



## **CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE**

By the time you sit down to read this, my last newsletter as Chairman, the nominations for new committee members will be in and we should know who amongst our membership has agreed to put themselves forward to serve on the new committee post AGM.

My three years as Chairman have been hugely enjoyable, and at times a little daunting. At the first meeting I chaired we had a visit from the 'Birds of Prey' and I must admit to being more than a little concerned that some people may find being in the same room as a large raptor somewhat intimidating. For me it was a baptism of fire. We have had some really captivating speakers, some of the most memorable being our own members. Fortunately we have not had too many disasters, one that springs to mind was a talk given by two gentlemen from Chester who even managed a fairly shambolic slide presentation. I am glad that I was not the speaker secretary on that day.

Throughout my time as Chairman I have been given incredible support from members in all areas. Whenever I have asked for help or volunteers it has been forthcoming. The committee have worked hard to deliver an incredible array of events and activities. Group leaders have also worked hard to generate interest and quality in their groups. It is impossible to name every member who has stepped up to the plate and helped when help was needed but you are all appreciated, without you my job would have been impossible.

It seems inconceivable that less than eight years ago Carol and I joined a newly fledged U3A with 30 members. We knew nobody but were made very welcome from the start. We now count so many of you as friends and our lives have been made much richer for your company. I will step down from the committee on 27<sup>th</sup> April, after seven years as a committee member, but we are not going away. We intend to be as closely involved as ever with Oxton and Prenton U3A and look forward to many years of active membership.

Colin Burkitt Chairman

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## **LUNCH CIRCLE**

The next meeting of the lunch circle will be on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017

12-00 for 12-30 Meet at The Toby Carvery, Arrowe Park Road



# THE CRAFT GROUP

The Craft Group continues to thrive in a small but enthusiastic way. Our latest project is quite exciting as our U3A has a big birthday coming up this year and we must make the most of this as we have done really well and we have much to celebrate. The group is, therefore, involved in making the bunting for this big occasion, which believe me involves much cutting and sewing. It also involves a bit of planning and talking, but that is by the by. We hope that you will all be pleased with the outcome, all I can say is that we will have done our best!

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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)

### EVENTS NOW BOOKING

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017

***PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE***

Mersey Tunnel Tour (near Pier Head) 2-00 pm to 4-00 pm  
Tickets £6-00

**NB Trains will be running to James Street by this point**

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Weaver Hall Museum & Lion Salt Works  
Depart Trinity with Palm Grove at 9-30 am  
Morning visit to Museum  
Lunch in nearby Pub at own expense  
Menu Choices £5-50 required please !!!  
Afternoon visit to Salt Works  
Home approximately 5-00 pm  
Cost of coach and both tours £22-00  
Booking Closing 30<sup>th</sup> March !

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017

LYME PARK  
Annual Visit in support of the Gardening Group  
Costs NT Members entrance FREE  
Non NT Members £9-50  
ALL TO PAY COACH £10-00  
Will depart TWPG 9-30 am  
Plenty of time to explore House & Gardens and of course have lunch.  
Home around 6-00 pm

### THEATRE NOW BOOKING

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017

BILLY ELLIOT – **First UK tour**  
Liverpool Empire at 2-30 pm Tickets £30-00  
**Booking closed – collect tickets and meet at theatre**

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017

THE RED SHOES (Latest Matthew Bourne Production)  
Liverpool Empire at 2-30 pm Tickets £12-00  
**Booking closing 30<sup>th</sup> March**

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 2017

WARHORSE at Liverpool Empire at 2-30 pm  
Tickets £45-50 (best price available)  
**Booking closing 25<sup>th</sup> May Full payment MUST be received by this date**

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## MEETINGS and SPEAKERS

March 30<sup>th</sup> 2017 Social Meeting – Carol Morris Lewis and The Wirral Holistic Society

April 13<sup>th</sup> 2017 - Monica Price and Eryl Hoskins: THE LIFE OF A GUIDE DOG.

