



## **NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2016**



### **CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE**

It always feels strange sitting down in the middle of November writing my piece for the Newsletter that will cover the Christmas and New Year period. It still seems a very long time until Christmas. In my usual way I have not even thought about Christmas presents and cards, let alone been out shopping for them. I need not worry though because I am reminded daily by the displays that have been in the shops since mid August and the constant adverts on television for chocolates and dubiously expensive alcoholic beverages.

It is often said that Christmas is for the children, and that is right and proper to a point, but we all need the opportunity to enjoy the festive season in our own way. For me there are a few small rituals that make my Christmas. Our U3A Christmas walk, where the emphasis is on the social aspect of walking and the walk itself tends to be incidental. There is our U3A Christmas dinner which gets bigger and better every year, and finally the Christmas edition of the Radio Times and a highlighter pen. For us Christmas day with the family will be great fun but I also look forward to getting out in the cold bright sunny weather of Boxing Day.

I hope that wherever you are, and whoever you are with this Christmas, that you have a really good few days of festivities. I look forward to sharing a glass or two with many of you in the weeks before the holiday break. Most of all I hope to see you all in the New Year refreshed and ready for another fabulous year at Oxton and Prenton U3A.

Colin Burkitt

Chairman

PS. I must remember to get that present and card!!



## **LUNCH CIRCLE**

There is no meeting of the lunch circle in December, the next one is;

Tuesday January 17<sup>th</sup> 12-00 for 12-30

THE REFRESHMENT ROOMS

NEW FERRY



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## **MEETINGS and SPEAKERS**

8<sup>th</sup> December 2016 – John Donoghue ‘The Holocaust in a Game of Chess’

PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO BRING YOUR DONATIONS FOR THE CHARLES THOMPSON MISSION

There is a short break until the New Year then.....

5<sup>th</sup> January 2017 - ‘Do you know what this is Quiz?’

19<sup>th</sup> January 2017 – ‘Moros Christians: A Spanish Celebration of Two Disparate Cultures’

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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)

### **THEATRE**

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016      THE NUTCRACKER English National Ballet  
Liverpool Empire 2.30 pm Tickets £21.50  
Tickets available for collection now

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017      CYRANO  
Liverpool Playhouse 7.30 pm

### **SOCIAL**

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016      CHRISTMAS LUNCH  
Wirral Ladies Golf Club 12.00 for 12.30 pm  
£24-00 per head

**\*\*MENU CHOICES & BALANCE OF PAYMENT\*\***  
**\*\*ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL NOW !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!\*\***

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017      Heritage Tour at the Royal Court Theatre  
2-00 pm start and it lasts 1 ½ hours £5-00  
FULL- RESERVE LIST ONLY

**PLEASE ALSO REMEMBER THERE WILL BE REPLACEMENT BUSES BECAUSE OF NO RAIL SERVICES SO PLEASE ALLOW SUFFICIENT TIME FOR YOUR JOURNEY**

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017      Meet 10-15 a.m Bus Stop Liverpool t.b.a.  
Morning Tour of Princes Road Synagogue Liverpool £7-00  
Followed by afternoon tour of Anglican Cathedral £3-00  
Plus optional lunch

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## **WALKING GROUP**

Our annual Christmas Walk will take place on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December.

We meet at Carol & Colin's house for the start of our festive walk, please sign up for this and liaise with Carol regarding food supplies

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### **BRIAN'S THOUGHTS**

With Halloween and Bonfire Night behind us we can now address the serious issue of the feast of lights that is the Winter Solstice or more traditionally 'Christmas', but of course in a multi-cultural society it is sometime useful to refer to things by names that we can all relate to. Whatever one's belief system might be, from reductionist scientism to something devoutly spiritual, we all experience the solstice and the fact that the year, for us, is at its darkest. This is less inconvenient for most than it used to be, though paying the fuel bills might hurt a bit. With the coming of electric light we are now in a position to cheat the darkness that brought about significant changes to our behaviour until quite recently and of course the further north we go the less actual daylight we have at our disposal. Sunrise and sunset are the same event in some countries and no amount of electricity can ever compensate for such a significant loss of daylight.

