



FEBRUARY 2016
NEWSLETTER



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Help us to help you help each other!!

Last year, for the first time, we held a coffee morning with the intention of making the opportunities for members involvement in the running of our U3A more transparent and easier to access. The coffee morning proved very popular and over 20 members attended, many of whom offered their time and expertise to help. This year we will be doing the same on Tuesday 1st March. Details of the coffee morning, when they are finalised, will be sent to you and I strongly encourage all members to come along and hear about how you can help us, to help each other and make our U3A even better than it already is.

Colin Burkitt

Chairman

LUNCH CIRCLE

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 16th February
12-15 for 12-30 at the Caernarvon Castle, Bidston Road

MEETINGS and SPEAKERS

Thursday 4th February 10-00 am – Social Morning. Come and find out more about our Groups

Thursday 18th February 10-00 am – The speaker will be Derek Arnold – Nautical Terms

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

SOCIAL OUTINGS

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

Tuesday 9 February 2016 Madam Bovary (Evening performance)
Liverpool Everyman Tickets £12
Collect tickets and meet at theatre

Wednesday 17 February 2016 MATTHEW BOURNE'S Sleeping Beauty
Liverpool Empire Matinee
Collect tickets and meet at theatre

SOCIAL MEETING THURSDAY 4th FEBRUARY 10-00 am

On Thursday 4th February we are going to show you some of the wonderful things that happen in the Oxtou and Prenton U3A.

So please come and see displays and presentations - everything from Art Appreciation to Psychology and hear about proposed new groups.

We know that many of you belong to groups but at the beginning of a new year we hope to give you new ideas and encourage you to try something different for 2016.

Judith Whaley

Groups Co-ordinator

GROUP NEWS

The German conversation group meets twice a month at Jutta's house and thanks to her we have all improved immensely. We have five regular members and a couple who come when they can. Occasionally we do grammar exercises but it is mostly conversation and we only speak English when absolutely necessary. Denglish comes in very handy and if we can't find the right German word, we invent one - as simple as that. The atmosphere is very friendly and we find much to talk and laugh about. So if anyone wishes to brush up their German and have fun at the same time, they would be very welcome.

Gill McCloy



WALKING GROUP

FRIDAY 19th FEBRUARY 2016 10-30 am

The days are still short and who knows how wet it will still be, so this is a 4/5 mile walk (depending on tides) on a mixture of sand dunes, boardwalk, tarmac paths and golf course paths from Hoylake to the dead centre of West Kirby and back crossing two golf courses. There will be 1 railway bridge to cross over, 1 hill up and 1 hill down but these are on footpaths with a few concrete steps. If you are coming by train or bus meet in the station car park in Carr Lane, Hoylake. If you are coming by car, you can park in the Green Lodge car park, Kings Gap and walk straight up to and over the railway line to the station car park. Meet at Station Car Park 10-30 am. Lunch is at The Green Lodge, Kings Gap, Hoylake at 1-00 pm.

Please put your name down on the list and indicate if you are staying for lunch.

Sandra & Chris Lakin

SHORT STORIES

The third in our series of short stories written by members of our Creative Writing Group is actually two for the price of one. Hope you enjoy reading Eliane's short stories as much as I did. Thank you Eliane.

DAWN

Her eyes flickered open briefly as she became aware of the moonlight through the open window throwing its eerie light across the room. For a moment she was unable to recognise her surroundings, then the sound of waves lapping clicked, and she realised that she was lying in bed in the beach hut. Still half asleep she turned over, reaching for the comfort of Jack's body but -- the place, *his* place was empty; just a cold void.

Suddenly, wide awake, she screamed silently as her loss hit her yet again. Pain, loneliness, anger all suffused her being as tears flowed freely across her face. Nausea swept over her gripping her stomach in a vice like knot.

His death had been truly shocking; sudden and unexpected. They had had no intimation of the time bomb his heart had become. All their plans for their family yet to be born, all the memories that were to be their life together – gone in minutes; he was only thirty four.

Marie clutched the duvet to her tightly. Coming to their special place, the beach hut, which they had purchased only months ago as a place to relax away from work, where their children might one day spend happy summer days, had seemed like a good move yesterday. As with so many of her actions over recent months it was proving a mistake.

Sleep impossible now, Marie dragged on a pair of jeans and a warm sweater then stepped out onto the beach, feeling the wet sand under her bare feet as she reached the water's edge. She walked a little way oblivious to the night's chill, deep in her thoughts. Despair gripped her; she felt no wish to live without her Jack, her soul mate. The gentle silvery waves pulled her hypnotically towards their depths and as she started to wade into deeper water she imagined Jack coming to meet her.

