



December Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It has really arrived, the return of Tea and Coffee, the return of the book table and the information board. Small steps to normality but very welcome.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking Eliane for reading the notices and showing me how it should be done. I think it was appreciated by all, especially me!



We have reason to be just a little excited, looking forward to the fast approaching Christmas Dinner. Being able to socialise in a festive setting after all this time, something to savour and enjoy.

Something Appropriate At This Time:

If you look at the back of a Canadian \$10 note, you will see an old Veteran standing to attention near the Ottawa War Memorial. His name is Robert Metcalfe and he died last month at the age of 90. That he managed to live to that age is rather remarkable, given what happened to him in the Second World War.

Born in England, he was one of 400,000 members of the British Expeditionary Forces sent to the mainland where they found themselves facing the German Warfare Technic - The Blitzkrieg. He was treating an injured comrade when he was hit in the legs by shrapnel. En route to hospital his ambulance came under fire from a German Tank, which then miraculously ceased fire. Evacuated from Dunkirk on HMS Grenade, two of the sister ships with them were sunk. His ship badly damaged.

Recovered, he was sent to Allied Campaigns in North Africa and Italy. En route, his ship was chased by the German battleship, Bismarck, but one of the few to escape the Bismarck's net.

In North Africa he served under General Montgomery fighting against the Desert Fox, Rommel.

Sent into the Italian Campaign, he met his future wife Helen Porter, a Lieutenant and physio therapist in a Canadian Hospital. They were married, in the morning by the Mayor of the Italian town and again in the afternoon by a British Padre.

After the War they settled in Chatham, Ontario, where he entered into Politics and became the Warden (Chairman) of the County. On his retirement he and his wife Helen moved to Ottawa. At the age of 80 he wrote a book about his experiences, "No Time to Dream".

One day out of the blue he received a call from a Government Official asking him to go downtown for a photo call. He wasn't sure what the photo was for, or why they chose him. He had no idea he would be on the \$10 note, his daughter said.

A Second World War story that epitomises the stories of all Allied Soldiers who bravely gave up their youth to stand and fight for freedom.

A little Geography to end with:

Damascus, Syria was flourishing a couple of thousand years before Rome was founded in 753BC, making it the oldest continuously inhabited city in existence.

Istanbul, Turkey is the only city in the world located on two continents.

Alan Harding – Chairman

Brian's Musings

No matter what we think of the festive season ahead and how we relate to it, we all share one thing in common and that is the fact that the twenty-first day of December brings us to the Winter Solstice and however the days and weeks that follow it unfold, they will be getting progressively lighter. One way or another, for those of us domiciled in the northern hemisphere, it has long been a highly significant time. There seems to be little point in complaining that this period has been taken over by commercialism and that we have lost sight of the spirituality that any specific religion might have attached to it. The winter solstice is an astronomical event exerting its own power and authority on nature and consequently upon the human psyche and we may attach to that whatever meanings and behaviours we will. During the decades of the Roman occupation the time was devoted to the god Saturn, who, I suspect would be happy to endorse the commercial activities of multi-national corporations and off-shore banking, together with seasonal retail activities from the lowliest charity shop to Harrods of Knightsbridge. It was puritanical, religious idealism, lately come to these isles that tried to spoil it all. Taking all this into account it seems to me that we can do little better than relate to this amazing time in any way that best suits us and seems most fitting and for as long as we care to maintain it.

Now that goods can arrive here from all over the world and at any time, the old custom of drawing on the carefully garnered products of seasons past is no longer relevant. On the stock exchange one can even buy and sell items that do not yet exist; the products of seasons yet to come. The ancient rituals associated with carefully stored benefits and seasonal feasting have become those of perpetual and largely meaningless indulgence. We may now take from the earth whatever we want whenever we want it. This is as it is. We

cannot go back; but the situation has profoundly affected our values and sources of meaning. Without recourse to our ancient alignment with the seasons and the mysteries of death and rebirth with which they connected us, we are left only with the exigencies of self-gratification and the quest for personal identity. That this is clearly not enough to live by is indicated in the increased reliance on drugs and the proliferation of mental illness and suicide.

