



December Newsletter



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I am not sure how many of our members, particularly the newer ones, know that our U3A is a member of Deeside and Wirral U3A Network. Until recently this Network was really struggling to have sufficient volunteers to fill the Officer roles, which are necessary for the smooth running of the Network, there was even the possibility that it would have to disband. This would have been a blow to those of us who find the Network meetings so very helpful. We pick each other's brains, answer each other's queries, come up with new ideas and encourage each other in our roles within our U3A Groups.

I am pleased to let you know that the Network is safe for the next twelve months and I am proud to say that three of our members have come to the rescue. At the recent Network AGM Brian Gill was appointed Chairman, Mal Waite of Chester U3A was appointed Treasurer and although the Vice Chair is no longer an elected role Monica Price has agreed to take on that role if necessary and Jean Mawdsley will take on the role of Secretarial assistant. These stalwarts of our U3A are to be commended for taking on these roles and I wish them every success.

It was also agreed that in future all Network meetings will be hosted in turn by each U3A at their individual venue. The hosting venue will prepare the room and cover the cost of the room rental and refreshments.

Why not visit www.u3asites.org.uk/deeside-wirral/home and find out more about our Network.

**Sandra Lakin
Chairman**

BRIAN'S MUSINGS



What thoughts can one possibly have about December that have not been thought and expressed a thousand times already? Nevertheless that does not seem to stop me from having them. Let's face it - December can be a very demanding month one way or another and one cannot help but wonder how to cope? Some of you will have already evolved highly efficient strategies that will carry you through serenely well into the New Year. Well done if you

have. I do try but have so far failed to come up with anything that will arm me effectively against the strategies or sheer chaos, of others.

The interesting thing about December is that there is some really fascinating stuff going on at this time of year. One cannot ignore the fact of the Winter Solstice; though in fact we tend to. All our festivities actually depend on it for their existence and yet it is hardly ever mentioned. Though it has been requisitioned by commercialism and Christianity its astronomical authenticity remains. From the twenty-first of December the days begin to get longer and the amount of sun that we are exposed to steadily increases; even though the actual winter, for a while, gets considerably worse.

Even so, a corner has been turned and our ancestors, long, long ago knew this and built it into the collective psyche. "It's always darkest just before the dawn;" "Things have to get worse before they can get better;" "The way out is the way through;" and so on. Such time-worn aphorisms often carry a great deal of truth; though we must bear in mind the fact that not everything or everybody will in fact see the sun come into its full strength for the new growing season ahead. But again our wise ancestors allowed for this. When sowing winter wheat they would chant: "One for the pheasant, one for the crow, one to rot and one to grow." In the 'great scheme of things,' it was understood that there would be losses. Today, with technology at our finger tips we expect everything to be under control; but is it???

Technology has a life of its own, it seems, and is defying its creators. It is leading us into situations in which our 'best-laid plans' are coming badly un-stuck. Our judiciary is being wasted by social media, over which it seems no-one has any control. 'Trial by social media' is so prejudicial to our system of justice that it threatens to invalidate what we hoped was a fair system. In our bid to gain control over our lives and our environment we often, unwittingly, create the very conditions that undermine them. We may know a great deal but we seldom have the humility to recognise that we just do not know nearly enough.

Yes indeed! The sun is reborn on the twenty first of December but there is still a great deal to get through before it is strong enough to encourage actual growth. Lying low, being still and waiting is vital to the process. What goes on beneath the surface is a great deal more important than what goes on above it at this time of year. Real growth, real development and real healing come most effectively to those who understand this.

Brian Gill



LUNCH GROUP

Dates to note for 2019 MEET AT 12.45 for 1pm

N.B. There is no Lunch Group in December as we have the Christmas Dinner.



