

February Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MUSINGS

As we enter the month of February, I wish I could feel assured that the pantomime season of darkly maleficent characters was now 'behind us'. Our culture has provided us with a wealth of dubious roles for them to play: bad fairies, cruel and wicked stepmothers, weak and inefficient rulers, corrupt and egotistical power-seekers are given plenty of scope; Rothbart, Carabosse, Herod and Voldemort are guaranteed a seasonal appearance and continue to exert their influence long after a final curtain that never truly falls. I sincerely hope that you have been able to mitigate their worst effects. They can never retire permanently to the dark interstices of the wings because, of course, they represent an integral part of the human psyche with which it has long been my job to develop a working relationship. Fortunately, as previously indicated, there are plenty of positive archetypal characters to challenge their darkly subversive powers and it is always infinitely preferable to light even one small candle than to curse and bewail the darkness that they bring.



Statistically February offers us some of the most inclement weather of the year but it also brings snow-drops and the days begin to grow noticeably longer. For our Celtic ancestors the month began with the festival of Imbolc which you will be glad to note, celebrates, amongst other things, the lactation of ewes. If you do not happen to own any and feel fairly casual about the fate of their off-spring at this difficult time you might be more impressed by the emphasis it places on the resilience and fortitude of the female principal in the face of negative influences. The Celts understood something of the innate creative power of potentially annihilating forces and that these were best negotiated with the help of our right-brain function; intuition, instinct and empathy can serve us better than confrontation and attack. Indeed, all the

intellect and brute force we can muster will not make the more unpleasant aspects of February go away.

It is Isis who alone descends into the swamps of Buto to gather together the scattered remains of her husband Osiris and make him whole again and Inanna who alone, makes the journey into the underworld to be hung on a nail 'to dry out' by her dark sister. These myths of death and rebirth speak directly to the soul which of course some scientists tell us is a figment of the imagination but that does not make it any less real and a real scientist would never make such a statement as it is not possible to prove that something does not exist. Surprisingly, one cannot know, from the scientific point of view, what nothing actually is as it is nothing. Imagination, on the other hand, is capable of directing the course of humanity.

Imbolc celebrates the very process by which something comes from nothing. Isis and Inanna knew of this. They faced annihilation and survived, and in doing so showed us a way of coping with some of the more difficult aspects of life.

BRIAN GILL

CHAIRMAN

ROTA 2nd JANUARY 2020 TO 20TH FEBRUARY 2020 COFFEE & TEA

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

2020

13th February

Mary Hamilton

Greig Roberts

John Roberts



27th February

Sylvia Hunt

Bernadette Hamilton

Joan Parfit

12th March

Eliane Davie

Hilary Robinson

Will Edwards

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.

LUNCH GROUP

Meet at 12.45 for 1pm

2020

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



COLIN STREDDER

LUNCH AT THE SHIPPONS – JANUARY 2020



NOTES OF ACTIVITIES AT NON - SPEAKER MEETINGS 2020

13 th February 2020	Further information on scammers.
12 th March 2020	Sing Along with the Killenwood Accoustic Duo
9 th April 2020	Wirral memories.
7 th May 2020	Spot the Landmarks



Further dates to be announced later.

Colin Stredder

A MUSICAL JOURNEY

On January 2nd Roger Browne entertained us royally with his rendering of music from New Orleans to New York and gossip chat which was frequently hilarious. I think by common consent he was one of the best speakers we have had at our U3A. He really knew how to play his instrument and how to amuse his audience as he took us on a journey down memory lane. Deservedly he was given a loud ovation and I think that we would all like to welcome him again.

Ed.

SPEAKERS 2020

Thursday 27th February–Anthony Annakin-Smith. The Neston Collieries Wirral's industrial revolution.

Thursday 26th March – Sheila Walsh Hullabaloo and Penguin Poo

Thursday 23rd April – Ruth Moor-Williams Wirral and Wales humour and song
(true story)

Thursday 21st May – Gavin Chappell Smuggling in the Wirral

Thursday 18th June – Keith Warrender Dunham Massey Ship Canal

Thursday 16th July – John Michael Corfe China Farm Story

AUGUST BREAK

Thursday 3rd September – Glynn D. Parr Under, over and up the River Mersey

Thursday 8th October – Brian Anderson Images from the edge –



Thursday 5th November – Michael Murphy

The terrible tale of Gin

Thursday 3rd December – Barry Humphrey

Christmas songs – a look back

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

23rd April 2020 -

AGM

30th July 2020 -

Last meeting before Summer Break

3rd September 2020

First meeting after Summer Break

CHARLES THOMPSON MISSION



The Charles Thompson Mission would like to thank you all for your generosity to their charity.

