



March Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The meeting on the 23rd April 2020 will begin with our Annual General Meeting. Though we try to deal with all the issues as quickly as possible it is nevertheless an important event and vital to the general running of our U3A. Please make a point of being there. It is all too easy for the responsibility of running a U3A to end up in a few willing hands who are then left to make decisions with which others might not later agree.

This year four of our committee members come to the end of their terms of office and though all four are willing to be re-elected and continue in their posts we are nevertheless obliged to invite our membership to nominate replacements for the positions of Membership Secretary, Social Secretary, Vice Chair and newsletter Secretary and Groups Secretary.

If you would like to be nominated for any of these posts you will need a nomination form from our Secretary; Marese Roberts. Nominations need to be returned at least a week before the actual AGM.

This is a good place to thank Eve Felton, Gwyneth Williams, Eliane Davie and Barbara Lloyd for all they have done on our behalf during their terms of office and

also for agreeing to stand again if necessary. Though it may well appear that a U3A runs itself, without a degree of commitment and dedication it just could not happen.

Having said that I hope members are not put off from joining the committee by the prospect of three years hard labour. Those who have already been there and done the job are ever on hand to help and advise and there is a strong sense of being in a supportive family to carry one along, added to which there is, above all, the very rewarding end product of a functioning U3A covering a wide and creative range of interests and activities.

I mentioned at our last meeting that the Head Office has adopted the 'strap-line' (I'm still not sure what that means) of 'Learn, Laugh and Live.' I am a little concerned in case people joining interest groups will now feel entitled to complain if they are not funny enough. Living and learning I can cope with (living I more or less do anyway) but as a group leader, the obligation to make my fellow members laugh is a little daunting. I am all too aware of the public speaker who heard a voice from the back of the hall shouting "Louder!" to be accompanied by yet another shouting, "and funnier!"

An AGM is not generally speaking a bundle of laughs, though having said that I've just thought of an idea for another of our U3A plays. We do have a good speaker to follow and we do need your support so I hope to see you on 23rd April.

BRIAN GILL - CHAIRMAN

ROTA 2020 COFFEE & TEA

If you cannot do a duty, please ring me, JOAN BENTON, ON 608 6226. Please let me know if you don't think that you are on my list and you would like to volunteer

12th March

Eliane Davie

Hilary Robinson

Will Edwards

26th March

Ruth Trace

Corinne Whitham

Ann Jou

9th April

Barbara Baker

Kathy Sullivan

Poppy Lewis

23rd April

Mary O'Neill

Greig Roberts

John Roberts

7th May

Dorothy Mathews

Maureen Jones

Judith Wheat

21st May

Joyce Roberts

Jean Skillicorn

Beryl Davies

4th June

Marion Jackson

Barbara Riley

Mary Potter

Subscriptions for the U3A Magazine Due

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 £3.10 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.



Those who have been receiving the U3A magazine for the last year now need to renew their subscriptions if you still wish to receive it. New subscribers to the magazine, which is excellent value, can see me on the 27th February at the meeting.

Marese Roberts

Information for Your Group Attention

TRINITY: Charges have been increased from £10 per session to £12, still excellent value!

Please be prepared to pay a little more for each group meeting depending on the numbers attending. This would be in the region of an extra 50p either on entrance or for coffee/tea.

Please support your Group Leaders by coughing up gracefully. They should not have to bear the brunt of increases.

GROUP LEADERS:

Please check the information regarding your group on the Notice Boards and the Web site.

Please check days and times of meetings are correct and amend if necessary. Please let Tony know if you wish to recruit more members or if your group is “full” and write a brief description of what your group does to be displayed on the Notice Boards and given to enquirers.

All replies to Tony Swarbrick at e-mail: groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk

Oxton, Prenton & District U3A

GROUPS TIMETABLE

Monday	am		<i>GERMAN CONVERSATION 10:30 – 12:00</i> <i>DEBATING 10.00 – 12.00</i>		<i>GERMAN CONVERSATION* 10:30 – 12:00 * last Monday</i>
	pm			<i>RUMMIKUB 2.15 – 4.00</i>	
Tuesday	am	<i>NEW BOOK GROUP 10:00 – 12:00</i>	<i>BOOK CLUB 10:00 – 12:00</i>		<i>FAMILY HISTORY* 10:00 – 12:00 * last Tuesday</i>
	pm	<i>POETRY 2:00 – 4:00</i>		<i>LUNCH CIRCLE 12:45 for 1:00</i>	<i>CREATIVE WRITING 2:00 – 4:00</i>
Wednesday	am	<i>PLAY READING 10:00 – 12:00</i>	<i>BRIDGE 10:00 -12:30</i>	<i>BRIDGE 10:00 – 12:30</i> <i>ART APPRECIATION 10:30 – 12:00</i>	<i>PLAY READING* 10:00 – 12:00 * last Wednesday</i>