With loss of meaning comes loss of responsibility and we can soon find ourselves in a wasteland that becomes increasingly bleak and uninhabitable. Yet we cannot impose meaning on those who find themselves in such desolation. Many feel themselves to be failures in a world that is itself manifestly failing as a human environment. When our collective values lead only to self-destruction, where is one to turn? Fortunately there are states of being and awareness that we do all hold in common, though we may choose to ignore them. Everything in the known and created universe is in relationship with everything else. In the holographic system in which we find ourselves the good of the whole depends entirely on the well-being of every part. Until we truly understand and accept the implications of this reality the solstice can hardly bring in its wake the incremental increase of insight, wisdom and understanding that will ensure that the season ahead is a prelude to our ontological development as an evolving species. We might not be quite able to love each other as some think that we should, or even to value each other as anything more than a commodity to be either exploited or dispensed with but sheer hard science informs us that for the good of the whole we all need to be warm, dry and well fed.

Meanwhile 'It is better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness' and the Winter Solstice is a very good time in which to do it.

Brian Gill

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS!



Joan Benton, who has been organising tea and coffee service for some years, would like to thank those who have already volunteered for tea and coffee duties. She would still like to hear from any others who would like to join the team. My apologies for a date error regarding the restart of coffee and tea available at the meetings in the November edition; the date had altered but had not been passed on, however coffees and teas are definitely available at meetings from November 11th.

Sugar will be in packets to avoid contamination and there will be no biscuits offered yet. Joan organises milk, tea and coffee so all that volunteers have to do really is, pour out the drinks and set out and clear the cups before putting them in the dishwasher. Please give your names and contact numbers to Joan at the next meeting if you can help. **WE ALL ENJOY OUR REFRESHMENTS SO COME ALONG AND VOLUNTEER!**

Please don't forget to bring your cheque book to pay your subs which Gwyneth will be collecting at the meetings until the end of January. After January any unpaid subs will be assumed to be a termination of membership. The amount is a very reasonable £12 and cheques are the preferred method of payment please.

Remember to bring correct change for the £1 at the door – this goes towards the hire of the hall and refreshments.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday January 6th when Colin will present a video of:

Liverpool and Wirral, 1900- 2000

Thank you!

Ed.

A letter which might be of interest to dog lovers:

From: Barking Mad Pet Care - Jonathan McDonnell-Rogers
<wirral@barkingmad.uk.com>

Date: 2 November 2021 at 12:30:28 -00:00

Subject: Barking Mad Wirral

To: secretary@oxtonu3a.co.uk

Hi,

Please point me in the direction of the right person to get in touch with if this isn't the correct email address.

My name is Jonathan McDonnell-Rogers and I've recently opened a branch of Barking Mad on the Wirral and thought that the service we offer might be of interest to your U3A members, as we find most of our volunteer hosts are active retirees.

The heart of our business is matching people that love dogs but don't feel they can commit to owning one or have a sociable pet that would enjoy having a guest, with dog owners that want an alternative to kennels. We have been trading on the Wirral for just a couple of months and found the demand for our service from dog owners quite overwhelming so actively looking for volunteer hosts, and generally active retirees that would like the companionship, affection, fun, health benefits and morale boost that caring for a dog brings, are the people most interested in our service.

We have a strict dog assessment process, and dogs are carefully matched to suit each host's home and lifestyle. The dogs come with all their own food, toys, bed and other belongings. Hosts can choose when they are available around their own holidays and commitments. Stays can be overnight to 2 weeks, and the vast majority of our hosts find they enjoying having dogs many times throughout the year.



We take care of everything, hosts are covered by our insurance and licensing and we provide 24hr support. For privacy and security hosts and dog owners don't meet, we are the intermediaries. Barking Mad are over 20 years old, multi award winning, and are rated the number 1 pet care service provider in the UK on Trustpilot, with almost 8000 reviews, where we are also 5* rated.

We have host communities throughout the country, with local get-togethers and events, and would love to establish this on the Wirral.

I'd appreciate if you could forward this information as well as my contact information to your members. I can also provide pamphlets to distribute if this is preferred.

Please visit the Wirral branch webpage to find out more about me and what we do below), and feel free to contact me if need any more information.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,

Jonathan



Social Meetings 2021-22

November 25th	DVD The Secret Dreams and Romances of the Wirral
January 6th 2022	DVD Reflections of Liverpool and Wirral from 1900 to 2000
February 2nd 2022	DVD Merseyside at War 1939-1945
March 3rd 2022	Colin's Quiz
March 31st 2022	George Sullivan, retired MP and MEP, will give a light talk about his experiences.