As you can see in this photo of committee members taken before your gifts were loaded into the charity's van, your response was truly superb.

Photo by Corinne Whitham

THE EYE FUND TALK ON JANUARY 16TH



Photos by Corinne Whitham

WALKING GROUP

The U3A Walk on Friday 17th January 2020 led by Ken Jackson started off from Overpool Station which is very near to Wetherspoons where we later enjoyed lunch. The day started off rainy but thankfully soon dried up and we enjoyed a very pleasant walk of just under five miles. Many thanks Ken for organising it.



Photo by
Eliane Davie



U3A Walk on Friday 21st February 2020.

A walk of just 7&1/2 miles led by Tony Swarbrick starting at Bidston Station and finishing at the Farmers Arms Pub in Moreton, where we will take lunch at around 1:30 – 2pm.

The walk is a meander around Bidston Moss, then via Cross Lane, Leasowe Road, and footpath to Green Lane (Wallasey Golf Course). We will have a brief coffee stop at Gun Sites Picnic Area so bring a flask and a chocolate bar. A little further along Green Lane we turn back inland along an enclosed path then have a short road walk through the estate to join path along the River Birket. Turn right and follow paths to Pasture Road, then left to Moreton for lunch at Farmer's Arms. Much of the walk is along good solid paths but the section along the Birket could be a bit muddy so please ensure suitable footwear. After lunch make the short walk back to Moreton station or get a bus from Moreton cross.

Meet outside at Bidston Station no later than 10:15 am. If you wish to drive directly there you will be able to leave your car in the station car park. Meet on the bridge over the station. There is one toilet on the station so please ensure you leave time to use it as there may be a queue.

Trains from Hamilton Square 9.45 and 10.00 arrives 9.55, and 10.10

Trains from West Kirby 9.36 and 9.51 arrives 9.51 and 10.06.

Tony's phone number on the day is 07478 726650 and his email is tony.swarbrick@talktalk.net.

Tony Swarbrick is planning to arrange a U3A trip by coach to Bowness-on-Windermere, notionally, on Friday 17th April 2020, although this could be subject to change based on coach availability. This will also be advertised separately. The trip is open to all Prenton and Oxtan U3A members but Tony has said he would be happy to lead a walk from Stavely to Bowness along the Dales Way; a distance of 7 miles approx. Walkers will be dropped off at Stavely and walk to Bowness. Others not doing the walk will be dropped at Bowness or Windermere to visit local attractions

If you would be interested in joining the walk please let me know so we have an idea of numbers. More details will follow nearer the time.

Gerry Riley

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 for January to April 2020. Please make a note in your diaries



2020

February 19th 2020 Session Room TPG: WINTER WONDERLAND IN ST. PETERSBURG. Presentation by Pauline Horner.

March 18th 2020 WILLIAM BLAKE- presented by Bernadette Hamilton

April 15th 2020 Visit to Tate, Liverpool: THEASTER GATES: AMALGAM EXHIBITION

Bernadette Hamilton

TAKI KATI EXHIBITION AT THE WORLD MUSEUM LIVERPOOL

The Japanese Print drawings of Taki Taki (1830-1901) were a delight to view; delicate and beautiful. Taki started painting at an early age and was tutored by many influential teachers who taught him calligraphy, traditional Chinese style painting and drawing from life.

He travelled extensively around Japan when he was younger, earning his living as an artist and receiving commissions on his return, for portraits and book illustrations. Despite many hardships, the influential contacts he made resulted in his becoming well regarded and gaining many new opportunities. In the 1890s he was awarded the prestigious position of Imperial Household Artist in recognition to his services to the Court.

