



## December Newsletter

### CHAIRMAN'S MUSINGS



November is a strange month. Once Bonfire Night is over (and that can take some time) November is a month that hardly seems to exist in its own right at all but rather as an indeterminate run-up to Christmas. Conversations in November tend to look forward to events in December and though the summer is decidedly over, winter has not properly begun. Those amongst us who tend to be a little more organised find this a good time to start wondering what to buy as Christmas presents for people who already have everything. I find it to be a good time in which to start planning strategies for getting out of the things that I hear those around me planning.

Of course this year, whichever way things go, the climatic and social uncertainties that the month traditionally brings will no doubt be exacerbated by events in the Palace of Westminster, where, some might argue that the pantomime season has come somewhat early, if indeed it ever left us. We have been cheering and booing for some time now as on stage have appeared an abundance of King Rats, wicked uncles, cruel stepmothers, 'ugly' sisters (and brothers!) devils and fairies; against scenery that makes it impossible to know which pantomime one is watching and precisely who the goodies and baddies really are.

I feel fortunate in that having a special affection for pantomime, the one currently running in London is, for me, full of fascination and interest. Italy during the renaissance gave birth to the Comedia del Arte: a group of stock characters: lawyers, doctors, idiots, warriors, lovers etc, who between them could improvise just about any situation that human relationship, might devise. This tradition is still honoured in pantomime and is reflected in human behaviour in general, nowhere more dramatically than in our current political life.

Seen objectively, pantomime parades before us powerful archetypes that hold humanity in thrall until such time as we can begin to awaken to the possibility of a more conscious participation. We become stuck in roles that we find difficult to cast off or might not even know that we are playing as our own, personal pantomime, unfolds - hour by hour, day by day, and year by year. We like to have 'baddies' to boo and 'goodies' to cheer and to tell others where to look to locate the problem – because it is so obvious – all you have to do is turn round and look behind you. But turning round within our own being is not so easily done. Years of responding in a particular way to events and situations in life are not for turning, especially if we are too busy looking to our audience for a reaction or in the audience captivated by the stories unfolding on the stage, sitting passively, watching it all as though the script and production are there solely for our entertainment; little realising that *we* are all the pantomime, improvising as best we can, trying hard to act out roles that life has bestowed on us, often against our better judgement.

The best actors know their craft well and understand that they are not the parts they play and that they also have a choice as to what, when, where and how they play them. They would not be seen in anything but the very best of pantomimes and they understand that when the curtain comes down they are left with the question of whom and what they truly are.

**BRIAN GILL**

**CHAIRMAN**

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## **MIKE BENSON RIP**

It is with great sadness that we mourn the death of Mike, a long standing member of our U3A group and well known to many of you. His funeral took place at Landican on November 14<sup>th</sup>, which was very well attended, reflecting the regard in which he was kept. He leaves his widow, Joan, to whom we offer our sincere condolences, three daughters and grandchildren. He will be greatly missed by his friends in U3A where he is remembered as a kind man with many interests; a true gentleman. Ed.



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## **ROTA 10th October 2019 TO 21ST NOVEMBER 2019 COFFEE**

If you cannot do a duty, please ring me, JOAN BENTON, ON 608 6226

**21st November 2019**                      **Marion Jackson**

**Barbara Riley**

**Judith Wheat**

**5th December 2019**                      **Mary Potter**

**Sandy Anderson**

**Brian Jones**

## **2020**

**2nd January 2020**                      **Jackie Ritson**

**Wendy Devonald**

**Lorraine Malyj**

**16th January 2020**                      **Ursula Cook**

**Judith Wylie**

**Gwyneth Thomas**

**30th January 2020**                      **Arlene Hinton**

**Margaret Yeardsley**

**Kate Walton**

**6th February 2020**                      **Mary Hamilton**

**Greig Roberts**

**John Roberts**

**20th February 2020**                      **Joan Parfect**

**Sylvia Hunt**

**Bernadette Hamilton**

**What an optimist I am! I am still hopeful of finding more volunteers. Please ring me (Joan Benton) on 608 6226 if you would like to offer your services.**

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## MEMBERSHIP SUBS DUE FROM OCTOBER 24<sup>th</sup>

### PAYMENT TO GWYNETH WILLIAMS

Cost £12 (payment preferably by cheque, made out to 'Prenton & Oxton U3A')  
Subs should be paid no later than January 1st after which names will be removed from the database.



