all habit, we feel obliged to comply; indeed we are morally and emotionally bullied into doing so. It takes a degree of courage to hold to the elements that one can manage and allow the rest to pass.

It is an amazing time of year without a doubt. Some make a song and dance about the summer solstice but stone circles are more likely to be better aligned to the twenty first of December, given that, from then onwards, the days begin to lengthen and the year regenerates. Traditionally people have come together to perform Mummers' Plays and its good to note that the custom is being revived. They celebrate the death and rebirth cycle that is the mainspring of creation. Things can indeed seem to get worse at Christmas, or thereabouts, because there are dragons of darkness and ignorance lurking. They hide in the human psyche and for as long as they go unnoticed and unrecognised, the chill of an inner winter will prevail. C.S.Lewis developed this idea in his Narnia series: 'always winter and never Christmas'. Christmas, with the reborn sun, facilitates an awareness of those elements in the psyche that are capable of inhibiting growth, flowering and fruition in the year that lies ahead. ('Herod' in the Christian tradition) They may never be vanquished entirely but the Hero, with the bright sword of truth that is the sun's penetrating light, demonstrates that all sorts of dragons can be put to flight and that in spite of them, the creative adventure that is life continues to unfold.

But then, haven't we always known that there is a bit more to Christmas than food, drink and presents? I constantly remind myself that 'it is better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness.'



Brian Gill



LUNCH CIRCLE

Dates to December are as follows:

There is no lunch Circle meeting in December as we have the Christmas Dinner

We would like to wish Colin Stredder a speedy recovery from his recent hip operation and look forward to seeing him back amongst his U3A friends very soon.



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

EVENTS

Christmas lunch
FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER
12.00 noon for 12.30 pm
Venue: The Arthur J Gallagher Platinum lounge
@ Tranmere Rovers **Menu choices now required**



Tour of WESTERN APPROACHES MUSEUM
WW2 Secret bunker
 5 mins from James St Station
Thursday 25 January 2018
10.30 am £6.75



Tour of Liverpool Medical Institution
Wednesday 28 February 2018
 Morning & Afternoon tours
 With Lunch for both tours @ 12.00 noon
 Cost **£11.50** inclusive
Limited places now remaining



THEATRE

Reminders

WARHORSE
 Liverpool Empire
 Wednesday 29 November
 @ 2.30 pm
Meet at theatre

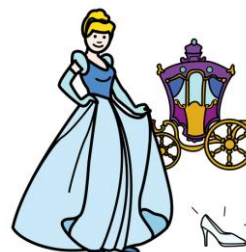


Spirit of Christmas (Carol concert)
 Liverpool Philharmonic Hall
Tuesday 19 December @ 7.30pm
 Collect tickets at meeting on 7 December
 & meet @ venue
Booking closed



NOW BOOKING

Matthew Bourne's CINDERELLA
 Liverpool Empire 2.30 pm
 Thursday 12 April 2018
 £29
Booking closing 4 January 2018



IMPORTANT NOTICE
No bookings or reservations
can be taken without payment
This is necessary in order to be fair
to all our members

Full booking details available @ meetings
 See your social organisers

PEOPLE OF OXTON

Portrait Photography Project by James Deegan

I am a local photographer currently producing a series of portraits of people who live, work, or regularly visit the Oxtan area of Birkenhead. The portraits would all be taken in different Oxtan locations, such as the home, place of work or favourite spot etc. These are called environmental portraits, where the photographs give the viewer an insight into the subject's life and surroundings.

The portraits are intended to show the rich variety of life in this particular part of the Wirral; a place that to me, as a local, has always had the feel of a small village within the broader Wirral area. I am approaching local businesses as well as people who simply have an interesting look or a great story to tell.

Typically, because of the natural approach I am taking, the photo shoots would take up to 10-30 minutes. The aim is to be as natural and unobtrusive as possible, although these are formal portraits with the subject fully aware of the presence of the camera and not documentary pictures of people at work.

I am aiming to shoot all the portraits over the next few months and I am flexible with times, day or evening. Anyone willing to take part would give their time for free, but would receive a copy of their best images for their own use, and maybe even some free publicity where appropriate!

The ultimate aim for 'People of Oxton' is to mount a public exhibition of the work in the local area. I hope also to produce a book or pamphlet with the images accompanied by text including information, quotes and stories from the people in the pictures. I am sure this would be of great interest, particularly in the local area itself.

