



April Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

OXTON & PRENTON DISTRICT U3A

To All Members In accordance with section 14 of our constitution I hereby give notice that the 2022 Annual General Meeting of the Oxton, Prenton & District U3A will take place at the Church Hall, Palm Grove with Trinity Church, Alton Road, Oxton at 10-30am on Thursday 28th April 2022.

AGENDA.

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the last AGM.
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report.
5. Treasurer's Report.
6. Proposal to elect Sandra Lakin as Honorary President.

Proposed: - Tony Swarbrick Seconded: - Alan Harding

7. Election of Treasurer

Ken Jackson is willing to stand for a further year, but we need also to elect someone to take Ken's place next year (see item 8)

8. Election of 2 Committee Members.

9. Appointment of Auditor.

10. Any other business

11. Date of next AGM.

Alan Harding Chairman - Oxton, Prenton & District U3A chairman@oxtonu3a.co.uk

To all Members Attached is the formal notice and Agenda for our AGM on Thursday 28th April 2022

There are 3 vacancies on the committee.

- Treasurer: Ken Jackson has served 2 terms (6 years). Ken is willing to stand for a further period, in order to mentor a new Treasurer to take over his duties.
- Barbara Lloyd has served 3 terms (9 years) and hopes that someone will be prepared to take her place on the committee.
- We have an outstanding vacancy which was not filled last year. Please consider joining the Committee, we need “new blood” to ensure the future of YOUR U3A.

Nominations for election to any posts on the committee are open to any fully paid-up member of our U3A. Prospective candidates must be proposed and seconded by a current member and the completed nomination sent by email to the Secretary, Elizabeth Harding secretary@oxtonu3a.co.uk. If you wish to discuss any aspect of committee membership in advance please feel free to contact me or any committee member. Alan Harding Chairman - Oxton, Prenton & District U3A chairman@oxtonu3a.co.uk

Alan Harding – Chairman

It was wonderful seeing so many members attend our meeting on the 17th March. Again we were entertained by a very good Speaker, Fiona Martin, talking of her experiences in Television, Theatre and the many productions she appeared in over the years. It was gratifying to see so many members attending and the enjoyment shown by all. I believe recent events have taught us how much we need to socialise with one another and how much our U3A contributes to this.

I was going to continue with part 2 of the Roman calendar, but I think the following subject is more topical at the moment.

COVID-19: The Past and Present of mRNA Vaccines.

Vaccines have been an essential tool in our ability to turn a raging pandemic into a manageable disease. Our return to a more normal life is due to their success. It is interesting to go back to articles published in late 2020 when Covid vaccines were undergoing very early trials with the hope of being our best chance of containing the pandemic. Damien Garde published an article on 10th November

2020 titled "The Story of mRNA: how a once dismissed idea became a leading technology in the Covid vaccine race".

At the time there were more than a dozen candidates using different technology, competing to develop a safe and highly protective vaccine. While we now know the superiority and dominance of mRNA vaccine technology, this was not always the case. While mRNA vaccines were made in record time, there were over 3 decades of research that led to this rapid success.

The Path to Success

Katalin Kariko is a Hungarian born scientist, who was a key pioneer in developing mRNA technology. In the 1990's her research was repeatedly rejected by funding agencies and scientific bodies. Her goal was to create a custom piece of foreign and synthetic messenger RNA (mRNA), to force the body's own production of protective proteins against infections and disease.

Two major challenges had to be overcome. The piece of mRNA was fragile and when nakedly injected without a coating, was rapidly degraded before it could enter cells. As well, the mRNA was considered foreign, thus triggering an excessive immune response to the mRNA itself with undesirable complications. Two key discoveries eventually followed. The modified piece of mRNA altered and thus was cloaked, much as a Trojan horse and could thus enter cells without creating an initial overreaction. Also lipid shell was created to surround the mRNA, that prevented its destruction when introduced into the body and also allowed it to enter cells more easily.