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## LUNCH GROUP

COLIN STREDDER

Meet at 12.45 for 1pm

In December the Christmas Dinner takes the place of the lunch group.

2020

January 21st 2020	The Shippons, Irby
February 18th 2020	The Caernarvon Castle, Oxton
March 17th 2020	The Travellers Rest, Bebington
April 21st 2020	The Toby Carvery, Landican
May 19th 2020	Pesto, Bromborough
June 16th 2020	The Boathouse, Parkgate
July 21st 2020	Sheldrakes, Heswall



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Lunch at the Caernarvon Castle November 19th



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## NOTES OF ACTIVITIES AT NON - SPEAKER MEETINGS

21st November 2019      Brian's play – "Whatever Happened to Baby Dalling"

### 2020

16<sup>th</sup> January 2020      The Eye Fund

13<sup>th</sup> February 2020      Further information on scammers.

12<sup>th</sup> March 2020      Sing Along with the Killenwood. Accoustic Duo

9<sup>th</sup> April 2020      Wirral memories.

7<sup>th</sup> May 2020      Spot the Landmarks

Further dates to be announced later.

Colin Stredder

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## SPEAKERS 2019

Thursday 5th December      Hollywood Drama Queens - Rina Tullinger.

And now for something completely different! Having chatted with the speaker on the phone I am sure that all who hear her will enjoy her originality and dynamism as she addresses this fascinating subject.



## SPEAKERS 2020

Thursday 2nd January – Roger Broowne. York; a musical journey.	New Orleans to New
Thursday 30th January – Max Hall earth.	Last Great race on
Thursday 27th February–Anthony Annakin-Smith. Wirral's industrial revolution.	The Neston Collieries.
Thursday 26th March – Sheila Walsh Poo –	Hullaballoo and Penguin
Thursday 23rd April – Ruth Moor- Williams and song (true story)	Wirral and Wales humour
Thursday 21st May – Gavin Chappell	Smuggling in the Wirral
Thursday 18th June – Keith Warrender Canal	Dunham Massey Ship
Thursday 16th July – John Michael Corfe	China Farm Story

### AUGUST BREAK

Thursday 3rd September – Glynn D. Parr River Mersey	Under, over and up the
Thursday 8th October – Brian Anderson	Images from the edge –
Thursday 5th November – Michael Murphy	The terrible tale of Gin
Thursday 3rd December – Barry Humphrey back	Christmas songs – a look

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2ND January 2020 -	First meeting after Christmas break.
23rd April 2020 -	AGM
30th July 2020 -	Last meeting before Summer Break
3rd September 2020	First meeting after Summer Break





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## CREATIVE WRITING

**NOTE:** Monica Price, who leads the Creative Writing Group, has space for about four more members. The group meets on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 2pm – 4pm. Enquiries to Monica on 200 2728

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### BOB'S LAST CHRISTMAS.



Jed and I had trundled across the highlands for much of the day, stopping off here and there in response to varying imperatives. We even picked up a bundle of sticks from a man in a remote village. We were assured that they would become a willow hedge if stuck into the ground appropriately. More importantly, we acquired a Christmas tree. 'Acquired' being a euphemism for 'stole'. They grew wild on the roadside verges in those parts, but having a genetic awe and dread of authority, I assumed that they all belonged to the Forestry Commission and that we would be flayed alive and boiled in oil if caught. I warned Jed in advance that if any such intervention drew near I would say that I was a hitch hiker and that I had never met the driver until he picked me up, an hour ago. I even had a corroborative story ready; a trick I had learned from my accountant. "Always have your story ready, and stick to it," she would say in the event of an interview with Her Majesties Inspectors of Taxes.