Dates for 2019

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| January 15 th | The Refreshment Rooms |
| February 19 th | The Shippons |
| March 19 th | The Queen's Arms |
| April 16 th | The Toby Carvery |
| May 21 st | The Pesto (Dibbinsdale) |
| June 18 th | The Travellers' Rest |



July 16th

Peel Hey – afternoon tea Please note time 2.30 pm

COLIN STREDDER

TEA AND COFFEE ROTA 25TH OCTOBER TO FEBRUARY 2019. If you cannot do a duty, please ring me, JOAN BENTON, ON 608 6226



6th December 2018

Ursula Cook
Brenda George
Bernadette Hamilton



3rd January 2019

Gwen Burrell
Jean Sheratt
Ann Hillier

17th January 2019

Maureen Jones
Arlene Hinton
Norah Murray



31st January 2019

Marian Jackson
Barbara Riley
Dorothy Pittard

14th February 2019

Wendy Devonald
Lorraine Malyj
Mary Hamilton



28th February 2019

Gwyneth Thomas
Hilary Robinson
Margaret Yeadsley

SOCIAL OUTINGS

EVENTS

IMPORTANT NOTICE

No bookings or reservations can be taken without payment

This is necessary in order to be fair to all our members

PLEASE try to book events BEFORE the START of meetings

Payment at end of meetings MUST be either cheque or correct cash only

Full booking details available @ meetings - see your social organisers



COACH COSTS are dependent on numbers travelling so it may be necessary to adjust prices slightly from time to time.

EVENTS

REMINDER

Christmas Carol service in aid of Children in Need

Anglican Cathedral

Friday 7 December 7.30pm

Booking closed



CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2018

Prenton Golf Club

Golf Links Road, PRENTON CH42 8LW

Thursday 20 December

12.00 noon for 12.30 pm

Booking closed

Menu choices **URGENTLY** required



NEW

TOUR OF ADELPHI HOTEL

In conjunction with Local History group

Thursday 24 January 2019

1 hour tour starting at 11.00 am

Followed by Carvery lunch

£8.50

Very limited availability



BOOKING FROM JANUARY

Tour of Liverpool Empire Theatre

Thursday 7 March 2019

Further details in January newsletter



THEATRE

Matthew Bourne's re-imagined version of his iconic Swan Lake

Thursday 11 April 2019 @ 2.30 pm

Liverpool Empire

COST £34.00 – outstanding balances now due

Booking CLOSING 6th December 2018



MEETINGS and SPEAKERS 2018



Thursday 6th December

Faith, Fun and Fellowship – Michael Burgess

SPEAKERS 2019

Thursday 3rd January

A Policeman's Lot - Bill Johnstone. The speaker shares with us his insightful and telling thoughts on a lifetime of policing.

Thursday 31st January

The Origins of Place Names - Anthony Poulton-Smith. You are welcome to bring interesting and mysterious place-names of your own for the speaker to consider. There can be a great deal more to a name than we might think.

Thursday 28th February

Grand Narratives and Political Language - Mary Clinton. We welcome back Mary Clinton whose insightful examination of the way in which we speak might help us to understand what our politicians are really saying when they address us at this crucial time.

Thursday 28th March

British Humour: 18th- 20th Centuries - Michael Murphy.

It is so easy to take humour for granted when really it can afford us amazing insights into the way we function. This talk offers an interesting development from our previous speaker.

Thursday 25th April

The Canal Dukes - Bernard Dennis. Our canals are currently taking on a new lease of life. Their early development supported the industrial revolution and changed our history; thanks to those who had the money, influence and insight to develop them. We can rely on Bernard Dennis to be his usual insightful and informative self.

Thursday 23rd May

Witches and Superstitions: their effect on modern culture - Jean Finney. We might like to think that in an age of scientific rationalism we are free from the effects of demonology. Not so! Jean Finney has entertained us on two previous occasions and is returning in response to popular demand.

Thursday 20th June

Confessions of a Probation Officer - Ray O'Brien. We know that whatever Ray O'Brien shares with us will be a subject of great mirth. His talks are always a rare treat.

Thursday 18th July

Major Predators of Liverpool Bay - Matthew Clough. Matthew Clough will be sharing with us aspects of the work that he knows and values. He may well reveal aspects of which we might not be aware when we survey or even enter the waters of Liverpool Bay.