The silvery moonlight was being replaced by the first stirring of dawn. On the horizon streaks of light were breaking through; purple, navy, pinks mixed with the gold of the rising sun. Marie stopped, suddenly aware that she was soaked to the waist. She stood quietly, as the waves washed around her, marvelling as the daily miracle of dawn happened. Quite quickly the colours rose in the sky and the light washed the darkness of night away. Jack used to say that dawn was his favourite time of day; she had laughed and said that she would sooner be in bed, but now.....

In the distance she heard a dog bark; soon there would be others out for their early morning walk. She turned and paddled towards the shore then turned back to the horizon, and as she saw the now fully risen sun, she felt the beginnings of a fresh dawn within herself. Life *would* continue as did nature and although Jack would always remain in her heart, little by little the loving memories that they had shared would help her find joy again. Bereft as she was, a glimmer of light had touched her and she could almost hear Jack's voice, "Be happy for both of us!"

As Marie headed back to the beach hut, waving as she passed a women being taken for a walk by a very large Labrador, she reflected that this was a daybreak that would remain with her forever.

Eliane Davie Oct 2015

THE SECRET

"I'll get it " Connie had assumed ownership of the phone as usual; at sixteen her social life seemed to revolve around it. Joan smiled to herself wondering if she would ever regain control if any of the electrical devices in her home; internet, I-pad, phone, TV all seemed to have been commandeered by her brood! At least Joe, at fourteen her youngest child, spent a large part of his spare time when not playing computer games, outside kicking a football!

"It's Jane!" Connie's voice rose slightly "She wants to know whether she can bring a friend home to stay next weekend? It's a chap – she sounds quite keen on him."

Joan thought quickly; it would be a bit of a bind really. She had been looking forward to having some one-to-one time with her eldest daughter; a rare treat now that she was at uni. Still she supposed she ought to be pleased that the children liked to bring their friends home. "Oh tell her yes – I'll call her later to make arrangements. She'll have to double up with you; her friend can take her room." Checking her watch Joan saw that Michael would shortly be leaving his office to start the half hour drive home from Worcester where he worked as an accountant. The evening meal was already underway and after asking Connie to lay the table, Joan hurried upstairs to slip on a fresh top and brush her hair. It was not long before she heard the sound of tyres on the gravel outside.

Michael walked in with a smile on his face; an important meeting today had gone well. Even after twenty four years Joan still felt a lift when he came home and she knew it to be mutual. They both still felt happiest in each other's company. A quarter of an hour later as they sat eating dinner and chatting generally, Connie piped up "Dad Jane's bringing a MAN home next weekend!"

Joan frowned slightly, having meant to break the news gently as they relaxed after dinner. "I said it would probably be okay – she hasn't asked before so it would be churlish to refuse She can double up with Connie; I thought he could have her room."

"HE," smiled Michael, "Interesting – I hope I approve! Don't want to lose one of my little girls just yet!" he winked at his younger daughter.

Later, speaking to Jane on her mobile, Joan learned that her friend was also a final year student at Bristol, studying architecture and, at twenty four, was two years older than Jane. Joan thought that her daughter sounded happy.

There was a ring of the doorbell; Joan hurried to open the door to her first born child.

“Lovely to see you all – I’ve missed you! This is Ken; he’s dying to meet you all! He’s an only child so don’t overwhelm him.” Jane’s eyes had a sparkle her Mother noted. She looked a picture of health and happiness; something certainly agreed with her!

Ken proved to be a great success with everyone; he had a natural charm and a great sense of humour. Both Joe and Connie were on their best behaviour, competing with each other for his attention while Michael seemed to find him excellent company. He made a point of chatting to each member of the family at length and treated Joan with chivalrous charm. Jane confided to her Mother that her feelings for him were getting quite strong and while Joan cautioned her on rushing into a serious relationship quickly, she secretly mused that her daughter could do much worse.

Sunday morning arrived all too soon for Jane; they were to return to Bristol that night. The couple decided to go for a short walk after lunch and as the others sat down they reflected on the success of the weekend. Michael squeezed his wife’s hand. “Well done darling, I think you did us proud and what a nice chap he is.

“You know why she’s drawn to him Dad?” Connie spoke thoughtfully, “He’s very like you; looks, personality....”