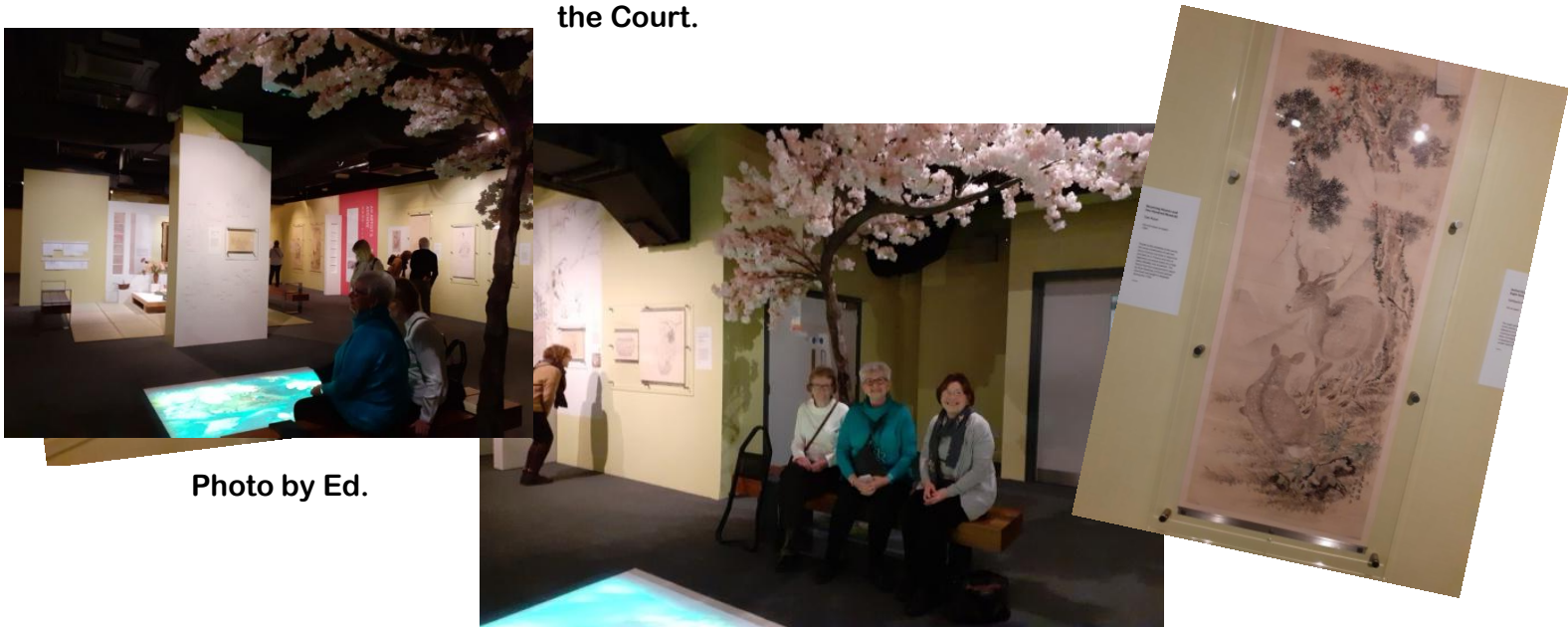


Photo by Ed.

THEATRE OUTINGS - SOCIAL OUTINGS

EVENTS

Elizabeth Harding is organising a visit to the Boat Museum on March 5th.
Please note that the date has been altered.

Tickets are £10 to include entrance, guided tour and a talk. Lunch or snacks are available on site (to pay for individually) and parking is free. Meet at 10am outside the Museum. It is suggested that we share cars to get there – book at the U3A meetings.

A Trip to See “The Northern Lights” Wednesday 7th October 2020

YES! A Trip to see the World Famous Northern Lights Blackpool Illuminations



Coach will leave Trinity at 1pm. Arriving Blackpool about 3pm, you will have an hour or so to walk the prom and see the sights followed by a Fish&Chip Supper before the coach trip through the lights. Return trip will leave Blackpool at 8pm to arrive back at Trinity about 9.30pm. Cost will be about £16 (+ Fish&Chips) dependent on numbers. Coach needs to be booked well in advance and I need to know that we will have sufficient numbers before booking. So please let me know if you are interested (There is NO COMMITMENT at this stage). Please add your name to the list on notice board or email groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk

Coach Trip to Bowness-on-Windermere Friday 17th April 2020



Leave Trinity at 8.30am. Return to Trinity about 7pm. Cost will be about £16 dependent on numbers. I need to know that we have sufficient interest to confirm the coach booking, so please add your name to the list on notice board or email groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk to book a seat as soon as possible. The coach can drop walkers off at Stavely, from where I will lead a 7 mile walk along the Dalesway path to Bowness if required. Other passengers can leave the coach at Windermere or continue to Bowness. For more information about “What To Do” see notice board

THEATRE

Tickets for all Theatre bookings made for the following shows will be available for collection shortly. **All bookings now closed** Collect tickets and meet at Theatre.



Liverpool Empire Thursday 19 March 2020 @ 2.30pm **THE KING & I**

Liverpool Empire Matthew Bourne's production of **THE RED SHOES**

Thursday 27 February @ 2.30pm



Liverpool Playhouse J. M. Barrie's **QUALITY STREET**



Tuesday 17 March 2020 @ 7.30pm

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please note if there are fewer than the requisite numbers to constitute group bookings, a slight increase will be necessary to cost of tickets.