I would love to hear from anyone interested in getting involved in this project so I can arrange a convenient slot for me to visit, explain further and take some images. Also if anyone can pass on my contact details to anyone else you think might like to take part, be it friends or fellow employees who fit the criteria, I would be most grateful. My contact details are – jamesdeegan10@gmail.com or 07930 985 442.

Please also visit my website www.deeganphotography.com and the James Deegan Photography page on Facebook to see examples of my work.



WONDERFUL VIBES FOR OUR TENTH BIRTHDAY – A LOVELY OCCASION

Our last meeting in October was a little too late to be included in the newsletter for that month but here are some photos of the very enjoyable celebration. The committee had decorated the hall with bunting, flowers and balloons to give a festive atmosphere and all present enjoyed the delicious cake washed down with a glass of Buck's Fizz!

Colin Burkitt gave a fascinating presentation covering some of the memorable moments since our U3A branch came into being ten years ago. A great deal of work must have gone into it and inserts in which well known celebrities *apparently* wished us "happy birthday" were hilarious – even the president of the U.S. Thank you so much Colin – I for one could watch it again. Ed.

October 26th TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



MEETINGS and SPEAKERS 2017 -18



2017

Thursday 7th December -

The Curious Origins of Our Christmas Traditions
– Ken Pye

2018

Thursday 4th January -

The Real James Bond. - Derek Arnold

Thursday 1st February

The Policeman's Lot is a Digital One. – Bill Jonstone

Thursday 1st March

Confessions of a Registrar – Carole Codd

Thursday 29th March

Now There's a Funny Thing.. – Brian Lloyd

Thursday 26th April

Grand Narratives and How We Live. – Mary Clinton

Thursday 24th May

Joyce Grenfell. – Jean Finney

Thursday 24th June

Thomas Edgerton and the Earls of Derby – Bernard Dennis

Thursday 19th July

Behind the Scenes in Theatre and TV. – Fiona Martine

Thursday 13th September

The Cultural Significance of the Belly Dance – Fatma

Thursday 11th October

Ephemera – Glynn Parry

Thursday 8th November

The Christmas Tree: where Culture, Science and Magic Meet.
Brian Gill

Thursday 6th December

Faith, Fun and Fellowship – Michael Burgess

Creative Writing Group



HOLIDAY: All year we had waited for our father's final homeward journey from work, waited for the sound of tyres crunching slowly on the gravel drive, waited with baited breath for our summer holidays to begin. The mammoth task of packing and unpacking the car for our fortnight camping holiday was undertaken with military precision. No gaps were left unfilled, the roof rack and trailer overloaded and strangely bulging with everything but the kitchen sink! As the sun was dipping in the sky we piled into our charabanc which was to transport us to our magical destination amongst the sand and sea of Pembrokeshire. Sticky sweet treats were shared equally on the back seat, melting chocolate smeared across mouths and down clean clothes, but no one cared. No washing would take place, except in the sea, for a whole glorious fortnight. Arriving at the camp site in the pitch black dark of night with stars to guide us, was part of the holiday, part of the tradition. The excitement was like electricity coursing through our bodies, the smell of the sea intoxicating, like an hallucinogenic drug. The longing for first light to set up our tent meant no one slept or was expected to sleep, squashed together until dawn. We tumbled out of the car, uncurled our stiff bodies, stretched our crumpled limbs and lifted our faces to the early sun which of course was always shining. Thoughts of that other place where we lived the rest of the year, were forgotten. This now was our kingdom our fiefdom.

Pitching the tent was an art form; grass had to be searched for stones, views discussed, slopes eradicated and neighbors kept at a distance! Instructions were given and each child held up a light weight pole like the bones of a skeleton. Our parents unrolled the canvas from its twelve

month cocoon over the frame and stretched it into place. Pegs, hammers and guy ropes all played their part in dressing the frame. It flapped elegantly in the gentle breeze, airing itself as a butterfly fluttering its wings. The smell of the canvas reached deep into our lungs and made everyone drunkenly smile as thoughts turned to sand, sea and picnics. But first everything had to be unpacked. Inner tents magically divided the space into bedrooms and living areas. Air beds pumped up and let down until they were the softness of marshmallows. Narrow sleeping bags with liners unfurled. The feeling of contentment pervaded everyone as the family established itself in its new surroundings. The final job before release onto the beach was erecting the loo tent; our latest acquisition to complete our palace. No more late night trips or tripping on guy ropes as we searched for the Elephant house toilet block!