At one time I lived in the City of London and before sunrise caught the underground each day to Oxford Circus where I worked under Regent Street until returning home after dark. If I appear to behave a little strangely sometimes this severe daylight deprivation, though long ago, might offer a viable explanation. There might well have been some neuronal trauma. My younger brother, who lives in Derbyshire, warns me to be careful, should I have occasion to encounter people who live on the left-hand side of a certain valley, as they never get any direct sunlight and can be a bit 'strange'. And of course current medical and psychiatric practice now acknowledges that we do need a certain amount of daylight in order to be in good health. Electric light cannot entirely meet our needs.

Conversely we also need the darkness and I would contend that we suffer psychologically from darkness deprivation. For many of us it is never properly dark and the psyche suffers. At these latitudes we have a deep inner need to be able to shut down and allow nature to work quietly beneath the surface; and if we refuse to do this voluntarily there is many a virus out there ready to come and do the job for us. In such an event we have no choice but to 'get off at the next stop' and let the whole festive vehicle carry on without us.

When I was a child my mother took me to the Midland Drapery in Derby every December. There one could make a mysterious journey through foreign lands and arrive at Santa's Grotto. The journey was accomplished by sitting with others in a vibrating box past the windows of which rotated a tired depiction of palm trees, a camel and a pyramid or two. I was not fooled. The constant repetition of the same scene robbed it of any pretence to realism and of course, even at five or six I was aware that the way to Santa was unlikely to take one via Egypt. Even so I always looked forward to the journey; pathetic as it was I knew that it had enormous potential. There was a sort of truth there after all. Christmas is a bit like that. We are all in it together being driven by events and circumstances over which we have little or no control with the same scenes flying through our heads every year, at the end of which is an intrusively familiar tussle with Santa Clause, in the form of presents, food and false humour. But one can also make one's own journey. There are dimensions yet beyond the reach of commercialism and the 'grand narratives' that can be both expensive and exhausting. The solstice is indeed a special time with plenty of potential yet to be realised and it can all be done without setting a foot out of doors.

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**TEA ROTA FOR DECEMBER 2016- JANUARY 2017**

|                               |               |                |                     |
|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 8 <sup>TH</sup> December      | Rowan Bligh   | Eliane Davie   | Bernadette Hamilton |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> January 2017  | Chris Lakin   | Sandy Anderson | Mary Potter         |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> January 2017 | Greig Roberts | John Roberts   | Judith Wheat        |

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

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**VISIT TO THE OLD DOCK LIVERPOOL 1ST NOVEMBER 2016**

We met at the Maritime museum and were introduced to our guides Danny and John. After a Health and Safety talk about crossing the Strand, we proceeded on our tour. We were shown the ponds representing the oceans and the grey tiles symbolising the creek. William Hutchinson was appointed dock master and he started keeping detailed tide and weather records. The earliest continuous set of tidal records and was still being used up to the 1970s.

We then went down to view the dock. A modern bridge and walkway gave a grandstand view. There is a bricked up ancient tunnel, believed to be years older than the dock and leading up to Liverpool Castle.



The Old Dock was originally known as Thomas Steers and was the world's first commercial wet dock. Started in 1710 and completed in 1716. A natural tidal pool was partially filled and locked in from the river with quay walls erected.

The Old Dock was built at a cost of £11,000 and could accommodate up to 100 ships. Originally a tidal basin was accessed directly from the river. The dock had one graving dock. The dock walls were constructed of brick laid directly on to

sandstone bedrock.

In the early 19th century the dock was considered too small for the growing size of the ships. The quays were too narrow. The city's sewage polluted the dock's water and the narrow wooden drawbridge across the entrance channel caused traffic jams. The Old Dock closed in 1826 and the custom house was built over the Dock.

The Old Dock was discovered during excavations in 2001 after being buried since 1826.

A very interesting tour, led by two very enthusiastic guides.



**Colin Stredder**

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# U3A SHORT COURSE - A HISTORY OF CARTOONS

## HESWALL HALL

This is a series of 3 x 2 hour lectures to be given by Ian Barclay,

16th February 2017 10.00am – 12noon

2nd March 2017 10.00am – 12noon

16th March 2017 10.00am – 12noon

£10 for the 3 sessions.

The first session deals with Art, Drawing, Cartoon Creation, and the Early History of Cartoons.

The second session covers Modern Day Cartoons and the Influence of Cartoons.

The third session focuses on Commerce & Communication and The Best of The Breed.