Establishing a guide-dog in its working life costs in the region of £50,000. Monica and Eryl are both official representatives of the Guide Dogs Association who, with the help of one experienced animal and another about to begin training, will tell us all that this involves. We follow them from selection, training, placement through to retirement.

April 27<sup>th</sup> 2017 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND ALSO  
**TRISHA KING: WITH MY CAMERA IN SIKKIM**

Trisha is returning in response to popular request to share with us some of the beautiful and arresting images and insights drawn from her travels in the little known kingdom of Sikkim.

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## WALKING GROUP

**WALKING GROUP FRIDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2017**

We meet at The Railway Pub, Birkenhead Road, Meols at 10-30 am for this 6 mile walk around Meols and Moreton. Mostly flat, occasionally muddy and there will be 1 railway bridge to go over 25 + steps up and 25 + steps down. You can get there by train to Meols station and walk a short way down Birkenhead Road to the pub or catch the No.38 bus at 9-47 am from Birkenhead Bus Station which goes through Claughton and stops right outside the pub at 10-16 am.

Please sign up at the next meeting, numbers required for lunch booking.

**PHOTOGRAPHS - WALKING GROUP 17<sup>TH</sup> March 2017**



Thank you Carol & Colin, a lovely walk from Heswall to Thurstaston and back

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## BRIAN'S MUSINGS

Out there in the naughty world competitive growth seems to keep everything going and we are assured that we cannot manage without it; where competition and growth fail economies become depressed and austerity rules. I have to confess that I have never been impressed by this state of affairs and have so far managed to live most of my life without getting too caught up in it and all the stresses and strains that it engenders. There are perfectly viable and functioning groups of people that seem to manage very well without it; take U3A for instance. I really appreciate the fact that my membership does not oblige me to be as good as or better than anyone else and I don't have any targets to meet. What a relief!

When I taught in Adult Education it was getting to the point where we were all going to be scrutinised by OFSTED and to that end we had to devise suitable aims and objectives for all who signed up for any given course. It served no purpose to write anything approximating the truth: 'Mrs Blankworth, by the end of the course, is aiming to have used this legitimate excuse to get away from her husband for as many Tuesday evenings as is reasonably possible. I intend to facilitate this by signing her name in the register every time she turns up.' 'Mr Donaught, to secure promotion, needs to provide evidence of study. I promise to provide evidence of his zero group participation throughout the duration of the course. There were of course people who genuinely wanted to learn but the hounds of OXTEd were not conducive to providing a sympathetic environment in such a mixed ecology.

I find U3A wonderfully liberating in its attitude to learning and participation. There is a very real chance that people subscribe to any given subject or activity for no reason other than that they actually want to be there and everyone is free to participate at the level that best suits their needs and capabilities. I nevertheless understand that there are plenty who genuinely value the surge of adrenaline that competition engenders. Though they might not feel up to the sheer physicality of rugby or fell-running. I know for a fact that the game of bridge can offer challenges that I personally consider to be life threatening and that scrabble is not all that far behind for any who fancy a rough ride and a bit of excitement and the last time I played chess I was so mortified that I vowed never to touch another piece.

It isn't that I am not competitive at all. Much depends on time, place and situation. Where only a limited number of comfortable seats are available, in a situation demanding my sustained presence, grim determination asserts itself and mild quiescence yields to aggressive survival mode. I will secure one at all reasonable cost – goal! Where comfort is an issue, it is an aim and objective well worth competing for.

In the U3A there seems to be room for everybody, supported by a genuine need to share.

Brian Gill

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## TEA & COFFEE ROTA MARCH 2017

March 30 <sup>th</sup> 2017	Margaret Yeardsley	Ursula Cook	Judith Wylie
13 April 2017	Sylvia Hunt	Barbara Baker	Kathy Sullivan
27 April 2017	Bernadette Hamilton	Sue Porter	Ruth Trace

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

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I loved it when the great aunts came to visit. They would sit with my grandmother around the kitchen fire and reminisce about their shared childhood in a cottage on a Cheshire hillside which overlooked their grandparents' farm. They didn't always agree and many were the arguments which passed between the elderly trio but there was enough for me to acquire a fair description of their country childhood in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. We knew the cottage was in the village of Tattenhall, county of Burwardsley, in Cheshire but never more than that and someone said, years later, that the cottage and part of the farmland had long since gone to make room for the motorway. We should have checked this out, meant to, but somehow, never seemed to have the time. There had been seven children in my grandma's family, four girls and three boys but although I never met the great uncles I felt I knew them because of these annual gatherings.