This ultimately led a group of Scientists to embrace the technology with high hopes of its use. In 2010 they created Moderna, a company whose name stands for "modified RNA", in the hope of producing an array of vaccines and cancer therapies. No product reached the market for 10 years.

Two scientists, husband and wife, Ugur Sahin and Ozlem Tureci, at a German Company Biontech founded in 2008, similarly worked on perfecting mRNA vaccine technology again with no approved drug. In 2020 when urgent collaboration was needed they partnered with Pfizer, a very large and well funded Pharma Company, in order to create a coronavirus vaccine. The two companies, Pfizer a large giant and Moderna, a much smaller company thus competed to produce the first successful mRNA vaccine. Trials of both vaccines started on the 27th July 2020, only 6 months after the SARS-CoV-2 virus was sequenced and thus mRNA pieces of the spike protein could quickly be artificially created to test as a potential vaccine.

The outcome was a remarkable race ending in a tie. Both Companies created highly effective vaccines that had very low risk and were initially about 95% protective against disease development. The rapidity of development and regulatory approval also led to some ongoing concerns about the long-term risks of this novel technology.

Vaccine hesitancy, always there in the background, grew as a result of this anxiety, though it was completely unfounded.

Did You Know?

You have 2 holes in your bottom eyelids. The punctum drains excess tears into your nose, which is why your nose runs when you cry. **Alan Harding – Chairman**



ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS!

Our AGM will take place on April 28th when you will be able to propose and second new members for Committee. You will be receiving information from our Secretary as to how you can do this and in the meantime please think about whether you or a friend would like to be proposed. There are several members of Committee that are due to step down. It is important that as many members as possible attend the meeting so please earmark the date!

Unfortunately we will have to increase the gate money by one pound in May due to increased charges for the room rental etc. Membership fees will also have to increase to at least £15 **next** season due to general increases in costs.

It was great to see so many members at the meeting on March 17th; do please tell your friends about us!

We hope to get back to organising some outings during the summer months and would be interested in any ideas that you might like to put forward. If anyone would like to organise an outing or theatre visit, perhaps with a friend, we would like to hear from you. Ken, our Treasurer, would help with the financial side of it. Anyone wishing to start a new Group should also inform the Committee to discuss the venture.

Ed.

Brian's Musings



Forgive me for stating the obvious but it seems that we are all human beings. I have to bring myself back to this obvious base-line from time to time because it is an issue that I have tended to find problematic throughout my eighty-six years on Planet Earth, and looking around me it is easy to assume that I am not alone; though many might not like to admit to the fact.

We define ourselves by the fact of our very existence, the fact that we are. We are not, primarily defined by our doings. As Human Doings we are a somewhat dubious phenomenon. Any good that we might do (we do plenty) has to be weighed against the fact that we are wilfully despoiling the planet as a suitable environment for life and that, throughout our known history we have destroyed and exploited each other by the thousands: being becomes eclipsed by doing and we live in the perpetual shadow of our misdeeds.

There would be no point in addressing this issue if there were no possibility of resolution. Obsessed by a mutual and over-riding urge to exploit each other at all cost we would best be left to get on with it. The planet itself, together with a few primitive life-forms, will survive. However the indications are that we might be an evolving entity, in which case there exists the very real possibility, given sufficient conscious awareness that we might evolve into something that is an improvement on the sorry state that has brought us to this point.

Evolutionary surges, it seems, are triggered by shocks. Some shocks can be so profound that they become genetically imprinted; otherwise we blindly repeat the behaviours that keep bringing us to the same point. The Gnostics understood that the cure for suffering is to suffer enough and only then are we likely to examine the mind-set that actually generates both collective and individual pain. When Jung was asked if there would be a third world war he said it would depend entirely on whether enough people would be able to acknowledge the negative contents of their own psyche. The change cannot be collectively imposed by any organised regime, political, ideological or religious. It has to be organic.