Thursday 12th September

Through the Eye of a Magician - Peter Turner. Peter Turner comes to us supported by a wealth of professional experience. He might possibly challenge the way in which we see things.

Thursday 10th October

Viking and Saxon History on Merseyside - Diana Goodier. Diana Goodier, a devoted historian, will make her talk particularly relevant to The Wirral and promises to dress for the occasion.

Thursday 7th November

English Village Life in the Middle Ages - Stuart Elliot. Stuart Elliot has the ability to bring to life ways of living and being that seem to be lost in time. He comes to us highly recommended and offers an interesting continuation and development from the previous speaker.

Thursday 5th December

Hollywood Drama Queens - Rina Tullinger. And now for something completely different! Having chatted with the speaker on the phone I am sure that all who hear her will enjoy her originality and dynamism as she addresses this fascinating subject.

NOTES OF ACTIVITIES AT NON-SPEAKER MEETINGS

22nd November: Lyn Ebbrell - Magic of reflexology. How it can help you.

Colin Stredder

WALKING GROUP

U3A Walk on Friday November 16th 2018

A linear walk of just under 5.5 miles led by Gerry Riley, starting at Hoylake Railway Stn. and finishing at the Railway Pub in Meols around 1.15pm. We enjoyed lunch at the pub.

The walk took us across fields to Frankby over China Farm. A short walk along Frankby Rd. led to a parallel path that runs through the old air base.



As can be seen in this photo the weather although overcast, stayed dry for our walk. Many thanks to Gerry for organising the day.

CHRISTMAS WALK

I am planning a pre-Christmas walk probably on 14th December 2018. This is a week before normal to take account of the main Christmas lunch on 20th.

Mike and Joan Benton have offered to host the after walk lunch at 91 Prenton Hall Farm Road. There will be a walk around the Storeton area first. Would those interested in this walk please sign up at the U3A Meeting.

Gerry Riley

ART APPRECIATION GROUP

**Dates for U3A history of art meetings.
All meetings in Trinity Session room start at 10.15a.m. unless otherwise stated:**



Here is our programme to April 2019

- December 20th – No Meeting
- January 16th – Fernand Leger Exhibition (Tate Liverpool)
- February 20th – “Every picture tells a story” Talk by Steve Cottam (Walker Art Gallery)
- March 20th - Leonardo da Vinci – Talk by Bernadette Hamilton (Sessions Room)
- April 17th – Leonardo Drawings Exhibition (Walker Art Gallery)



Please make a note in your diaries

The group enjoyed a visit to the Williamson Art Gallery on November 21st followed by a soup and sandwich lunch. We were lucky to receive an enlightening talk by Colin Simpson who is in charge of the exhibits and explained facets of the WW1 collection, also a selection of paintings which each included an animal. These talks really do help one to fully appreciate the intentions of the artists.

The gallery is local and has local artists' work featured on occasion; exhibits change periodically. There is a shop and pleasant tearoom which deserves patronage. In the summer months there are music recitals on Sunday afternoons; it is always worth checking on the net.

Many thanks to Bernadette for organizing the morning. We all agreed that we should visit on a more regular basis. Ed.

CREATIVE WRITING

Another Closed Door



‘How’s that for a sunset’ ventured Danny as he approached a group of holiday-making females sharing the palm tree-fringed beach bar. A

couple of bottles of local Chang beer had strengthened his normally fragile confidence, and whilst his chat-up line would not have won any creativity awards, it achieved the objective and one of the group responded with a cheery: 'Come and join us, sunshine boy', in a recognisably New York accent. The owner of the voice approached Danny as he came over to the bar. 'You like sunsets?'

'I certainly do' replied Danny. 'We have some wonderful ones in the UK. Turner painted quite a few, but nothing quite like this. I've seen several in Thailand, but this one is exceptional'

'Oh, very poetic' she said, 'Who's Turner? By the way, I'm Carly. And you are?'