	pm	<i>MUSIC APPRECIATION 2:00 – 4:00</i>			
Thursday	pm				<i>A BOOK AND A GLASS OF WINE* 7:30 – 9:00 * last Thursday</i>
Friday	am	<i>MEDITATION 10:00 – 12:00</i> <i>SCRABBLE 10:30 – 12:00</i>	<i>PSYCHOLOGY 10:00 – 12:00</i>	<i>WALKING 10.30 –</i> <i>SCRABBLE 10:30 – 12:00</i>	

Exceptions

Amateur Astronomy By arrangement

Theatre Group By arrangement

Spanish Conversation By arrangement

Wine Appreciation By arrangement

Walking (see Notice board)

LUNCH GROUP

Meet at 12.45 for 1pm

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

FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

Our new Family History Group got off to a slow start at the end of last year. Initially we met in September when we introduced ourselves and agreed that we would meet on the fourth or last Tuesday of the month at 10am.

However, due to prior commitments, we couldn't manage to meet in October, but we had two interesting meetings before Christmas and recently our January meeting.

So far, we have looked at basic charts for keeping track of a family tree, free websites for our research and ways of keeping and recording our findings.

In our future meetings we hope to share individual progress so far, look at a computerised way of recording information, and make a visit to Birkenhead Central Library to see helpful records, books and directories which are generally found in Research Centres throughout the country.

Our ancestors came from all over the country – not just Wirral and Birkenhead. We have room to take a few more members if anyone is interested in joining us. Below are the dates and topics for our next few meetings in 2020.

Tuesday 25th February Sharing progress and useful research ideas 10am

Tuesday 31st March demo of the computerised Family Tree Maker software 10am

Tuesday 28th April visit to Birkenhead Library and Research Centre (time to be agreed)

If you are interested in joining us, please email me on familyhistory@oxtonu3a.com for the venue for our meetings – and don't worry we are all researching in different ways but it's good to share our problems and successes!

Pauline Horner

Group Leader for Family History

NOTES OF ACTIVITIES AT NON - SPEAKER MEETINGS 2020

12th March 2020 Sing Along with the Killenwood Acoustic Duo

9th April 2020 Wirral Memories.

7th May 2020 Spot the Landmarks

Further dates to be announced later.

Colin Stredder



SPEAKERS 2020

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

Thursday 26th March – Sheila Walsh

Hullaballoo 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
Mersey

Under, over and up the River

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

PLEASE NOTE IN YOUR DIARIES: there are three weeks between the meeting on September 17th and the following one on October 8th after which they will continue at fortnightly intervals.

THE LAST GREAT RACE ON EARTH

Our talk on February by Max Hall about the Iditarod Trail sled Dog Race across Alaska's wastes was interesting and informative with slides to give us some idea of what it entailed. Max has himself competed in this thousand mile marathon no less than five times already and one cannot help but admire his courage; it is an extremely testing endurance feat for both man and dogs. He personally trains his dog team over three preceding months and prepares their food supplies for the up to a hundred mile sectors they can cover in one day – he even makes them special high protein sausages! The logistics of all the supplies to be packed, the weather that can be extremely cold, the small planes that follow the route and change dogs that may get lame



etc. were astonishing and would deter all but the bravest. He said his most frightening experience was the occasion when they were confronted by a pack of wolves. Sadly time had run out so we were unable to ask further questions but the talk was an insight into something quite outside most people's experience. **Ed.**

CONGRATULATIONS JOAN



Congratulations are due to Joan Parfect who celebrates her 90th birthday on
February 29th

Windermere Walk Friday April 17th 2020

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 Oxtou 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



21st February Walk

Tony Swarbrick led the walk from Bidston Station to Moreton where we enjoyed lunch at the Farmers Arms Pub. The route was an unusual one encompassing Bidston Moss via Cross Lane, passing by Gun Sites Picnic Area and the towpath by the River Birket. The dull weather with a threat of rain meant that we were a smaller group

than usual but while we did get some rain it was not heavy and we all enjoyed getting out in the fresh air. Thank you Tony for an enjoyable morning..

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 July 2020. Please make a note in your diaries

March 18th 2020 Session Room TPG: WILLIAM BLAKE- presented by Bernadette Hamilton

April 15th 2020 Please note – this venue has been altered. Lady Lever Art Gallery: German Revolution: Expressionist prints.

May 20th 2020 Session Room TPG: A Few of Our Favourite Things. (Members present art works they admire.