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

CREATIVE WRITING

THE EMPTY HOUSE (June 2019)



A distant rumble caused him to glance quickly at the sky; it was certainly getting darker. Ken looked at his map, checking to see how far it was to the nearest village. As he did so another clap of thunder sounded much nearer and a few spots of rain signalled that the storm was getting closer. The dappled sunlight filtering through the trees had suddenly disappeared to be replaced by ominous black clouds and he hastened along the path.

The atmosphere had been feeling quite stuffy, with that heavy airless quality that often precedes a thunderstorm and now the rain started to pour down on him in a deluge, clearing the air and bringing a chill to the atmosphere. It was trickling down his neck and he pulled the zip of his cagoule to the top, thankful that he had decided against wearing sandals for his walk! His map showed that he was about three miles still from the nearest village. Reaching the edge of the woods he took stock; the view ahead was open but vision was limited due to the downpour beating down on him as he searched the horizon for signs of some kind of shelter.

A house, about two hundred yards away, looked promising. Ken wondered whether its occupants would take pity on him and allow him to shelter until the storm passed. It was right overhead now and he was soaked to the skin. Lightning flashed around him and the air was full of the scent of glistening wet vegetation and the sound of rain pounding down on already sodden foliage.

As he neared the house Ken saw that it was unoccupied, its peeling paintwork, broken gate, dirty curtain-less windows and overgrown garden indicating that it had been empty for a considerable time. "Any port in a storm," he thought grimly, hoping that he could somehow find a way of getting inside. He tried the front door to no avail, then walked, squelching his way around the side where the undergrowth tangled his feet, as he struggled to make a path through. The windows were intact apart from a small one which sported a large crack; he doubted whether he would be able to get his frame through it even if he broke it. Then he heard it; the creaking sound of a door swinging in the wind. His heart lifted – a way in?

Turning the corner to the rear of the house he saw that one door of a French window was swinging freely, banging against the wall with a dull thud. At last an escape from

this relentless rain! He stumbled through the last few steps of jungle and entered, pulling the door to behind him.

The relief to be out of that pounding rain with lightning forking across the sky – magnificent but scary in its power! Ken removed his weatherproof and shook it out looking around as he did so. This must once have been a very pleasant and sunny room, he guessed. Now it was covered in cobwebs and thick layers of dust coated everywhere. Apart from a couple of odd chairs the room was empty and Ken decided to look around the house while he waited for the rain to stop. At last the storm appeared to be moving on; the thunderclaps further away, the flashes less threatening.

The room led out to a square, panelled, hallway, with a staircase up to a half landing then more stairs. A window on the half landing was the main source of light apart from a front door with windows so dirty only a faint glow passed through. Further exploration revealed a large farmhouse type kitchen still containing a dusty old Aga against one wall. A long wooden table took up a quarter of the room and as a small rustling sound caused him to turn, he caught sight of a rat scuttling into a corner accompanied by several squeaks. Flies, perhaps escaping the deluge outside, buzzed annoyingly around his head. The house had that kind of musty smell he used to associate with bombed out property when serving in the army. It had clearly been empty for some time. An old mincer was attached to one end of the table and some old logs covered in cobwebs, lay in a box beside the range. A tap at the large belvedere sink dripped slowly, plop plop.

Turning Ken walked back towards the hall. Then he heard it; a definite knock. He stopped - it came again. There was another door across the room and he moved towards it, pausing briefly before opening it – oh, it was an old pantry extending to what he imagined had been a wash house. Looking around to find the cause of the banging he had heard he could see nothing obvious. “Something must have been caught by a draught”, he thought. A high tiny window provided little light and after a cursory glance he turned once more to return to the hall. As he crossed the kitchen a voice whispered softly behind him, “Is that you Joe?” Rounding quickly he could see nothing and he could feel a trickle of sweat running down his back, his hair felt to be standing on end and an icy hand seemed to be gripping his chest.

He fled back to the hall closing the kitchen door behind him. He must have imagined the whisper, there was absolutely no one there! Pulling himself together he smiled at himself for being so silly and decided to explore upstairs. The rain had stopped and a beam of sunlight shone through the landing window; the house felt a lot less scary. Upstairs there were four doors, which he opened. The first opened on to a large sunny room overlooking what *had* been the back garden and with a view over the dales beyond. It was empty except for an old window seat with a couple of faded dusty cushions and a dilapidated chest of drawers on which stood a mirror. Ken moved on to what had obviously been a child's room; a broken rocking horse stood forlornly in a corner, a well worn Teddy lay in a heap on the floor and a photo, now yellow and curling, of a little girl of about seven with an older boy who might have been about twelve. The next door led to a bathroom still with its old iron bath and the last one led to some stairs and, Ken presumed, the attic.

