



## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

By the time you are all reading this newsletter I will have made all my New Year resolutions, and probably broken most of them!!

One resolution that I am determined to keep this year however, is to try something new. I am not sure yet what it should be but with the tremendous array of opportunities available within our interest groups, apart from the activities that are on offer from the wider U3A, I am spoiled for choice.

If like me you fancy taking up a new interest in the New Year can I recommend our website as a good place to start. Details of all our groups are published there, with the group leader's name. Details of events and activities organised by the' [Deeside and Wirral U3A Network](#)' and the '[U3A North West Region](#)' are reported in our Newsletter and both of these organisations have their own website (just press control as you click on these names for the link). When you get your issue of 'Third Age Matters' you will find even more opportunities available. All of these activities are open to all members of our U3A so you are guaranteed to find something to tickle your fancy.

Colin Burkitt

Chairman

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## LUNCH CIRCLE

The next meeting will be on January 19<sup>th</sup> 2016 at

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

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## **MEETINGS and SPEAKERS**

7<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – Mike Benton presents ‘Call my Bluff ‘

21<sup>st</sup> January 2016 – Terry McCoy talks about Phobias

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## **SOCIAL OUTINGS**

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

### **SOCIAL OUTINGS**

#### **REMINDERS**

Wednesday 27 January 2016 - Liverpool Medical Institution Tour  
114 Mount Pleasant  
Liverpool L3 5SR  
(Around corner from Everyman Theatre)

#### **Reserve List only**

Morning tour Arrive 10.40am TOUR 11.00 am to 12.00 noon

12.00 noon LUNCH FOR BOTH TOURS

Afternoon tour Arrive for lunch @12.00 noon  
TOUR 1.15 pm to 2.15 pm

**N.B Anyone going on the Afternoon tour who would like a morning tour of Garstang Museum MUST advise us beforehand.**

#### **EVENTS - NOW BOOKING**

Thursday 25 February 2016 Guided Tour of Liverpool Town Hall 11.00 am to 12.00 noon  
£3.00 (Meet at Town Hall at 10.45am)

Friday 11 March 2016 Hope Street Shivers Ghost Tour Approx start time 5.45pm  
Ghost Tour cost £15 max followed by a meal at nearby restaurant

#### **THEATRE**

#### **REMINDERS**

Wednesday 17 February 2016 MATTHEW BOURNE'S Sleeping Beauty  
Liverpool Empire Matinee  
**Collect tickets and meet @ Theatre**

#### **NOW BOOKING**

Tuesday 9 February 2016 Madam Bovary (Evening performance)  
Liverpool Everyman Tickets £12  
**N.B Tickets available 7 January meeting ONLY!!**

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# **WALKING GROUP**

## **WALK CHESTER WALLS AND WATER – FRIDAY 15TH JANUARY 2016**

A winter's walk of about 4 miles around the walls of Chester and along the towpath of the Ellesmere canal. The walking is all on surfaced paths, relatively flat but a few sets of steps on the walls.

Meet at the ticket barrier in Chester station at 11am, trains from Hamilton Square at 09-59, 10-05 or 10-20, 2 minutes later from Birkenhead Central. Lunch will be in the Little Owl pub then walking to Bache Station (10 minutes) to get the train home.

Put your name down on the list available in the Church Hall 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016

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## **GROUP NEWS**

### **German Conversation**

As always, the group is quite delightful, although small, but that is good as we can all have a stab at conversation interspersed every so often with some grammar.

Different members of the group are taking it in turn to prepare something for the fortnightly meetings; much fun is had as well.

If you are fairly proficient in the language you are most welcome to come and join us. Watch the Interest Boards for information or see me about it. We meet again on January 11th 2016.

Jutta Hesketh

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### **Spanish Conversation**

This is a new group that will start on January 18<sup>th</sup> 2016, we will meet once a month at 39, Farndon Way for a coffee or tea at 10.30 am. It is definitely for those members of the U3A who are fairly fluent in the language.

If you are interested in joining us, please speak to Jutta or Brian Gill.

Jutta Hesketh

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### **History of Arts Group**

We have had another eventful term. In August we visited the Tate Gallery where Lee Kendall, one of their excellent visitor curators, first introduced us to a video of Jackson Pollock's art. He was very informative and clear about the work that this artist had presented to the world, a shock too many at that time, although now it is much more understandable. The colours and the movement in his paintings, which we were able to appreciate when we went around the exhibition itself, were quite thrilling. At times one felt like dancing to jazz music as we looked at the panels on the walls.