The spell was nearly complete, the web was spun and all that remained was the mad dash to the beach, to be the first to pound down the sifting dunes, sinking and rising in the sand as we were drawn to the million twinkling fairy lights of the sea. And there it was; more resplendent and magnificent than we remembered, like a shining, precious jewelled bracelet stretching endlessly from one end of the beach to the other. The wet slap of the sand made by the receding tide, left ghostly footprints, there one minute then gone as we made our way to the edge of the dancing waves. Tiptoeing and squealing at the water's eddies and swirls it took our breath away and all memories of anything other than the immense ocean, filled our heads.

Sitting further back on the beach sifting the drier sand, we piled great mounds into castles decorated with seashells and seaweed. We were waiting for a distant sighting of our parents carting bats and balls, costumes and towels and of course, the picnic, across the wet planes. All year we have dreamt of doughy bread and jam and honey sandwiches, ginger cake and juice! For these are the things heaven is made of when you are a child. There they were, light bouncing around them in a mirage as they trudged camel like towards us to unload their wares and feed their flock. We gave ourselves up to the shivering dip in the sea, the rite of passage at the beginning of the holiday and rushed around chasing the dog and each other to keep warm, fleeing wasps who shared our sandwiches as the sun dropped down to say "hello" to the sea. "A fine day", father said, "Red sky at night shepherds' delight," as the mackerel clouds beckoned us back along the beach to our camp. The air was cooling, our skin was sore and itchy with the sun and the tent bellowed in the growing breeze. "Batten down the hatches," Dad said with authority and "tighten the ropes." Early to bed that first night, curled in salty warmth, floating on air we drifted to sleep. The rattling winds awaken us, the canvas flapping wildly trying to escape its skeletal frame. Everything is loud. We hear shouts from our parents to get up quickly and hold the tent; "Quick, quick!" We drag ourselves nervously from our safe nests and hug a pole each. The wind is howling like a ghoul trying to whip the tent away and gobble it up. We watch in dismay as the zips give way and the wind rushes in doing its best to blow our house down. Dry food is whipped up into a vortex and sent flying through the air. We don't know it yet but we are in the middle of a mini hurricane. The sheer strength of the wind is an unseen deadly enemy and we cling with all our might to the canvas and frame as it is ripped and battered. After what seemed hours the wind gives up its battle and slips away. The darkness gives way to murky light. We assess the damage. Our palace, our hideaway is destroyed. The poles are keeling, the canvas dress ripped and tattered. "Our holiday," we cry, "What are we going to do?" We gather up our home and ourselves and stuff them into the car. We drive away to Pembroke town where our grandparents live. They revive us, feed us, and know this reader, they mend our temporary home, for my grandfather was a tailor and with nimble, adept fingers he sewed and stitched that canvas tent and mended its zips. The poles were straightened never to be truly upright again, but enough for our tent to be resurrected and our holiday to meander on and for no childhood dream to be broken.

SARAH NANCE

WALKING GROUP

THURSDAY 14th DECEMBER 2017 – CHRISTMAS WALK As our annual Christmas dinner is on our normal walking day the Christmas walk has been brought forward by 1 day. As in previous years we meet at 11am at our house in Forest Road for a local walk with lunch back at home about 1pm. Nearer to the date Carol will put out a request for contributions of soup, mince pies, mulled wine, etc.



Mobile: Colin – 0743 4284666 Carol – 0757 0492993. Landline: 0151 651 2947

Email: carol.colin@talktalk.net

COLIN BURKITT

On Friday November 17th Colin Birkett led an circular walk from Liverpool Parkway around the Woolton area and encompassing Clarke Gardens, Woolton Woods, Eleanor Rigby's grave, Allerton Park and the old Public Baths at Woolton (where the Beatles had spent some happy hours!) The autumn colours were wonderful and we were fortunate with the weather. As always we enjoyed a pub lunch along the way! Many thanks Colin for all the thought that went into it. Ed.



ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Dates for U3A history of art meetings.
All meetings in Trinity Session room start at 10.15a.m. unless otherwise stated:



2018

Wednesday January 17th in Session room ANGELS – Bernadette leads

Wednesday February 21st MEET AT TATE GALLERY 10.45a.m. for curator led exhibition of JOHN PIPER'S art.