June 17th 2020 Tate Modern, Liverpool: Don McCullin Photography Exhibition

July 15th 2020 Session Room TPG: Understanding Paintings. (Presentation by Bernadette Hamilton)

NO MEETING IN AUGUST

Winter Wonderland in ST. Petersburg presented by Pauline Horner



On



Wednesday February 19th Pauline Horner gave a really interesting presentation about her trip to St. Petersburg. Her talk, illustrated by slides was enjoyed by a well attended audience. The beauty of the great historic buildings, wonderfully restored after the ravages of war, was breathtaking while the collections of some of the world's greatest artists were truly amazing. A selection of Russian paintings, not so well known outside Russia, was particularly interesting; it is certainly a country of prodigious talents in many directions. ED.

THEATRE OUTINGS - SOCIAL OUTINGS

EVENTS

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

Manchester Ship Canal Tuesday June 9th Cost: £42 including the bus back to base. Meet at Secombe Ferry at 10am for an interesting trip up the Manchester canal going through several locks, as far as Salford Docks. Afterwards a bus takes us back to Birkenhead. Further details from Elizabeth Harding who is organising the trip.

THEATRE

Tickets for Theatre bookings made for the following shows are available for collection

Both bookings now closed

Collect tickets and meet at Theatre

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



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 organ

CREATIVE WRITING

'Prospects'

Harry Phillips hated Christmas. All the fuss seemed to start as soon as Easter was over, with Christmas cards for sale in June, decorations in July and cribs in August, complete with oxen, sheep, wise men, straw and shepherds. And when it came to family finances, he felt that low income families were being constantly pressurised via TV adverts to buy X-boxes, Frozen Dresses, Little Ponies, trampolines, Lego Boxes and Evil Robots.

He also disliked Bonfire Night and, oh, he wasn't all that keen on Halloween either. He was not really very fond of himself and for a reasonably presentable 35 year-old bloke, he was quite isolated and although interested in having a long term relationship with a woman, nothing had ever really materialised.

One of his few friends was his colleague at work, a fellow plant engineer, Spencer Craven, who confronted him in the works canteen over a mug of steaming tea.

'Just loosen up, you miserable sod' said Spencer.' Your negative attitude is even making me feel suicidal. Why don't you look in at the Halloween Social at the Rugby Club tonight? Most of the girls from the office are going, dressed up as a ghosts, ghouls and monsters. You'd fit in very well, well, as you are, with your normal gear and persona.'

'Thank you, Spencer,' said Harry.' That's just what I need to restore my confidence, which has been in constant decline since I fell on my face at the school prom, having been persuaded to match various Rugby playing colleagues at their excessive rate of pint drinking.'

‘So, are you coming to the Halloween bash?’ asked Spencer.

‘No, I really don’t like all this monster stuff. And as for ‘trick or treat, that’s a disgrace. Hordes of kids marauding round the neighbourhood frightening old ladies. In my day it was all about duck apples and roast chestnuts. It’s all become so Americanised, with tons of junk being sold by the likes of Poundland. Most of that ends up in landfill.’

‘OK,’ said Spencer. ‘I gather you are not a big fan of Halloween. I’ll certainly be going and I’m certain I’ll have a great time, I’m going to dress up as a monster and I have every confidence of managing to haunt at least one ‘monstress’ at the do, possibly competing in the fancy dress competition or dancing to the Monster Mash. See you at work on Friday.’

At home, that night, Harry was idly watching a BBC2 programme about the reorganisation of the bus system in Shanghai, when he heard the noises of fireworks going off outside in the build-up to November 5. Three local children knocked on the door and when Harry opened it, he was greeted with ‘Trick or Treat’ in a chorus of children’s voices.

‘Get lost you scruffy brats, and don’t you dare to do any tricks’ was Harry’s response.

The boys shouted something like ‘misery guts’ as they turned and walked across the road. From a distance, Harry could see them knocking at a neighbour’s door, and Mrs Hankins of No 55 was dolling out sweets and biscuits to the young scroungers. ‘Stupid woman, encouraging a ridiculous American trend,’ thought Harry.

Back in the office, the word at the water cooler was that after a smashing Halloween party at the Rugby Club, there was going to be a bonfire and a firework display. It was going to be a fantastic event, with a bar, hot foods and a disco. Harry happened to be talking to Mary Cranford, a senior member of the finance department.

‘Are you off to the bonfire event at the weekend’ asked Mary.

‘No.’ said Harry. ‘It’s a really bad night for cats and dogs. My poor mother also gets frightened on that night. I have to stay in and keep an eye on her.’

‘If you came to the Rugby Club, you could keep an eye on me.’ said Mary, with a twinkle in her eye.