Colours were vibrant, one felt that Pollock had not just strewn paint all over but that there was definitely a pattern and a message that he was trying to convey to the world. We were indeed fortunate that the Tate had been able to gather together so many of Pollock's works.

"Reading" some of the painting and being guided by such an expert, was an absolute delight.

This visit was followed in September by going to The Lady Lever Gallery where a small but interesting exhibition of paintings and photographs of Venice was showing. It was again an informative morning, Charlotte Keenan, an expert on Walter Sickert, gave us a talk as we viewed some of the varied works.

In October we met again in the Sessions Room at Trinity; Bernadette talked about Mathis Grunewald's Isenheim Altarpiece at Colmar which was such an inspiration behind Pablo Picasso's Guernica Mural; it was only after Franco's death that it was housed in the Sofia extension to the Prado Museum in Madrid. Jutta explained the Mural and pointed out how strong the influence of Grunewald and the horrors of the Spanish Civil War were behind Picasso's masterpiece.

Grunewald's influence on many other artists was indeed great, some of the notable of the crucifixions that have been painted since are by El Greco, Mark Chagall, even by Salvador Dali.

Bernadette's knowledge of Grunewald and the Renaissance is extensive. The morning passed all too soon.

November was an interesting change as we visited the Walker Art Gallery to view the Reality show. Again, one of their curators who had helped put this exhibition together explained to us in detail various paintings. It was a morning that, to me, was incredibly interesting.

We have planned an extensive programme for this term. Starting with a visit to The Williamson Art Gallery where the Chief Officer for Wirral Museums, Colin Simpson, will take us round.

Jutta Hesketh

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The second in our series of short stories written by members of our Creative Writing Group, this one is by Val Noble

### The Perfect Wife

(A modern fairy tale loosely based on *The Princess and the Pea*)

Once upon a time there was a handsome young man who lived near the city of Oslo in Norway. His name was Bjørn and he lived with his mother, Kirsten, in a beautiful house overlooking the fjord. His father had died many years before when Bjørn was twelve years old and over the years he had become ever closer and more admiring of his mother.

"It is time you found a wife, Bjørn," Kirsten would say as they sat together on the veranda in the summer sunshine, admiring the yachts in the distance on the fjord.

"How could I ever find a wife who was as perfect as you?" Bjørn would reply as they sat together in front of the log fire on winter evenings.

Although this obviously pleased Kirsten, she knew that one day she would also die and she did not want her son to grow old alone, with no children to put joy in his heart. There had been many girlfriends over the years – girls who worked with him in the huge, towering office block near the royal palace in Karl Johansgate, girls from the gym, girls from the sailing club and daughters of friends of hers. There had been Ingrid, Anne, Kari and finally Solveig. Bjørn's mother had liked

them all; especially Solveig whom she thought was a perfect match for her discerning son. Bjørn was always kind, but honest; when he broke the news to each one that he felt it was time for them to part.

One evening in December, as the snow fell gently outside, Kirsten decided to ask her son what he was looking for in a perfect wife. Bjørn smiled at his mother as he stretched his long legs towards the fire and rubbed his thick woollen socks together.

“It’s simple, Mama,” he said. “She needs to be beautiful inside and out, just like you. She must be able to cook fiskeboller and bløtkake, just like you. Sew Hardanger like you. Knit beautiful woollen socks like you. She needs to be able to sing like you. She needs to be able to ski at full speed through the woods like you. She needs to be able to ice fish like you. She needs to be able to grow beautiful flowers like you. I could go on. You have so many wonderful skills and gifts – I want to find someone just like you.”

This was quite a speech and Kirsten smiled gently at her misguided son. Apart from all her obvious gifts and talents, she was also wise and she knew that Bjørn was never going to find what he was looking for, because he was looking for the wrong things. Kirsten knew that true love did not depend on a shopping list and that no-one was perfect, not even her!

As her long, sensitive fingers continued the intricate embroidery; she enjoyed the warmth of the fire, the soft light of the candles dotted around the colourful room with its wood panelling, rag rugs and traditional music softly playing on the radio. “I am so lucky,” she thought. “But Bjørn needs to find his soulmate, just as I found his father all those years ago.”

Bjørn stood up and stretched, ruffling his blonde hair absentmindedly. He poured some milk into the saucepan as he did most nights to make their bedtime drink. “The wind’s getting up,” he observed walking to the window to check the thermometer. “its twenty degrees below and a blizzard out there.”