I hadn’t thought of that,” chimed Joe, “but yes he is!” A bit taller and darker haired than you but there’s certainly a similarity. Coming for a game on the play station Connie? She nodded her agreement.

Joan looked at her husband and suddenly realised the truth in what they were saying. Yes, he was extraordinarily like the Michael she remembered from their courting days. Smiling, she said “Well if he’s like your Father right through then she’s a very lucky girl! It will probably be someone else next term though!” Laughing Joe and Connie made for the den.

Ken and Jane returned from their walk and Joan went into the kitchen to put the kettle on. While Jane went upstairs to put her belongings together for their return to Bristol, Michael chatted to Ken. “Where do your family live, Ken?” he ventured. He realised that they really knew very little about Ken’s family and remarked that they didn’t even know their names.

“Oh I’m sorry but that is easily remedied. My parents are called Pam and David Heywood and they live on The Wirral. Actually they did suggest that as you have been so kind as to put up with me perhaps you might like to visit us during the summer?”

At that minute Joan came in with the tea tray just in time to hear Ken, “How very kind of them but it would be difficult with the younger ones – still I’m sure Jane would love to.” Glancing at her husband she became aware that he was as white as a sheet and looked quite ill. What could have happened?

“Did Jane say that you are an only child?” Even to Michael his own voice sounded strange. Joan watched his face, puzzled by an expression she did not recognise; for some reason she felt uneasy.

Would you mind going upstairs to hurry Jane up with her packing and to tell her that tea will be ready shortly, please Ken?” Joan tried to keep herself sounding normal.

“Of course, Mrs Wade – and yes, I am an only child; my parents struggled to have children and had to resort to IVF eventually, so wasn’t I the lucky one?” he grinned walking swiftly towards the stairs.

“What on earth is wrong with you Michael; you look as if you’d seen a ghost?” sitting beside him Joan took his hand.

“Oh God darling, it’s a very long shot but I think that I may be the father of that boy – it was so long ago when I was a student at Liverpool and we were asked to donate sperm for IVF purposes. IVF was in the early stages then and we were told that there would be no repercussions as it would be anonymous - we were offered a bit of cash and being perennially broke as students it seemed a harmless way to help science.....” His voice trailed away and Joan stared at him.

“You never told me about this! What are we going to say to Jane, she’s falling in love with him? Oh Mike it’s so unlikely, it would have to be a chance in a million! Apart from the fact that his family live quite near to Liverpool and Ken was conceived with IVF what makes you feel that you were the donor?”

“Because of the likeness that you all noticed, because I was told that the sperm would be going to a couple from a similar background, his age would tally with the period I donated, the fact that they live on The Wirral and would almost certainly have received the sperm from Liverpool,,,” Michael’s face betrayed his concern.

“I still think it would have to be amazingly unlikely but I suppose there is always going to be a slight risk of something like that happening.”

“Like what happening?” Jane and Ken had entered the room unnoticed.

Joan glanced at her husband. “Sit down – do you take milk Ken?” She poured tea as she gathered her thoughts. “We’d better tell them Michael – after talking to you Ken, we think that there may be a very SMALL chance that Michael could have been the donor for the IVF your parents had!” There it had been said! Joan felt her hands shaking. “We realise that it will come as a terrible shock to you both as it has been to us. Probably the best way forward would be for you to speak to your parents to see if they would be agreeable to both Ken and Mike having DNA tests to check whether it could be true that Mike is your biological father. Obviously Dave is your true father but it would make a difference to the relationship between you and Jane.”

Silence ----- then gasps as Connie and Joe walked in looking for their cups of tea and halted as they felt the electric atmosphere in the room! Jane was trying not to cry as she related to then the gist of the news that she was still trying to absorb. Ken looked totally shocked, then Connie, outspoken as always burst out with: “You could be our brother – wow that would be great!”

Twelve months later as Joan and Michael sat by the fire, remembering the weekend which was to affect their lives forever, Joan suddenly mused, “I never understood why you didn’t tell me about your IVF donations –you told me most things! Doesn’t it bother you that there could be quite a few other little Michaels knocking round the country that you’ll never know about?”

“But that’s the point,” responded Michael, “I didn’t think it would ever happen – that I would ever get to know any of them!”

“Well we were amazingly lucky that Ken proved so likeable and that all the kids responded positively even though it took poor Jane some time to come to terms with the loss of her beau. They’ll keep in touch and he’ll be a sort of honorary brother.” Joan sighed.

Hopefully no more secrets to come jumping out of the woodpile – I never want to go through that trauma again!” The remark came from the heart as Michael gave the fire a good prod with the poker.