Harry completely missed that cue, even though he had always got on well with Mary and knew all about her recent divorce following some really bad treatment from her ex-husband. She seemed a warm-hearted woman with a bit of a sense of humour.

‘Thanks, anyway, but I really worry about all that smoke polluting the atmosphere. We’ll all end up like Delhi or Beijing. People will be choking and dying on the spot’ said Harry. ‘Thanks anyway.’

Once again, the water cooler area reverberated with reactions to the firework night.

‘The Guy bore a strong resemblance to a certain Harry Phillips.’ said Spencer.’ Even down to the absence of sartorial elegance. I think, like you, he must have had an Oxfam Credit Card.’

‘That’s a bit unkind.’ chipped in Mary Cranford, making herself a cup of herbal tea from the communal kettle. ‘To the Guy, I mean, who was quite smartly turned out, as it happens.’

Harry couldn’t help but chuckle at this, and ruefully thought to himself that yes, it might make sense to have a look at M&S or even H&M. Most of his present clobber had originated at Man at C& A. He might even have a look at Poundland. Not that you could buy a pair of jeans for one pound, but they were pretty cheap. On the other hand, the product probably involved exploitation of workers and elements of environmental damage. Maybe M&S.

Turning down all the invitations for the works Christmas events, Harry saw Christmas Eve as a quiet night at home with his mum, until he bumped into Mary Cranford as they left the office that night.

‘Oh, Harry, could you drop in and help one of my neighbours. She’s not far from where you live and I said I’d try to get someone to help install her new TV. The old one gave up the ghost last night and I was able to get one delivered, but I haven’t a clue how to set it up. She lives on her own and has problems getting around. I try to give her a hand now and then, because she’s a very positive lady Mrs Kenwright, she’s been widowed for a number of years.’

Harry took his time to reply, but eventually agreed to help if he could, although fearing getting roped in to do loads of jobs.

‘I suggest we drop in around 7 pm, if that’s ok.’ said Mary. I’ll see you there.

So it was that the vaguely anti-social Harry, the man wary of any kind of involvement, found himself helping an elderly lady to set up her television set. Tuning it to BBC2, he stumbled across a programme of carols from King’s College Cambridge. Mrs Kenwright had, possibly with help from Mary, decorated the room with a tree, fairy lights and steamers. In the hearth, there was a roaring blaze which cast a warm glow over the room as the flames devoured a couple of logs, shooting crimson flares like sun spots. As Harry made as if to leave, Mrs Kenwright suddenly appeared with tumblers of mulled wine and a plate of mince pies. A young boy soloist with an ethereal voice was just finishing the first verse of ‘Once in Royal City’ and the choir came in with the other verses. The glorious sound swirled round the chapel and entered the consciousness of the three of them as they sipped the mulled wine.

‘You make a lovely couple’; said Mrs Kenwright, ‘you’ve transformed my Christmas. I hope you have a wonderful time.’

Slightly embarrassed, Harry looked over to Mary, thinking to himself how attractive she looked, something he had failed to discover in the frantic atmosphere of the office. ‘We could join the gang in the pub for a Christmas Eve drink. Be nice to be together.’ he ventured.

‘That’s the best suggestion I’ve had in a while’, said Mary. ‘Check your Mum is ok, let me slip home to put something on more seasonal, and I’ll see you in the bar. Mine’s a half of whatever you are drinking.’

Walking home, through the chill December evening, Harry closed a few buttons on his coat, tugged his scarf closer to his neck to keep out the cold and retrieved an old bobble hat from his coat pocket. Whilst his fingers felt frozen, he did experience a strange sense of warmth within himself, and even his normally gloomy face had creased into a smile, which lingered like the grin on a Cheshire Cat. Mary Cranford? Who would have thought it? And old misery guts Phillips, with a new pair of Poundland Jeans, and maybe trainers from Sports Direct, going to a Christmas do with the star of the Finance Department.

Robin Thomas

BODNANT GARDENS



These beautiful photos were given to me by a member who felt that they would be a lovely addition to our newsletter and at this time of year they certainly are a beautiful reminder of a sunny day we spent there a few years ago. Perhaps someone might like to arrange another visit; the gardens are well worth it. **Ed.**



Registered Charity number 1159091

Regional Web site: www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events

For regional news and events.



AND FINALLY-----

Quite a lot of news and information this month which I hope you find useful. You will be asked for nominations for the Committee which need to be in shortly ahead of the AGM in April. It does seem to come round quickly when you're having fun! So please think carefully about anything you would like to be brought up and let members of Committee know ahead of the AGM.



Eliane Davie

Editor