Grandma was the most attractive of the trio. Tall, slim and graceful with dark eyes and hair she held court from her usual chair closest to the fire and her voice was often the most strident. Great Aunt Belle, the youngest, was short and stocky with silver hair and bright blue eyes and she always had plenty to say. She thought herself a cut above her sisters because she had never married and had been housekeeper to a well to do family in London who, she often said, glaring at my sisters and me "knew how to behave." She liked to have the last word if possible so she and Grandma were responsible for the heated arguments which would flare up unexpectedly when their memories differed about an event long past.

Aunt Madge, the eldest, sat in the middle. She was tiny with wispy white hair and big brown eyes. She was supposed to be deaf and her sisters would tell everyone this. "She's as deaf as a post, our Madge", they would say with some satisfaction. "She was so bossy when we were girls you wouldn't believe." Aunt Madge would sit there, nodding and smiling but, now and then, she would interrupt her sisters' arguments and they would be outraged and remind her forcefully of her childhood misdemeanours – and also that she was supposed to be deaf.

"Our Madge got drunk one night and shamed us all," Aunt Belle told those of us who gathered there one night. She said it with great satisfaction and Aunt Madge, if she heard her, was not put out at all.

"Drunk? Aunt Madge?" screamed my sister in amazement.

"Yes and she'd signed the pledge, too," said Grandma sternly. "Thirteen she was and she fell down drunk in front of the whole village."

Aunt Madge just nodded and smiled so Aunt Belle told the story. It seems that the Methodist minister had got all the young people to sign the pledge – to promise never to drink alcohol and to stop others from doing so – and his wife marshalled groups of aggressive women to stand outside the "Feathers" pub on Sunday evenings to heckle men going in. Our great grandfather liked his ale and did not take kindly to being shouted at in public by a group of strident women which included his own daughter so he speedily put a stop to Aunt Madge's connection with that church. Everyone else in the family attended St. Peter's Anglican Church anyway and Aunt Madge had no choice but to go with them.

One Sunday evening Madge's father sent her to the pub to buy a gill of ale. Madge didn't want to go but my great grandfather insisted. He knew the women from the Methodist church would be there and he wanted to know if his daughter had heeded his words so, after Madge left the house, he followed her. When she reached the pub the women welcomed her with open arms, thinking she had come to join them.

"Oh, good for you, Madge," they called. "You've come to join us. Well done."

When Madge went past them and came out with the jug of ale they urged her to empty it out and the alarmed landlord gave them a severe telling off. They shouted that Madge's father was wicked to send his daughter to buy ale for him and went on and on about her father's misdemeanours until Madge had had enough.

"Pour it away, pour it away," the women chanted and the landlord, thoroughly alarmed because he knew my great grandfather possessed a violent temper when roused came out to support Madge.

"Don't do it, lass," he urged. "Take no notice. Get home right away."

"He's a wicked man sending his daughter to collect his ale," someone yelled and Madge knew then what to do.

"My father is not wicked," she said and she lifted the jug of ale to her lips and drank the lot, falling senseless on the pavement afterwards. Her father was there to carry her home and Madge's sisters were shocked when their father laughed about the episode and praised Madge for standing up – or, rather falling down – in response to their heckling.

There was another sister, Aunt Betsy, who was never invited to the sisters' gatherings. "Betsy's no better than she ought to be," was the only response given when she was mentioned. Sixty years earlier Great Aunt Betsy had had an illegitimate child and, though she had long ago been forgiven – supposedly – and her son was much loved by everyone - she was thought to be a bad influence and was not invited to stay with us because there were children in the house.