'Danny,' he replied. 'Where are you from? East Coast of the USA, maybe New York?'

'Not bad, said Carly. 'I can see you've been watching too many episodes of 'Friends'. It turned out that her group was taking part in a hen party holiday in aid of Ella; the one wearing the angels' wings and the blonde wig and the 'L' sign.

Danny and Carly continued to chat as they wandered down to the beach to marvel at the sunset. Together they looked down to the waterline where some traditional long boats were tied up. As their eyes moved to the horizon and skywards, they saw a single golden yellow beam focusing on a wet stretch of sand, creating a mirror image of the sunset. The sky was streaked with black, grey and gold, while rocky outcrops in the sea showed as ominous black shapes.

'You have to clear things at the onset', thought Danny as he began to feel increasingly attracted to this New Yorker, a mix, in *his* dazzled eyes, of Jennifer Anniston and Julia Roberts. 'Are you, kind of, a free agent, as it were, on the boy friend scene?' Danny ventured cautiously.

'Of course', said Carly, 'Apart from Ella we are all as free as the wind whistling over the East River. What about you, Englishman?'

'No commitments.' Danny assured her. 'In fact, without sounding too much as a wimp, I've a rather poor record in that department. There have been some disappointing scenarios, but in the exotic beauty of this land, with this incredible sunset as a backcloth, I think I might just be turning a corner.'

Conversation then swiftly took on an affectionate tone and, after more bottles of Chang, they found themselves clasped in a strong embrace on a quiet part of the beach, as the sun gradually sank below the horizon, casting an amber glow across the darkening sky.

A final kiss, then she returned to her friends and a nightcap, as Danny padded over to his chalet, his bare feet barely touching the warm earth. After his recent history of failed romances, Danny allowed his hopes to accelerate into overdrive; here was a potential soul mate, with many shared pursuits, including oriental travel and 1960s UK pop music. Obstacles like geographical separation could be dealt with in this global age with the help of Facebook, Skype and Virgin Atlantic. All these topics flooded through his head as he tried to sleep, plus the depressing thought that he would be signing out of the beach holiday complex the next morning and taking a taxi to the local airport, prior to flying from Bangkok back to the UK.

It had all happened in a blur and once back home, he emailed Carly, full of emotional language, reflecting on their golden moments together and on their hopes of a future. But the expected ping of a return email did not happen, not in the days after or in the following weeks. In desperation, Danny googled Carly's name and was horrified to read a report in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, a local newspaper in the Sheepshead Bay part of Brooklyn which Carly had so affectionately described. The clip from the Eagle read:

'Mr & Mrs Derek Donovan are proud to announce the wedding of their beloved daughter Carly to Elmer Peacock at The Palm House, Crown Heights' on a date, Danny noticed, only a few weeks before his Thai holiday.

Danny reflected on the incredible but bitter-sweet evening in Thailand with Carly. The sunset was supposed to herald an exciting and optimistic tomorrow, but to Danny, it was just another closed door.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

Jane awoke suddenly, quite disorientated. For a few minutes she was four years old and the wind was whistling through the hedgerows making a strange wailing sound – Mummy said it was the Banshee calling! The night- light made flickering shapes on the walls and ceiling and she shivered as she remembered the night when she was sure that a man holding a gun was standing at the end of her little bed. Mummy said that there was a war on and we had to keep the blackout curtains closed until daybreak and that the man was just a shadow made by the candle.....

Loud ringing, and wide awake now, Jane reached out for her phone, “Hi Mommy, we're at the airport! It's snowing pretty heavily so visibility is poor and there are delays on all the flights but they are hoping to get us away sometime during the next four hours or so - keeping fingers crossed. We're so looking forward to seeing you; we'll text you. Love you - Len and the boys send kisses, speak soon...” Sonya's voice faded and Jane sighed; it was going to be a long wait. Still it would be great to see them all; it had been almost a year.

