



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

As winter approaches we are all reminded that there are vulnerable people within our community who from time to time need our help. Our speaker in December this year is from the Trussell Trust. The Trussell Trust runs the Wirral foodbank. Since it opened in 2011 the Wirral foodbank has helped nearly 38,000 people, of which nearly 14,000 were children. At our meeting on Thursday 3rd December we are asking members to donate an item of food for the food bank. There is a list in this newsletter of items urgently required at this time. These donations will be collected in the hall at the meeting and taken to the foodbank in time for Christmas.

Also within our own U3A you may know of a member who would appreciate a phone call. If there is a member who you know is not well, or you have not seen for a while, please let either Pauline Pinnington or Carol Burkitt know. Pauline and Carol make sure that members who are indisposed feel that at least their friends in the U3A are thinking of them, but they cannot do this if they are not made aware that a valued friend or member is missing, or in need of a friendly word.

Finally can I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a New Year full of pleasure in Oxton & Prenton U3A.

Colin Burkitt

Chairman

LUNCH CIRCLE

There will NOT be a meeting of the Lunch Circle during December due to our Xmas Lunch.

The next meeting will be on January 19th 2016 at

The Queens Pub, Storeton Road, Birkenhead.12-15 pm for 12-30 pm

MEETINGS and SPEAKERS

Thursday 3rd December – The Chairman of the Wirral Foodbank
(Charity No.1145123)

Would you all please bring a donation from the following list to this meeting which will go to help people in crisis

- * Squash * Shampoo * Instant Mash * UHT Milk * Drinking Chocolate * Sponge Pudding
- * Small bags of sugar * Biscuits * Coffee * Evaporated Milk * Washing powder



Selection boxes welcome at this time of the year



They have plenty of BEANS, CEREAL, TEA, BISCUITS, TOMATOES, FRUIT & FEMININE HYGIENE

THANK YOU

7th January 2016- Our first meeting after Christmas is a Social Morning

21st January 2016 – Speaker Terry McCoy ‘Phobias’

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Your annual membership of Oxton & Prenton U3A is now overdue for renewal.

The cost is £12-00 per person. Because this is always a very busy time for Gwyneth our membership secretary at the desk, could you all please assist her by offering the correct money or make your cheques out in advance to Oxton & Prenton U3A.

Can I just remind all members that unless they renew their membership this will be the last newsletter they will receive and also they will not be allowed to go on any future theatre visits or social events or attend meetings.

Would everyone who has renewed their membership please produce their membership card when asked to do so.

SOCIAL OUTINGS

REMINDER

Friday 18th December 2015

Christmas Lunch at Wirral Ladies Golf Club
12.00 noon for 12.30 pm
Payment of balance and menu choices due NOW
GET YOUR GLAD RAGS ON AND HAVE SOME FUN

EVENTS

Wednesday 27th January 2016

Liverpool Medical Institution Tour 114 Mount Pleasant,
Liverpool L3 5SR £9-50 (including lunch)
Morning Tour arrive 10-40 for tour 11-00 am – 12-00 noon
Lunch for both tours at 12-00 noon
Afternoon Tour 1-15 pm – 2-15 pm
RESERVE LIST ONLY
(Possibility of second date if there is sufficient interest)

N.B Anyone on the afternoon tour who would like to join a morning tour of the Garstang Museum, please meet Jutta Hesketh at the museum in Abercromby Square at 10-15 am

Thursday 25th February 2016

Guided Tour of Liverpool Town Hall. Cost £3-00
11-00 am to 12-00 noon meet at Town Hall at 10-45 am
NOW BOOKING !!!

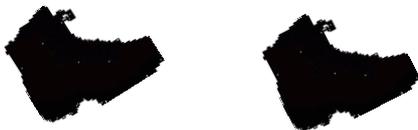
THEATRE

Wednesday 17th February 2016

MATTHEW BOURNE'S SLEEPING BEAUTY
Liverpool Empire Matinee Tickets £12-00
BOOKING NOW CLOSED TICKETS AVAILABLE SOON

NEW OUTINGS WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON

Full booking details available at meetings please see your social organisers at the back of the hall
OR e-mail barbara@oxtonu3a.co.uk



WALKING GROUP

FRIDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2015

The Christmas Walk from our home in Claughton, followed by the walking group traditional lunch time festive social. If the weather is suitable I hope we will be able to do a circular walk of about 3 miles to Bidston Hill for some panoramic views. We set off from our house at 10.30am aiming to be back in time for lunch around 12 o'clock. Carol will look after the food and drink arrangements and will be pleased to receive offers of homemade soup, mince pies and gluewein.