Eliane Davie Dec 2014

CHESTER WALK JANUARY 2016



The U3A movement is the only national educational organisation in the UK run entirely by its own members and one of its principles is **The Self-help Learning Principle** whereby members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire; by the members, for the members. No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards. There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; they are all U3A members. **Joining a Group** is a wonderful way of meeting people, making new friends whilst at the same time learning new things for our own enjoyment. We look forward to seeing you on 4th February when you can find out more about our special interest groups.



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

I don't know how many of you have accessed the Head Office website of the organisation to which all local U3A's have membership. It is an absolute mine of information about the U3A movement and its aims, principles, and activities.

There is a link to the website if you click on the above logo it will take you directly to their website, I am sure you will find it very interesting. Amongst other things it gives information about local workshops, the first one of 2016 is ;

First and second workshops of the National Workshop Series 2016 coming up in February in
MANCHESTER & BELFAST

Are you a Group Leader / Convener / Co-Ordinator?

If not, please forward this email to the ones in your U3A

Participative Learning

Dates: 2nd February in Manchester, 16th February in Belfast

Time 10.00am - 3.30pm

Tickets no charge

Manchester: Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street M2 5NS

Belfast: BCM Grosvenor House, 5 Glengall Street BT12 5AD

Participative Learning - (February, March)

This full day workshop builds on the very popular Participative Learning workshop at the National Conference in Nottingham. It will include an interactive presentation and a series of exploratory planning activities. The main supporting document will be More Time to Learn.

Possible audience: all U3A members but of particular interest to those who run Interest groups or those who co-ordinate their U3A's Interest groups.

The website will also have further information about residential summer schools. The usual pattern of summer school is arrival on Monday afternoon with an introductory seminar before dinner, approximately 5 hours of seminars on both the Tuesday and Wednesday and 3 hours on the final morning, with plenty of breaks and opportunities for socialising with U3A members from all over the UK. They are a wonderful example of self-help learning with all the tutors being U3A members, giving up their time to provide attendees with an enjoyable and participatory learning experience. There are many subjects to choose from. This year they will be held at Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester. School one 8-11 August, school two 15-18 August.

Those of you who were at our meeting on January 21st will recall that the speaker we had booked failed to turn up. Catastrophe!!! That is until Brian Gill stepped into the breach and spoke to us of his experiences. Thank you Brian you were serendipitous! His newsletter articles aren't bad either! I for one look forward to reading them, so here's what he has to say about February;

FEBRUARY

February is not the most popular month of the year. Many escape to warmer climes if possible. There is a particular day in the month, I don't remember the date, which is statistically proved to be the least benign of the year but U3A goes on regardless, as does life in general.

The second day of the month sees the official end of Christmas with the festival of Candlemas: a good time to take down any remaining decorations! It is also The Celtic festival of Imbolc, linked to the lactation of ewes and the promise this brings at a time of darkness and cold. These two festivals celebrate in common the ability, in the least promising conditions, to give birth to new life and conscious awareness.

So if you are feeling a bit 'fed up', remember there is such a thing as 'divine discontent': an urge to throw off limitation and restriction and explore a new season of unrealized potential.

This need not involve long haul flights, moving house or other extravagant gestures. It could be as easy as joining a U3A group that allows you to experience yourself in a different perspective. It has been suggested that if we wish to ward off the onset of mental deterioration, using the mind might not be enough, using it *differently*, together with all available faculties, might be a more viable solution.

Brian Gill

TEA ROTA FOR THE NEXT 4 MEETINGS

4 th February 2016	Valerie Edwards	Doreen Alig	Steve Cottam
18 th February 2016	Margaret Cullen	Paul Cullen	Judith Wylie
3 rd March 2016	Rosemary Holden	Mary Potter	Sandy Anderson
17 th March 2016	Ann Hillier	Chris Lakin	Gwyn Thomas

Please ring me (Joan Benton) on 608 6226 if you are unable to do a duty.

Finally..... I would like to remind you all that our Chairman, Colin, is holding a special coffee morning on Tuesday 1st March at Trinity with Palm Grove, many of you will remember that he held a similar get together last March with the idea that any member who is interested can come along and find out what being a member of our committee entails. The aim is to get more people interested and involved with the work of the committee, and maybe encourage more members to stand for election to the committee. It is essential that your Committee evolves and changes with new members bringing new thoughts and ideas so why not come along and meet your committee and find out?

Sandra Lakin