We got the tree without incident. Well actually another van drew up at one point. "This is it!" I thought. "I will be spending Christmas in a remote Highland prison." But the driver's business was similar to our own so a brief but convivial relationship developed. Crime can do that for people. With an enormous tree on board there was scarcely any room for the provisions that we had yet to pick up before arriving at our planned destination, a remote croft on the Isle of Skye. Thank God for the new Skye Bridge! Though once across it we still had a couple of hours driving s to do.

Why do we do this to ourselves I thought, as the short day slid stealthily into night. It was getting colder and the visibility was far from good. I was thankful that Jed was the sort of male who, once he takes possession of a vehicle will not let go of control until you threaten damage to his metacarpals. Me, I'm just happy to sit there and let it all roll by. And so we trundled on, arriving at the croft when, mercifully there was still a little light on the horizon, though not as much as we would have liked. It was enough for us to be able to locate the oil lamps and get them lit. The rest we could do at a slower pace. A fine, stiff wind had got up. It carried stinging shards of snow and I began to worry about those who were to join us tomorrow. Jed was more phlegmatic.

The croft had not been occupied for a while. Our job, as the advance party, was to warm it up and make it habitable. Bedding needed to be aired and the damp, clammy

atmosphere needed to be replaced with something warm and cheery. We had done it every year for a while now and set about it like a well trained platoon. It wasn't long before the smell of haggis and bacon assailed the senses and we knew, without doubt, that we were on to a good thing. The miles travelled were as nothing. This was the right place to be.

The sparsely inhabited north of Skye was not a quiet place. There was usually a wind from one direction or another to which the croft would respond with a variety of musical inventions. Bangs, rattles, scrapes, squeaks, shrieks, wails, sighs and splutters issued from all sides but they were part of the deal. The croft was well built and roofed. We were now safe and snug for the night. Tomorrow we would go down to the loch where Jamie Creedy and his partner Morag, scraped a modest living between land and water. This, for me was one of the highlights of the visit.

The wind had dropped in the night. It was even colder and the snow had done little more than provide a light, seasonal dusting to the ethereal view. The pressure was off. The others would not arrive until dusk and they too would be bringing provisions. All we had to do was pick up some more wood and get down to Jamie who would provide us with a goose. He needed time to attend to his croft. It was amazing what he managed to produce there. Morag had the shelves packed with a variety of home produce consigned to gleaming bottles and jars and awaiting the attention of her considerable culinary skills.

When we finally got ourselves down there it was like being ushered into wonderland. Their spacious kitchen had once been a byre. Now it was dominated by an Aga and a huge table squarely central to the scene. On the Aga a large, black kettle was never far from the boil; and I will swear that every time I ever set foot across their threshold, Morag was always caught in the act of pulling something delectable from an oven. On this occasion it was homemade mince pies. "Oh you're just in time for a Stupak!" she proclaimed as we stumbled in. And a Stupak we had. The landscape that surrounded them was by any standards, bleak; romantic yes indeed but bleak. And yet between them, these two managed to produce something pretty close to paradise on Earth. I'm not a total fool. I know only too well the effort required to harvest anything remotely nourishing from such ecology but they did it and on the way provided visitors with a sense of falling into an oasis of bliss.

The snow was gathering intention now. Looking out across the loch from the rich interior of the kitchen was like being in a film that had little to do with reality. The hot mince pies, (I had to have two,) and the mugs of tea only added to the sense of the unreal. Watching the snow, almost painfully beautiful as it was, I voiced my concern for the others who were to join us later. "Well you don't have to worry about Bob," said Jamie, "He's here already." Jed and I looked at each other in astonishment. How could that possibly be? We were silently questioning. "Yes," said Jamie "he just stopped by to say that he had arrived early and as you were out he would make a few calls. He didn't stay; said he was going up the loch to visit Donald."

By the time we had picked up the goose, which I'm glad to say Morag had dressed for us, and a few branches of holly en route, I was seriously anxious about getting back for Bob. How was it possible for him to arrive so early? I needn't have worried.