Sign up at the next meeting on 3rd December.

FIRST AID COURSES

LAST ONE AVAILABLE

U3A members are charged £5. They may take along a friend or relative who is not U3A member - they will be charged £10. They will need your permission to use your membership. Anyone else i.e. the general public will be charged £30

Venue: St John Ambulance. Mather Avenue, Birkenhead CH43 1TS

Date	Time	Course reference	Max people
14 December 2015	10am till 1pm	MSY15G0332	14

HOW TO BOOK? The courses listed are exclusive to U3A members. To book, members should call the Training Department on 0161 443 0106 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Quote the course reference for the course you wish to attend and give your U3A membership number. Payment will be taken at the time of booking by credit or debit card. Confirmation of booking will be sent to you by email or post.

Those of our members who were not at our social morning on 22nd October missed an absolute treat when Monica and the members of her Creative Writing Group read some of their short stories to us. Some members enjoyed it so much that they asked for those stories, and hopefully some new ones, to be included in our newsletter. So reproduced below is the first one which was written by Diane Adams. Enjoy.....

WALK

It was a warm night and although she was tired Ruth did not feel like sleeping. She lay on her bed and let her thoughts wander. She felt strangely calm as she recalled the past few months and the turn of events that had brought her to this place.

As she mused on the past her thoughts turned to David, they often did. How she had loved him. A smile played about her lips as she remembered the night when they had first met. How smart he was with his clean cut looks and sharp suit. Teddy boy style might well describe his appearance, with drainpipe trousers and bootlace tie. His shoes were always so highly polished that you could see your face in them. With his dark hair and quiff kept in place by a generous application of brylcream he caused heads to turn wherever he went. As well as his dark good looks he had the ability to turn on the charm at less than a moment's notice. Very few women could fail to be flattered by the attention he gave them.

I could hardly believe it when he walked over to me and started to talk. I forget what he said but it was no different than the usual chat up line, the offer of a cigarette and a drink was the usual opening line and I fell for it, 'oh how I fell for it' from that moment on no other man existed. The night we first met we talked and talked until 3 or 4 in the morning. As the club started to empty out he made his way off, I really did not want him to leave. The next night I spent the early part of the evening watching the door and just past midnight he arrived. He walked over towards me and started to chat, I was smitten. That night we became lovers.

At first he was so good to me, showering me with gifts and showing me attention that I had never been used to. There was however a dark side to his nature. He was very controlling and the women, oh the other women, that was something else! I chose to ignore his infidelity. I was so happy. We made a striking couple, me with my blonde hair, alright with a little help from the peroxide and him with his jet black hair, slicked back in his trademark style. We met at the club and went to lots of parties with the rich and famous.

Many were celebrities from the East end of London along with various politicians, all only too happy to be mixing with a racing driver. And then one night he asked me to marry him, of course I said yes. I could not believe how lucky I was, so many girls would have jumped at the chance to be in my shoes. Plans were underway for the wedding, then one morning I woke up feeling quite off colour, I dashed to the bathroom and was sick, 'oh no, I knew the feeling as I had been there before'. I did not say anything to David. I might have been wrong so I kept my fears to myself, anyway it would not be a problem, after all we were engaged to be married. Life continued as normal and the weeks flew by. When I had missed my second period I knew I would have to tell him.

At first he was silent. Then the explosion came, silly cow, stupid bitch, the insults continued. Then he hit me across the face, just as I was straightening up from this blow the next one came, right into my abdomen! I fell to the floor, doubled up with pain; I heard the door slam as he left the room. Some time later the door opened and Marlene from next door came in,

'Ruth are you ok? I heard the shouting but was too scared to come in. Just then I felt the warm trickle between my legs, 'The baby, I am losing the baby'.

Marlene ran down the hall and rang for an ambulance.

Recovery was slow. David heard I was out of hospital and came round to see me. We talked a while and he said he was sorry of course. 'You cannot stay, the Doctors said' before I had finished the sentence he had gone. Things were not going to change, I had to take control of the situation and I did.

Ruth woke up as the door opened. Mr Thomas came in followed by the Governor, Albert and the Priest.

'Well Ruth the time is now' said Mr Thomas. The Governor muttered a few words and Albert Pierpoint put his hand firmly on her shoulder.

'Now Ruth come with me just how I told you to yesterday. Ruth stepped forward and took the shortest yet longest walk of her life. Slowly, one step in front of the other and then she was there.

12 seconds later it was all over.

Ruth Ellis was just 28 years old when she took that last walk.