Climbing up, the dust was thick enough to make him cough. A bird which must have nested in the rafters, startled him by flying past his face with a loud squawk and unsettling some debris which dropped onto the floor. Up here was mostly floored out storage space while a door to the right led to another small bedroom – it was empty.

Ken decided to have another quick look round before leaving to resume his walk back to the pub where he was spending the weekend. He paused on his way downstairs to take another look at the child's room to see if there was anything to identify the last occupant, but apart from the photo there was nothing by way of identification. Judging by their clothes he thought it might have been taken in the late thirties; he wondered briefly if they were brother and sister. Crossing the landing he entered the main bedroom and went to the window to make sure that the rain had stopped. It had and he walked over to the chest of drawers and opened the top drawer which had evidently been cleared except for a yellowing black and white photograph. As he made to pick it up he thought he heard a sigh – his imagination again playing tricks? He picked up the photo - again a sigh of such sadness, made him look up to the mirror and he felt the blood drain from his face. A young woman, perhaps about twenty was behind his right shoulder, "Is it Joe? I've missed you so much, I've looked everywhere." Ken turned but she had disappeared. Shaking now, he looked round the room; nothing. Silence, even the insects had stopped buzzing. And then he ran! Down the stairs into the living room, out of the French window, the sound of "Joe, Joe," was following him to the broken gate and down the lane as he broke into a run.

Two hours later he heaved a sigh of relief when he reached the door of the pub and entered the warm normality of chatter and laughter. It was early evening now and the landlord greeted him warmly, "Did you get lost, we wondered where you'd got to in all that storm. I said you'd be back in time for dinner and you are – Just!

"Pour me a beer Tom," Ken responded, "I had the strangest experience this afternoon, you'll never believe it, I hardly do myself..." and he sat and recounted the events to Tom and a couple of others who gathered round to hear.

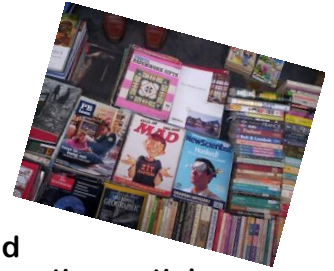
"That'll be the Watson house you visited," an elderly man volunteered. "It's been empty while nigh on fifty years. They say it's haunted and they gave up trying to sell it after Marie passed on. She and her brother lived there with their parents; a very close family by all accounts. It was a sad story; the brother went missing during the war and the parents were killed in an accident in the early fifties. Marie never really got over it all. She refused to believe that her brother was lost in the war and swore to remain in the house in case he came looking for her. Truth to tell she went a bit doolally. She died quite young – people did try to help."

Ken pulled out the photo which he had held on to in his fright: "That was the woman I saw behind me only older, is that her? I thought I must have imagined it but now I..."

The men leaned in then passed the photo round, "Well I'll be! It's her alright." the elderly men nodded.

ELIANE DAVIE

U3A MAGAZINE



Could anyone who wishes to receive the U3A Magazine for the next year please see Marese Roberts (secretary) by 10th March. There are 5 issues of the magazine each year at a total cost of around £2.50 to £3 (exact figure still to be notified) and it is full of useful information, articles & advertising on national U3A events and various other items relevant to U3A members. You will need to commit to receiving the magazine for 12 months and to pay when ordering. It is posted direct to you.



Regional Web site:

Registered Charity number 1159091

www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events

For regional news and events.

AND FINALLY-----

What a variety of things we get up to in our U3A! Please keep the news coming, particularly from groups that we seldom hear from in the newsletter. If anything special is happening in your group or you have information that leaders would like passed on, please let me know.

It is great to see that Tony Swarbrick has volunteered to organise two trips, one to see Blackpool Lights, the other to Bowness-on – Windermere. Both sound like great days/evenings out. Our thanks to Tony. Thanks also to Elizabeth Harding who is organising a trip to the Boat Museum on March 5th; please note that the date for this has changed.

Barbara Lloyd will continue to arrange theatre visits for us; she has provided an excellent programme for some years now. There is a considerable amount of planning involved and we owe her our thanks.

This month celebrates Valentine's Day on the 14th – a good time to spread a little love around! Enjoy the day!

Eliane Davie - Editor