A relative interested in the family tree finally found the address of the cottage on the hill. From the road it could be approached by a short path known as "Jacob's Bench."

In 2004 my eldest sister, Sheila, came to stay with me. Brian was away and Pat, a friend with a car, suggested a day out. We left it to her to choose where we should go. It was raining so hard that day that it was only when we stopped to have lunch at an inn that I realised we were in the village of Tattenhall.

Our friend Pat knew nothing of our ancestry and it was when the landlord of the pub came to chat to us that I said "I don't suppose you know a place called "Jacob's Bench" do you?"

"Of course," he replied. "It's just round the corner from here, a little side road, quite steep and at the top there's a cottage standing on its own. It's got quite a history I hear and I'm sure the present owner will be glad to show you round."

Pat agreed to drive us there and a few minutes after leaving the pub we were driving up the steep incline to the cottage and found ourselves outside our grandma's former home. It had been modernised but there was a flourishing bay tree which showed us where the original front door had been. Sheila felt that, as the eldest, she should be the one to knock at the door and she braved the driving rain to do so but there was no-one in. There was a small bridge on the high road above the cottage so we drove there, passing the Methodist church of Aunt Madge's fame finally reaching the bridge which looked down on the cottage. No-one was about. The rain had become a deluge and our friend said she'd stay in the car as Sheila and I ran to look down on the place where Grandma was born and its surrounding farmland.

It was then that we heard the voice, our grandmother's voice, shouting "Monica! Monica." My sister was pushed over by some unseen force and struggled to her feet saying "That's Grandma's voice. She's calling you." Pat had elected to stay in the car but wound her window down asking "Who's shouting to you?"

Then we saw them. From the cottage, which seemed to change before our eyes to a much older one (but was equally large) – children were emerging, waving frantically at us and all calling to me.

The girls wore smocks over their long dresses and the boys were in long shirts and trousers. We recognised a young Grandma and Aunt Belle and Aunt Madge who held a younger dark haired girl by the hand. They waved and we waved and they ran up the hill towards us. Then they were gone and Sheila and I, soaked to the skin by then, made our way back to the car.

“We’d better find somewhere for you two to dry off,” Pat said and we noticed a large Norman church ahead of us through trees. We made for that, St. Peter’s it was called and were relieved that the door was open. The warmth hit us immediately and we were thankful that the central heating was on. As we wandered round, basking in the warmth, there was a smell which we recognised as Camphor. All the aunts, as well as Grandma, used mothballs in wardrobes and drawers and Sheila and I were convinced that this was connected with the vision of our ancestors we had just experienced. No-one came into the church and when we left we were warm and dry though we did get wet again later as we dashed for the refuge of the car. When we passed the church notice board Sheila wrote the vicar’s number down.

“We’ll ring him when we get home,” she said. “Perhaps he has some church records we can see but he should know how warm and welcoming his church has been.”

She rang as soon as we got home and I heard her exchange angry words with whoever was at the other end of the line. She replaced the receiver with a bang and said “There isn’t a vicar at St. Peter’s, the Church has been closed for two years and the man I spoke to – he used to be the church warden – said “That church is always kept locked and I have the only key. Also, there never was any central heating so, even if you did get in there – which you couldn’t – it certainly would not have been warm.”

A mystery it certainly was but it was witnessed by three of us and none of us will ever forget the experience.

Monica Price

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### NEW GROUP FOR BUDDING PLAYERS !!

John Bews from Heswall U3A would like to know if any of our members are interested in Walking Football, Tuesday afternoons at Tranmere Rovers ground. Anyone interested should contact John direct at [johnbews@btinternet.com](mailto:johnbews@btinternet.com)

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## North West Region of U3As

Invite applications for their Residential Summer School

29<sup>th</sup> August – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017

At Newton Rigg College, Penrith,  
Cumbria, CA11 0AH

*An opportunity to learn in the inspiring setting of the Lake  
District*



Newton Rigg College is located close to J40 of the M6 and less than five minutes’ drive from Penrith Railway Station. The campus, which is just ten minutes from Ullswater, has modern facilities, student en-suite rooms with Wi-Fi access. Food is

locally sourced and prepared on the premises. A large room is available for meeting and socialising. There will be entertainment on the second evening and a "Gala Dinner" on the third and final evening