Diane Adams

If any of our members or indeed any of our Groups have anything they would like to say, or want to publicise their next meeting all you need to do is email me newsletter@oxtonu3a.co.uk and I will be more than happy to put it into our next newsletter, closing date is usually around 20th of the month. I am more than happy to run a 'Letters to the Editor' page, why not send me your contribution?

GROUP NEWS

A big thank you to Pat Round for leading the *French Conversation Group* since the inception of the Oxtou and Prenton U3A. As Pat has decided to retire we are looking for a new group leader.

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We now have a new and very informal *Spanish Conversation Group*. Brian Gill and Jutta Hesketh are happy to welcome Spanish speakers for coffee and conversation.

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Corinne Whitham ran a very successful *Drawing Group* for 10 weeks last year. As the number of participants has dropped this year the course will not be running for the moment.

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Life Writing has a small but very enthusiastic group of people who meet once a month in the Cabin. Mo Kermodé leads it and will always welcome new members.

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Diane Adams has handed over the leadership of the *Scrabble Group* to Dorothy Pittard. Thank you, Diane for all you have done for this Group.

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Finally Martin Hesketh would like to run a one-off *Wine Appreciation Course*. However to make this viable he would need to have 12 to 15 participants. Please contact me if you are interested.

FAREWELL

November 5th was the day we said goodbye to Hilary Sanders. Hilary has been a member of our Group for many years and for the past few years has served on the Committee as our Secretary and a very efficient one too. She has kept us all in order with her quiet efficiency and we will all miss her. She has gone to live near Leeds to be close to her daughter and Grandson and we wish her every happiness in her new home and many years of fun with her family. Goodbye and good luck Hilary, we will miss you.

Happily Jean Mawdsley has stepped in to fulfil the duties of our Secretary, thank you Jean.

FINALLY

I look forward to seeing many of you at our Christmas Lunch on 18th December but I will leave it to Brian to have the final word, thank you Brian and my very best wishes to you all for Christmas and the New Year ;

Christmas Is Coming!

Christmas is indeed coming and for U3A members this entails a short break during which time we can:

Rest (unlikely!), shop, put up decorations, write a lot of cards, catch up with friends, over eat, exchange presents, drink too much, have a family gathering, make fools of ourselves, go down with something nasty, feel totally out of it, hide away, resent the expense, face it all and be sociable, see in the New Year, take down the decorations, take unwanted presents to the charity shop and so on, before we all get together again in the New Year. I will leave each reader to mentally strike through any of the above items that are not applicable and even add a few of your own. The list is by no means comprehensive.

There are bits of the festive season with which we might fail to connect, even so you probably agree that there are plenty of good bits left. Are we not fortunate in having a festival that can provide something for everyone? I cannot say that I really warm to people telling me what Christmas is truly about though. Historically and culturally it is about so many different things, the first of which is the fact of the winter solstice. This is a sure, timeless and certain date that we can rely on and in this present epoch the tradition, going back for many thousands of years, of kindling lights, eating and drinking, dressing trees and dancing the night away tends to involve the majority of celebrants, one way or another. Even carols were originally round dances to encourage the rebirth of the sun and who can fail to respond to the pagan ceremony of turning on the Christmas lights in Oxton Village?

None of the above prevents me from valuing the spiritual aspect of this festival. The sounds and rituals of Christianity are more recently come amongst us but the message of death and rebirth that they bring is as timeless as the yule-log, the mistletoe and the holly it now embraces. It hardly matters that we do not know when Jesus was born (certainly not in December); there were no sheep out at night in that month and wise men from Mesopotamia would have taken many weeks to get to Bethlehem by camel. (Having just given birth, one can only sit so long in a draughty stable waiting for unscheduled, high-status visitors). Though the intellect can easily make mincemeat of these events they are nevertheless, at some deeper level, food for the soul; and one might also consider the profound symbolism of mincemeat itself. Its many and varied ingredients represent the wealth of experience the past year has given us and upon whose, carefully preserved and honoured wisdom and meaning we can feed during the dark, winter months.

No doubt when we all meet up again and the whole thing is behind us, there will be tales to tell and anecdotes to exchange. The sheer energy that we put into the occasion might sometimes yield disappointing results; on the other hand there is plenty of scope for delightful surprises too. However it all works out I try to hold on to the bits of Christmas that I can and do truly relate to. They are beautiful and heart warming. If we get that right it is not so important if the rest does not quite fall into place as we would wish.

SO;

however you come to it –

have a goodly and deeply nourishing Christmas and a richly rewarding New Year.

Brian Gill