For further information or booking please contact Tricia Harrison at ;  
[tricia.m.harrison@btinternet.com](mailto:tricia.m.harrison@btinternet.com) or 334 6085

***This course is open to all current U3A Members***

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## A Halloween Tale by Val Noble

As the long, dark street stretched ahead of her, Alice was uneasy. Straggly clouds sped past blocking out the watery moonlight and the gale seemed to be trying to push her back towards the lights of the town centre. She was determined to get home though. As she remembered what James had said, her unease was replaced with anger and hurt.

Who did he think he was? How dare he accuse her of two-timing him? He was the one with a track record in that department.

As she battled her way towards home, she could hear her mother's voice . . . 'Never walk home on your own, pet. It's not safe in daylight, never mind in the dark. James has to walk you home, or ring me and I'll come and collect you.'

Until a year ago it would have been Dad who came out to pick her from parties or cinema visits, but he had left to set up home with his new girlfriend, leaving her mother heartbroken and Alice distraught. She tensed as she could hear voices coming from a side street ahead. What should she do? Carry on, or turn back and try to find a phone. Her mobile battery was flat – Mum would give her a hard time about that, but she had set out with James that evening expecting him to walk her home.

The terraced houses had basements with steps leading down to their front doors. Maybe she could hide down there until the voices moved on. She tried to open the gate nearest to her, but it was firmly padlocked. As the raucous voices got nearer, she ran quickly to the next gate along – thank goodness, it opened, creaking eerily. She closed it quietly and tiptoed down the steps. If things got really bad, she could ring the doorbell and hope that the people inside would help her as she could see lights behind the curtains.

She huddled out of sight against the damp wall and held her breath. She was soaked through and her wet hair was plastered to her face. The male voices were getting nearer. It sounded as if

there were at least three of them and they were arguing about something. The wind was gusting loudly making it difficult to hear what was being said, but Alice was glad she had found a hiding place as their language was coarse and combative.

She sighed with relief as they made their way past. After five minutes or so she decided to press on. She was about half way home. She was longing to see the familiar red door and her hand closed around the front door key safe in her pocket. Mum wouldn't be worried yet; it was still pretty early, but she wanted to get home and tell her what had happened with James.

A loud shrieking cackle made her jump and stop in her tracks. Two gyrating creatures dressed in black popped out from behind a hedge and stood menacingly in her path. 'Trick or treat! Trick or treat!' She recognised two girls from Year 8 at her school.

'Get lost, losers! Shouldn't you be in bed?' she barked, trying to disguise that they had rattled her. She was shaking and her heart was pounding in her chest. Halloween really wasn't a night to walk home alone after watching a horror film and splitting up with your boyfriend.

She scanned the road ahead – it was deserted thankfully. Leaves were airborne, lifted by the relentless gusty wind and still the rain battered down. Trees at the edge of the pavement creaked and groaned as they were buffeted by the gale. Her mother's voice came to her again, 'It's not safe, Alice. Never walk home alone. Keep your phone charged and always have some taxi money.' Good advice, but she hadn't followed it tonight.

She could take a shortcut through the churchyard and home would be in the next street, but just then a piercing scream rang through the air. Her wrists tingled as adrenalin coursed through her body. Fight or flight overtook her and she turned away from the lych-gate and opted to run round the outside of the churchyard.

It was a girl's scream; she was sure of it and it came from the direction of the cemetery. She remembered the film she had seen earlier with its Gothic buildings, swirling mist and vampire visitations – but this was far more frightening.

She turned the corner into her road and ran at full pelt towards the house. The kitchen light was on and she could see her mother filling the kettle. Her relief as she put the key in the keyhole was overwhelming. What a night! Thank goodness she was home.

After a concerned lecture from her mother, they both went upstairs, Alice very appreciative of her warm bed and cosy pyjamas. Early the next morning her mother burst in to her bedroom. 'A girl was murdered in the cemetery last night!' she exclaimed. 'It's on the local radio.....'

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**FINALLY .....**

If you have not yet renewed your membership, would you please make sure you do so before the end of December?

Members who have not renewed by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 will be removed from our database and will no longer be eligible to attend any groups or monthly meetings.

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***WISHING ALL OUR MEMBERS A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND ALL GOOD WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR  
FROM ALL YOUR COMMITTEE***