At birth one likes to imagine that Being is relatively pure and free. We have instinctive reactions to some extent but many of our fears have to be imprinted on us by adults to the point where some are hardly able to move, let alone act and those that do go out into the world do so with all manner of neurotic attitudes imposed by their various educational influences. Common to them all is a dualistic philosophy which views 'the other' as something to be vanquished and/or exploited. From an early age points and prizes are awarded for such activities; thus we 'get on' in the world. Balance, order, harmony, reconciliation and creative relationships are largely ignored.

There are so many ways of being open to us that it seems pitifully short sighted to imbue only those related to success and general acclaim, defined usually by income and status. Those who fail can fail badly, without ever discovering that there are other ways to be.

Now that I am older and some of the pressure is relieved, I see that the truly luminous moments in my life have been moments of (relatively) pure being and that, mercifully, these can be extended now simply by doing less and being more. Being does not need to be defined by numerous tags. We do not need to be this, that or the other. We might find it difficult at first but it costs nothing and is way more healing than a long-haul-flight to somewhere exotic and you might even be doing something towards saving humanity from self-destruction.

Brian Gill

Social Meetings 2022

March 31st 2022

George Stevenson, retired MP and MEP, will give a light and entertaining talk about his experiences.

Speakers (so far) 2022

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

WALKING GROUP

New Walking Group Leader.

When we re-started the group after lockdown I agreed to lead the group on a temporary basis until the New Year until a long term leader came forward!



No new leader has as yet volunteered!!! I will continue arranging walks until Easter, but cannot promise to take on this role long term!!

If the group is to survive I need members of the group to come forward to arrange and lead walks. Please contact me if you are prepared to do this.

Thanks to all who have supported the group in 2021. We all look forward to some interesting walks in 2022.

Tony Swarbrick

WALKING GROUP MARCH 4TH



Ken and Gerry led a most enjoyable walk on March 4th. The day before had been one of non-stop rain but the 4th started bright and sunny and remained so throughout! Having met at Central Station, we walked up town by the cathedral via the sunken garden and on to Princes' park, full of daffodils and crocus. From there we proceeded to Sefton Park where these photos were taken, stopping for coffee and ice creams at the cafe. They are really lovely parks with ornamental lakes inhabited with a mixture of swans, ducks, geese etc. and after walking around them we continued to Otterspool Park which led to Otterspool Prom. The weather continued

to be sunny with a fresh breeze coming off the water; the Mersey really looks its best in these circumstances. We continued along the promenade until we reached the Britannia Inn where we enjoyed a well earned lunch. After lunch a short walk took us to the station where we boarded our trains for our return to Wirral.

Many thanks to Ken and Gerry for a really enjoyable day.

Ed.

ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Bernadette led the Art Appreciation Group in a visit to the Williamson Art Gallery on March 16th to view an exhibition of wood cuts by Grayson Perry, depicting his “A Day in the Life Of” collection. Six snaps of Julia Copa, ‘an ordinary woman at different stages of her life.

There were also paintings by local artists including Michael Fenner, son- in- law to Bernadette, who also talked about one of his own, depicting his wife and young child painted some forty years ago.

We all met in the coffee bar where we enjoyed our chats so much that we almost forgot the purpose of our meeting! However, the exhibition proved really interesting.

Ed.



GROUP NEWS

Discussion Group: **Tony Sullivan**

Tony led the new Discussion Group at its first meeting on Monday February 21st. Members spent an enjoyable afternoon in lively debate, covering a wide range of subjects and were to meet again on Tuesday, March 22nd. Unfortunately this meeting had to be cancelled due to Tony testing positive for Covid. We wish him a speedy recovery. The meeting in April will take place on April 26th. Anybody else interested in joining the group should email Tony Swarbrick at the address below.

groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk



A Book and a Glass of Wine: **Judith Whale**

Meet on last Thursday of month. The group is full at the moment, but vacancies may occur if all do not return.



Amateur Astronomy **Paul Cullen, Judith Wylie**

Paul will inform members of what events to watch out 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. We meet to play friendly relaxed bridge, Joan and myself are on hand to offer advice to less experienced players and from time to time offer "teaching" sessions for people new to Bridge.