Speakers (so far) 2022

20th January 2022	Hilbre Bird Observatory	John Elliot
17th February 2022	Birkenhead Tramways	Rob Jones
17th March 2022	Behind the Scenes on TV Theatre	Fiona Martin



14th April 2022	Jean Finley.	Nursery Rhymes
12th May 2022	John Michael Corfe.	The China Farm Story.
9th June 2022	Keith Warrender.	Dunham Massey Ship Canal.
7th July 2022	Philip Caine	Barrow to Bagdad

GROUP NEWS

Local History:

There will be no meetings of the Group during November or December

Walking: As Gerry Riley may not be returning to U3A, the walking Group needs a new leader. Tony Swarbrick stepped in as a temporary measure.

Debating:

Tony Sullivan has offered to lead a new Discussion Group. Tony will host this group from his home in Upton – day and time to be decided. Those interested should e-mail me at the address below.

If you are interested in taking over as leader of any of the groups above or starting a new group with similar interests please e-mail Tony at the address shown below.

groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk

A Book and a Glass of Wine:

Judith Whaley

Meet on last Thursday of month. The group is full at the moment, but vacancies may occur if all do return.



Art Appreciation:

Bernadette Hamilton

Bernadette will meet members at the Williamson Gallery for coffee followed by a look around the Gallery
Wednesday December 15th 2021

Amateur Astronomy:

Paul Cullen

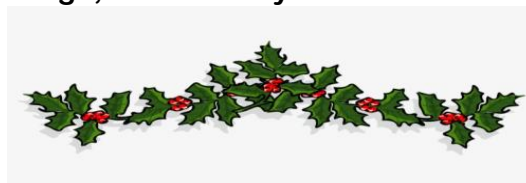
Paul has offered to keep members informed of significant astronomic events to watch for



Bridge:

Tony Swarbrick, Joan Perfect bridge@oxtonu3a.co.uk

Meetings will be in “The Cabin” at Trinity. Meetings on 2nd and 3rd Wednesdays each month, 10.30a.m. to 12.00p.m. meet to play friendly relaxed bridge, Joan and myself are on hand to offer advice to less experienced players from time to time offer new to the game. New “teaching” sessions members welcome.



Book Club: Mary O'Neill
Mary will contact members shortly to make arrangements for restarting.



Creative Writing: Monica Price
Anyone interested should get in touch with Monica, please. She will shortly be contacting group members for details of her restart.

Lunch Circle: Colin Stredder
Next lunch: January 18th, 1pm at The Shippons, Irby



Music Appreciation: Paul Cullen

Next meeting December

1st in the Session Room 2-4pm. Christmas Medley, bring your favourite CDs!

New Book Monica Price. This Group has continued to operate during lockdown

Boules: Anyone interested in joining this group this group, to play Boules at Park, West Kirby, please contact Maureen Oldham.



groupcordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk Tony Swarbrick

Committee Vacancy

We are still looking for another Committee Member to plan Social meetings once a month and help take part in the general running of our U3A. Colin Stredder has taken over the booking of the main Speaker Meetings. Anyone interested in taking this on should contact a Committee Member at the next meeting.

A WALK FOR THE GROUP ON OCTOBER 29TH

Sandra Lakin led a walk around the Ness/ Burton area on Friday 29th. The group met at the Wheatsheaf Inn, Little Neston for a circular 5-6 mile walk around the Ness and Neston area. Although rain had been forecast, we started off in sunshine enjoying some lovely scenery before the heavens opened and the rain fell down on us with a vengeance!



However our walking group are a stalwart bunch and were not deterred, continuing to enjoy a really well thought out route over fields and parts of the Wirral Way, until the rain stopped and we neared our destination, the Wheatsheaf, for lunch! Still dripping a little we changed our boots and, leaving wet coats in the cars, went on to enjoy a good meal in the company of good friends. Thank you so much Sandra for organising a cracking walk and apologies for failing to get a photo on this occasion.

ED



Christmas Lunch



Our Christmas lunch takes place on December 9th at the Prenton Golf Club at 12 noon for 12.30. We look forward to a really enjoyable social occasion, particularly as we were unable to stage it last year due to Covid.