Wednesday March 21st in Session room THE GHENT ALTARPIECE Terence Whaley

Wednesday April 18th in Session room To be advised

Wednesday May 16th MEET AT TATE GALLERY 10.45a.m. KEN'S SHOW: exploring the unseen. Celebrating the 30th Anniversary Special Exhibition of the gallery's Collection.

TEA AND COFFEE ROTA – DECEMBER +

December 7 th 2017	-	Sylvia Hunt, Barbara Baker and Kathy Sullivan
January 4 th 2018	-	Rita Lillie, Carol Burkitt and Margaret Yeardsley
January 18 th 2018	-	Steve Cottam, Gwyneth Thomas and Ann Hillier

February 1 st 2018	-	Chris Lakin, Margaret Cullen and Paul Cullen
February 15 th 2018	-	Jill McCloy, Ian McCloy and Brenda George
March 1 st 2018	-	Jean Dickie, Maureen Jones and Bernadette Hamilton
March 15 th 2018	-	Lilian Evans, Joan Parfect and Helen Roberts

NEW GROUP FOR BUDDING PLAYERS !!

John Bews from Heswall U3A would like to know if any of our members are interested in Walking Football, Tuesday afternoons at Tranmere Rovers ground. Anyone interested should contact John direct at johnbews@btinternet.net.



MUSIC MAKERS



Monday 11th December 2017 10.30am – 4.00pm
Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool

Cost £8.00 (lunch not included)

Programme 10.30 – 11.00 Welcome and refreshments

11.00 – 12.00 Performance by Andrew Wilde

12.00 – 1.15 Lunch (not provided)

1.15 – 2.15 Workshops led by U3A members

Recorders (improvers)

Ukulele (improvers)

Singing (no experience necessary)

Music Appreciation

2.15 – 2.45 Short performances by workshop groups

2.45 – 3.00 Refreshments

3.00 – 4.00 'The Magical Musical Mystery Tour' with

Chris Devereux



Further details and booking arrangements are available on the events page of the Regional Website or from Gill at:

gillruss71@gmail.com www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR MEMORY EXPERIMENT!

Are you an aged 50 or above?

Are you interested in helping “memory and ageing” research?



Great!!! You may be eligible to participate in a study at Liverpool John Moores University exploring how individual memory strategies predict future cognitive decline.

The procedure lasts approximately 1 hour and it includes some “pencil and paper” and “computer-based” tests to evaluate your cognitive functioning.

All participants are reimbursed for their time with a £10 Tesco or Amazon voucher and free car spaces are available at the campus, if needed! Consecutive bookings are available for couples or friends!

Please, contact Deborah Talamonti for further information: D.Talamonti@2016.ljmu.ac.uk

A LETTER FROM HAZEL PALMER at U3A NORTHWEST

Hello Eliane, wondered if the following would be of interest for your Newsletter.

Last year and this a group of members from several different U3As on the Wirral, set off by mini bus for Newton Rigg, Penrith, an Agricultural College set in glorious countryside. The accommodation is in brick buildings looking out onto a green and housing four students, two up and two down, with all you need for a short stay including a communal kitchen where you can make a cup of tea and meet with friends.

The courses are many and varied but best of all is the welcoming and friendly atmosphere and being with like minded people who still want to learn new things; plus the food is delicious. There are lovely gardens to explore on site at break times and the chance to go to the Theatre on the Lake, with transport laid on; a treat not to be missed. The tutors give of their time free so don't miss out, take advantage of the U3A Summer Schools, rejuvenate the brain cells, feel young at heart and spirit. It is all arranged especially for YOU.

Hazel Palmer

It certainly sounds very appealing and I for one will be looking over next summer's prospectus with great interest! The photos below show some of the facilities. Ed.



CHRISTMAS CHARITY



On behalf of Eve and the Committee we would like to thank all those who contributed gifts for our charity this year; Ferries Families. They will be much appreciated.



AND FINALLY.....

I would love to hear from Group Leaders regarding the various activities under way in our U3A. If you would like to share any items please e-mail them to me at the address below before the twentieth of November and I will try to include them in the next newsletter.

Eliane Davie

e-mail

elianedavie@hotmail.co.uk

Editor