He had let himself in and was sitting by the stove. Warm hugs all round. He had had lots of energy and deciding to keep travelling, he had driven through the night, though now, he informed us, he would appreciate a rest more than even a cup of tea so he took himself clomping upstairs.

The others arrived in penny numbers. April and Gemma, together from London, Edward from Birmingham and Fran and Geoff from Liverpool. They were the last to turn up and yes the snow had been a potential problem but the roads were all open and milder weather was predicted. They were keen to know if everyone had managed to get here. "Yes indeed. We are all here now." "What do you mean by all?" questioned Geoff, looking decidedly 'off' as he asked. "Bob is upstairs sleeping, having driven though the night." I informed him.

"Sit down please. Everybody sit down." said Fran. "We have something to tell you, though God knows how we can do it now. When we were about up to Carlisle, we got a phone call from Bob's Dad." There was a long pause here but some of us guessed what was coming. "It seems that Bob was in a traffic accident not far from home. They pulled him out alive but he died in hospital later. His parents were with him, which is something to be thankful for."

I leaped to my feet and shot up the stairs, determined to prove them wrong. Both Jed and I saw him go to his room just a few hours ago. He had to be there. They had got the wrong body. But the room was empty, as were all the rooms, and clearly his bed had not been slept on.

What a strange Christmas that was. Much of it seemed trivial and irrelevant and those bits we glossed over but with wind, at times howling round the croft, we were drawn ever closer together and it wasn't long before the word went round and we knew who were the friends that Bob had visited that morning. Later there was a great gathering at the croft. The scattered community came together and we sat quietly exchanging stories, in many of which Bob featured, (we also shared a dram or two) then someone produced a fiddle and a little later, when it was seemly, an accordion. Bob's last Christmas had to be a good one and indeed it was.

**Brian Gill**

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## **WALKING GROUP**

Unfortunately the weather forecast was so poor that the October walk was cancelled but Gerry planned a similar walk on drier paths for November.



**U3A Walk on Friday 15th November 2019.**

A walk led by Gerry Riley starting at Bache Station and finishing at Chester station. Lunch at around 1:00 pm at the Panda Mami Chinese Buffet Restaurant, followed by a mile walk back to the station giving a total distance of just under 6 miles.



The walk proved most enjoyable and the day was dry – our thanks to Gerry.

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### U3A Christmas Walk Friday 13th December 2019.

A History Walk around Oxton Village led by Oxton Society Guides starting in Oxton Village Centre near the Post Office at 10:50 am for 11:00am start. Full details are not yet available, but it is likely (depending on numbers) that there will be two different walks to choose from to keep the numbers to around 10 – 12 people per party.



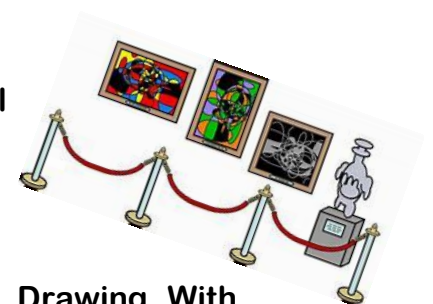
Afterwards we will take lunch in The Queens Arms at around 1 pm.

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### ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Dates for U3A Art Appreciation Group meetings. All meetings in Trinity Session room start at 10.15a.m. unless otherwise stated: Here is our programme to November 2019

Wednesday November 27th 2019: Matisse Exhibition: Drawing With



Scissors at the Lady Lever Gallery. Please note that the date has changed for this visit.

## NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

Please make a note in your diaries

## 2020

**January 15<sup>th</sup> 2020** Visit to World Museum, Liverpool. DRAWING ON NATURE: Taki Katei's Japan exhibition.

**February 19<sup>th</sup> 2020** Session Room TPG: WINTER WONDERLAND IN ST. PETERSBURG. Presentation by Pauline Horner.

**March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020** WILLIAM BLAKE- presented by Bernadette Hamilton

**April 15<sup>th</sup> 2020** Visit to Tate, Liverpool: THEASTER GATES: AMALGAM EXHIBITION



**Bernadette Hamilton**

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## MUSIC GROUP



On Wednesday November 6<sup>th</sup> Paul Cullen led the session alongside Bernadette, matching music to the works of Leonardo Da Vinci. The occasion was very well attended by members of both the Music and Art Appreciation Groups. Bernadette presented pictures of Da Vinci accompanied by music by Monteverdi and Josquin De Pres presented by Paul, demonstrating how they complemented each other in mood.