The ten courses on popular in previous Course titles are: Cities, Digital Digging Lakeland Landscapes, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Culture, Science is for



offer include those which have proved years and a number of new courses. **About Beauty, Architecture: The ABC of for Armchair Archaeologists, Geology of Painting with Stitches, Medicine in the Recorder Playing, Russian and Soviet Everyone, Ukulele for Beginners**

**Full Board Residential Delegate; £275** We include a welcome reception, full board for three nights (including dinner on the 1st September), breakfast, morning coffee and lunch on 2nd September.

**Non-Residential Day Delegate: £155** includes lunches, teas and coffees, (excludes breakfast (£8.00) a 2 course dinner (£16.00) and Thursdays' Gala Dinner £24.00. If any of these meals are required they must be booked in advance and would be subject to an additional charge. Alternatively, Accommodation is available at the Travelodge /local B&B's or Hotels. Full details of the costs for the school are set out in the Booking Notes.

An Application form, obtained from our Website, must be completed and sent with a deposit cheque for £50.

Any member booking and paying their deposit of £50 no later than 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017 will attract a discount on the above figures of £35 (Full Board Residential Delegate) and £35 (Non-Residential Day Delegate) Any queries should be directed to Neil Stevenson on 01744 895723 or [ndstevenson@hotmail.com](mailto:ndstevenson@hotmail.com)

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## Double click on the link below for the latest North West Region U3A Newsletter



NWREC NEWSLETTER No 45 MARCH 20170314 V1 0.pdf

### [North West Regional Newsflash-diary dates](#)

[www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west)



#### **Friday May 19<sup>th</sup>. Finance and Charity Law**

Venue: Quaker meetinghouse, Liverpool.

Presenter John Ellison, National Treasurer.

Registration form is on the Regional website

#### **Wednesday June 7<sup>th</sup>. North West Regional AGM and Conference**

Venue: Quaker Meeting House, Manchester.

Breakout groups will include

- Top Tips for Treasurers (John Ellison, National Treasurer)
- Being a U3A Trustee (Gill Russell, Regional Trustee)

- Research (John Kaye)  
Entertainment (to be confirmed)  
Guest speaker Neil Smith – ‘Have Guitar will Travel’  
More details in next newsletter

**Wednesday June 21<sup>st</sup>. Learning in the Future**

A look at MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) – a way of using the internet to assist learning.  
Venue: Gateway Centre, Warrington. Presenter Ian Hunt. Flyer and registration details are on the website

**August 29<sup>th</sup>- September 1<sup>st</sup>. Don't forget the North West Regional Summer School. Newton Rigg Near Penrith.**

Course details and registration form are available on the website. Registration is going very well so if there's something you're interested in book quickly. There's a discount if you book before the end of May.

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**SPECIAL NOTICE**

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017 is our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

In a break with past tradition and in anticipation of a swift conclusion to the AGM formalities we will be welcoming a very popular speaker to our meeting.

**TRISHA KING: WITH MY CAMERA IN SIKKIM**

Trisha is returning in response to popular request to share with us some of the beautiful and arresting images and insights drawn from her travels in the little known kingdom of Sikkim.

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**FINALLY.....**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT CAR PARKING RESTRICTIONS AT THE CHURCH HALL**

Contractors will be starting on renewal of the church roof on 29th March. The work will take until the end of June if all goes according to plan.

**PARKING AT THE CHURCH HALL WILL BE EXTREMELY LIMITED**

**UNLESS YOU HAVE LIMITED MOBILITY PLEASE PARK IN ADJACENT ROADS AND WALK TO THE HALL.**

THE RAMP AND STAIRLIFT WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE TO WHEELCHAIR USERS who will have to park in Beresford Road and use the back entrance into the hall.

TWPG Church apologises for any inconvenience whilst this essential work is carried out.

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