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**

The next Lunch Circle meeting will be on the 19th April, at the Shippons' Inn, Irby 12.45 for 1pm lunch.



May 17th at the Acorn Pub, Bebington

June 21st will be Pesto at the Dibbinsdale Inn, Bromborough

Music Appreciation: Paul Cullen

Next Meeting April 6th in the Session Room at 2-4pm. Please bring some music you really enjoy. Unless the attendance numbers increase the group may have to fold and so we look to music lovers to support this enjoyable group. There needs to be enough people to cover the room rental. Further information will be provided at the next meeting.



Walking Group: The April walk will be in Delamere Forest when we will be taking a picnic lunch. Further information will be sent to Group members in due course.





Books and Jigsaws

Thank you everyone for thinning down the books and jigsaw collections; they are at a much more manageable number now and we can return to bringing in books and jigsaws for exchange again. In the interest of not getting stock in excess of storage space again, please keep to only bringing the number of books that you take – it seems to work really well!



Friendly Ear

If you know of any member who is sick, in hospital or in need of a friendly chat please let Mary Hamilton or Dot Matthews know. They will contact them to see whether they need help and send cards (where applicable).



Lunch Circle

On the 15th March The group met at the Travellers' Rest, Bebington to enjoy a chatty lunch. Spirits were high and the food generous – mine could have fed two people – and enjoyable. Many thanks to Colin for organising it. Ed.



Walking Group

Friday 29th April - Delamere

Leader Tony Swarbrick

Meet at Barnes Bridge Car Park in time to start walking at 10.45. Plan to leave Oxton by 10am.

Parking is limited, and petrol expensive!!! At the moment the car park is Free!! Hopefully we will be able to car-share and take fewer cars; apart from sharing cost this is the **Greener** option!!

If possible, please arrange your own car share arrangements – please let me know who is taking who so that I can make sure all are sorted.

Otherwise, let me know if you need a lift, or if you are prepared to drive and how many extra passengers you can accommodate.

I will send driving instructions closer to the date.

Driving distance approx. 28 miles – 45 minutes

Round Trip 56 miles – I suggest passengers contribute £4 towards cost of fuel etc

6 Miles starting at Barnes Bridge Car Park.

Option to do just 4 miles on the flat, but you miss the great views!!!

Walk circles Blakemere Moss and takes in Pale Heights

Lunch: Bring a flask and Butties for lunch which will be at top of Pale Heights from where you have views of 7 Counties!!

Toilets. Apart from bushes, there are no toilet facilities at the start of the walk. We reach the Visitor Centre about 1 hour into the walk where there are good facilities.

We will have a short break here for coffee and a snack before tackling the climb to Pale Heights – a modest climb!!

Anyone wishing to do the shorter walk can have a longer break here before continuing at a leisurely pace back to car park by lower route.

I hope I have covered everything, but please email me or ring (07478 726 650) if you have any queries.

Please let me know if you intend to join this walk, and let me know any car share arrangements as these are made.

Thanks,



Tony



And finally,

As you can see much of the news for April centres on our AGM and the selection of the new Committee. We do ask that you consider the information carefully before the AGM on April 28th so that we can go forward with a complete team and fresh energy. We would like to hear of some new ideas to help us to return to our U3A before Covid.

We would also like to hear from anyone prepared to lead new Groups and suggestions for outings etc.

Unfortunately I tested positive for Covid last Saturday (19th March) along with my son and we are both currently in Purdah! Hopefully I will be able to test negative x2 by next week as I am currently having to miss some rehearsals of the play I'm directing and need to get back to! My symptoms are fortunately fairly mild, due no doubt to the vaccines, so fingers crossed.

It is wonderful to see the sun shining this week; Spring on the way and Easter just around the corner with the promise of rebirth. Let's hope that this summer sees an end to this terrible war of attrition being fought in Eastern Europe and a final waning of the Covid virus.

My very best wishes to you all and thanks for your friendship.

Eliane Davie - Editor