The next music session is on December 4<sup>th</sup> when members will bring some of their own favourite selections. All are welcome. Ed.

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## THEATRE OUTINGS and EVENTS SOCIAL OUTING

2019 CHRISTMAS LUNCH PRENTON GOLF CLUB Golf Links Road, PRENTON, CH42 8LW THURSDAY 19 DECEMBER 12.00 noon for 12.30pm 3 Courses £26.50

## CHRISTMAS LUNCH MENU

Starters





Broccoli & Stilton Soup

Plaice Goujons + chilli sauce

Farmhouse Pate

Mains

Roast Turkey

Roast Lamb

Sea bass + watercress sauce

Vegetable Brie Crumble

Desserts

Christmas pudding



Meringue nests + fruit

Profiteroles + chocolate sauce

Cheese & Biscuits

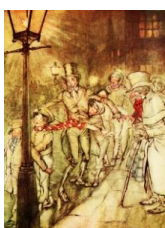
and

Coffee



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## THEATRE



**Booking closed** THE NUTCRACKER:

This year's English National Ballet production Liverpool Empire Thursday 28 November @ 2.30pm Collect tickets and meet at Theatre

Booking until January THE KING & I Liverpool Empire. Part of world tour.  
**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 @ 2pm. Tickets £35**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE** No bookings or reservations can be taken without payment. This is necessary in order to be fair to all our members PLEASE try to book events BEFORE the START of meetings. Payment at end of meetings MUST be either cheque or correct cash only Full booking details available @ meetings - see your social organisers

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## VISIT TO THE PLAYHOUSE TO SEE 'AMELIE' THE MUSICAL OCTOBER 14TH

A group of us agreed that the production of 'Amelia' proved to be a really unusual and enjoyable entertainment. The versatility and energy of the actors who, apart from acting and singing, played a variety of instruments throughout, was amazing. The set was interesting, resembling a railway station and representing the various localities Amelie encountered in her search for the mystery man who was also looking for her. A window above on a higher level opened onto her bedroom and from time to time a red lampshade dropped down containing a strap which she grasped prior to being lifted up to her room. Difficult to describe but fun, as was the tale!

Many thanks to Barbara Lloyd for organizing another great evening's entertainment.

Eliane Davie

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### Local History Group

The Local History Group meets on the third Monday of the month at 2.00 pm in the Sessions Room at Trinity. Last month, October, it was on the 21st. We were looking at the Workhouses of Wirral. All are welcome.

Email address to contact Pauline is [history@oxtonu3a.co.uk](mailto:history@oxtonu3a.co.uk)

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### Rummikub – New Group

Rummikub is a cross between scrabble and the card game Rummy, it is easy and fun to play, but beware it can become addictive!!!



More details of the game are on the Group Notice Board.

If you want to join this new group, contact Joan Parfect using:

email address [rummikub@oxtonu3a.co](mailto:rummikub@oxtonu3a.co).

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## IDEAS FOR OUTINGS!



Does any member(s) have an idea for an outing that they think people would enjoy? Would they be prepared to organise it, (perhaps with a friend), as a 'one off' to see how they get on? This would involve collecting names and money, organizing a coach if required, booking any reservations and paying any bills. Cash and receipts to be handed to our treasurer, Ken, who will do any paperwork involved. Barbara Lloyd is prepared to help with advice and anyone interested should speak to her.

Ed.

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## AND FINALLY-----

As always I would like to thank all those who have sent contributions to the newsletter; please continue to do so. To all of our U3A members I wish a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

**Eliane Davie (Editor)**