MORE PHOTOS FROM CORINNE

From the



Williamson Art Gallery



Birkenhead Park



Daybreak



Art Appreciation Group

Visit to the Lady Lever Gallery



A large group met at the Lady Lever Gallery for coffee followed by a visit to the

Sublime Symmetry Exhibition of ceramic work by William De Morgan. Born in 1839, De Morgan was a friend of William Morris, who was also involved in the Arts and Craft Movement of the late 19th century and early 20th Century. De Morgan's work used innovative glazes and firing techniques with which he produces intricate works full of vibrant colour.

The gallery has approximately seventy of his pieces on display, including tiles featuring birds and exotic flowers and vases of varied shapes and sizes. All were executed with exact symmetry in beautiful colours; many being reminiscent of Persian and Moroccan work.

Our thanks to Bernadette for organising this enjoyable visit.

Ed.

Book Exchange

We will be re-starting the Book exchange at Thursday meetings shortly. Please help us to "clear the decks" of our stock of books - It would be helpful if you could take 2/3 books each and donate these to your local charity shop.

Please note this is an EXCHANGE not a way to get rid of large quantities of unwanted books!!

Please donate no more than 2 books at a time, unless taking away a similar amount.



Please only donate books in Good Clean Condition.

No technical Books, thank you

U3A Christmas Walk will be on Friday 17th December.

Meet at Moreton Station at 10.30. 9.56 or 10.16 train from Hamilton Square.
If you come by car, on street parking is usually available close to the station.

Depending on weather – we will walk about 4 miles along the Wirral Circular Path towards Meols, looping back to Moreton via Carr Lane.

Refreshments – Mince Pies and Mulled Wine will be served at my house - 12 Eleanor Road, Moreton, CH46 7SB at the end of the walk.
It is about 10 min walk back to Moreton Station.

A couple of people have offered to bake Mince Pies.
Much as I am a fan of all things Aldi, You can't beat home baking!!
So if you could please confirm that your offers are still open, I will adjust my buying accordingly.

No other food/wine contributions are expected, but I will have available a Charity Collection Box for Motor Neurone Disease Association – also Card Reader for contactless donations!!

Please let me know if you will be coming on this walk.
Tony Swarbrick – Group Co-ordinator



Reminder for Walking Group Members on Friday November 26th

Meet on the platform at Waterloo station on the Merseyrail Southport line at about 10.35.
Trains leave Moorfields station at 9.56 and 10.16.

Toilets are available just outside Waterloo station (across road about 100M to left).
BUT you will need 40p in change, unless some kind soul has wedged the door open with a Coke Can as yesterday!!!



Distance is approx. 5.5 miles. It is a flat walk along the beach and Coastal path.
Path is not likely to be muddy, but the beach may be wet – I think we will be about 4 hours after high tide.
The Coastal Path is a tad rugged underfoot on one stretch so you will need strong footwear and/or a walking pole.

Lunch will be at “The Hightown, Pub & Kitchen” at about 1.45pm.
We do not need to pre-order food, but I attach a copy of the menu so that you can think about your choice in advance.
I recommend the “Lighter Bites” we had an Omelette and a Hightown Sandwich – both were excellent and good value for money!!
Please put an odd coin or two in your pocket so that we can leave a staff gratuity.

Elevensies. We will have a short break about halfway for coffee and another toilet opportunity (40p required again).
You can either bring your own flask or there is a Van selling coffee and snacks.

Please let me know if you will be joining us for this walk – some have already said “put me down”, but please re-confirm.
If you book, but find you cannot come on the day, please **text** me (07478 726 650) – we don’t want to be waiting for you if you are not coming!!

Look forward to seeing you.

Tony Swarbrick
Group Coordinator
Oxton U3A
07478 726 650

KEEP YOURSELVES AND OTHERS SAFE

Please continue to wear face coverings during our meetings.

Hand Sanitising gel is available on entry

Do not gather in large groups

If a queue develops please keep at a safe distance.

Thank you, but please do not stack the chairs at the end of the meeting they have to be sanitised before stacking away

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



AND FINALLY.....

As we approach Christmas it looks as though it will be a far more normal one than last year with lockdown. We can look forward to sharing a Christmas lunch together with U3A friends and to seeing our extended families over the holiday. Our Groups are gradually returning to activity and next year will hopefully see our return to other events and outings.

There will be many other changes ahead as the world strives to lower greenhouse gases but we have seen in the last couple of years, where people work together much that has seemed impossible can be achieved.

On behalf of the Committee, may I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a much happier year for 2022!

Kind regards,

Eliane Davie - Editor