“Put on the television – it’s almost time for the weather forecast,” suggested his mother. They watched the bulletin which confirmed that the harsh weather was set in for the night. Bjørn went to lock the front door just as someone rang the bell repeatedly. He opened the door to see a tall, dark man leaning heavily on the veranda. He was dressed in hunting gear, with his rifle slung over his shoulder, but was panting in pain.

“Are you ok?” asked Bjørn. “Can I help you inside?”

As the man turned nodding silently, Bjørn was transfixed by his piercing ice-blue eyes. He allowed Bjørn and his mother to support him as he hopped in and managed to flop down on the sofa after removing his rifle.

“I was hunting fallow deer in the forest behind your house, but I tripped on a root and I think I have sprained my ankle. It’s bitter cold and it has taken me hours to get here. I was so relieved to see the lights of your house at last.”

As Kirsten began to unlace his boots, she noticed the look that passed between this young stranger and her son. “I wonder if he can knit?” she mused.

Val Noble November2015

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## NEW YEAR THOUGHTS

A whole New Year ahead! I shall refrain from wishing that it be a happy one because happiness depends entirely upon what happens. We can do better than that. We all know that in any given year there will be good happenings and bad happenings, (however we define them!). I don't know about you but I do not want my inner state to be entirely dependent upon events and circumstances. Let us suppose that, in spite of what happens, we can remain calm, understanding, compassionate, integrated, discerning and wise. Now I have no hesitation in wishing all of these to anyone who would be glad to be the recipient. I am certainly wishing them for myself.

I shall also refrain from greeting the New Year with a package of resolutions or even just one. I know enough about the psyche to be aware that anything we resolve, affirm or determine verbally, in the conscious mind, will immediately instigate a non verbal counter-current somewhere in the subconscious psyche and generally speaking, in any internal struggle, the subconscious wins. But I do honestly want to improve and to encourage improvement I refer myself to the above list of qualities, particularly that of wisdom, which I define as the ability to gain meaning from and make sense of experience; and indeed, to meet events that have yet to come with wisdom already gained, if I can remember where I put it. In the Christian story the Wise Men don't turn up until The sixth of January. For us the winter is really setting in by then and we cannot hope for any real improvement for a few weeks. It's a good time, in those dark, cold days, to honour wisdom; however we might come by it.

So we have a whole year ahead, full of whatever has yet to unfold and much of which will be entirely beyond our control but we do have a choice in how we meet it. Few in their right minds would seek or welcome the difficulties that can unexpectedly occur but it is through them that we become more human, and more humane, qualities needed on a global scale in the year now unfolding.

It is usual to make predictions in early January. It is a bold soul who falls into that trap but dare we predict that, as things stand and the way they are going, Oxton and Prenton U3A will be with us, together with the enormous benefits it bestows, throughout the year ahead. And if this is the case, I dare predict that I, for one, will be very grateful.

Brian Gill      January 2016

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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](mailto:newsletter@oxtonu3a.co.uk) and I will be more than happy to put it into our next newsletter, closing date is usually around 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. I am more than happy to run a 'Letters to the Editor' page, why not send me your contribution?

I would like to say a big THANK YOU to everyone who takes the time to email me and say how much they enjoy the Newsletter. It makes it all so worthwhile and to know so many of you actually read it gives me huge satisfaction. I so enjoy doing it anyway and to know it is appreciated is wonderful. May I wish you all a VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR and hope that 2016 will be good for everyone.

Sandra Lakin

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## **XMAS WALK DECEMBER 2015**

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December saw over 30 walkers set off on the annual Christmas walk, this year it was lead by Colin who took them up and over Bidston Hill. Unlike previous years it was neither wet, nor snowy, nor icy and the temperature was in double figures.

Judging by the laughter, camaraderie and fun during the shared lunch afterwards, a good time was had by all.



**TWO LIKELY LADS IN FESTIVE GEAR**



**SOME OF THE KITCHEN STAFF !!**



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## **XMAS LUNCH 2015**

I am sure you understand why I start this with a HUGE THANK YOU to Barbara Winstanley for yet another wonderful XMAS LUNCH and also to the staff at Wirral Ladies Golf Club for their hard work. I thoroughly enjoyed the day and it was so good to see so many of our members (106 of them) get together to celebrate this special time of the year. Thank you too to Gwyneth who took the time to take a few photographs of the day, and to the Craft Club who I understand made the beautiful decorations that adorned the prizes. A great time was had by so many members. Good to see you all there. I won't say a word about the three wise men, the photographs speak for themselves.

**THANK YOU ALL, EACH AND EVERYONE OF YOU**



Well deserved prize for Carol

Our very own NOT so Wise Men



Where did you get that hat Colin?

More of our Members