Turning over she checked the time, 5a.m., no rush then. It would be a long day by the time they arrived and settled in. Canada was several hours behind the U.K. It was Christmas Eve and she smiled in anticipation of the first family Christmas for several years. Since her daughter had moved to Canada with her husband and the boys when they were tiny, she had been finding Christmas rather depressing. Peter, her son, *tried* to come home sometime over the holiday but *his* life was in London now. While Michael was alive they had had their own social life to occupy them but since she had been widowed four years ago, Jane often found herself painfully lonely in spite of multiple interests. This year was going to be different however; the house would fill with her loved ones and with children around, Christmas would regain some magic!....her thoughts wandered as her eyes closed once more....

She liked sleeping in the spare room; there was a warm fire in the grate because she had the measles and it was next to Mummy and Daddy's room so that they could hear her! The curtains had to be closed day and night “to protect her eyes” the doctor had said. Suddenly she spotted that the sack for Father Christmas which had been left by the fireplace, had moved onto the end of her bed. With a whoop she pulled it towards her and started to pull out her presents. She didn't remember last Christmas really except that Father Christmas had brought her a dolly and Mummy had shown her how to make a little dress from one of her old petticoats. Now there was a game of snakes and ladders, a painting book, crayons, an orange, a Mars Bar, a little wooden boat, a book about a boy and a snake up a mango tree, a tiny set of scales for playing cooking, and most exciting – a cardboard theatre stage with cut out figures and scenes! She shrieked with pleasure and Daddy came in to carry her into their room telling Mummy that she must be getting much better!.....he had a few days' leave.....

Jane's alarm was going off and she grabbed her dressing gown as she threw back the bedclothes. There was a text on her mobile: *Just boarding – can't wait to see you! Not long now. Will call soon as we land – love you, Sonya.* Heading for the bathroom Jane mentally went over tasks for the day. As the hot water splashed, her excitement rose and she found herself humming a little tune – this Christmas was going to be different!

In recent years she had not really bothered much with decorations; there hadn't seemed much point, but now the house looked warm and welcoming, ready to be filled again with laughter and children. It was quite a large house and with only one occupant echoed as if to signal its emptiness. The real tree sparkled with ornaments and smelled of pine. Jane switched on the lights to put herself in the mood. In the kitchen the goose was defrosting nicely ready for the blowout meal. Pillowcases for the two boys, stuffed with gifts were sitting waiting at the bottom of her wardrobe. She smiled to herself remembering the simplicity of her war time stocking fillers which nevertheless held perhaps more excited anticipation. It was strange how her dreams lately had been filled with long forgotten memories; memories of her young self and her parents in a world changed almost beyond recognition.

It was still only 9a.m. on Christmas Eve, plenty of time for the Canadian contingent to reach Manchester by around 6 pm. After checking that the bedrooms were warm and equipped with everything needed; towels, hangers, books and magazines, extra blankets (in case), Jane set about preparing a simple casserole for the evening ahead - one which would only need reheating as she was unsure of their arrival time. By the time she had prepared, as far as possible, for Christmas Dinner tomorrow, she began to wilt a little. There was little further she could do for now and there would be several hours before she need think about their aircraft landing, so she decided to make the most of the lull and put her feet up; there would be plenty to keep her busy during the next few days.....

The siren was going, "Come on Janie, we must get under the stairs," Mummy was reaching for her hand. She put her arm round her daughter and held her close as they snuggled on some cushions under the stairs. The planes seemed to be roaring overhead, at any rate they sounded quite close. "After the war we'll go back to our real home," Mummy was saying, "you'll love it there and it overlooks the sea!" Grownups always seemed to be talking about *before* the War and *after* the War as though NOW was a different world. I quite liked NOW though, and hiding under the stairs or under the kitchen table was fun. Children were being given Mickey Mouse gas masks; mine was just an ordinary black one though - I would have preferred a Mickey Mouse one.....

The "all clear" was sounding and it blended with the doorbell. Jane woke with a start wondering why she kept dreaming of the past; must be something to do with encroaching old age, she ruminated. Peter was on the doorstep, "Hi Mum, I've made it - thought it would be great to all be together for once! What time will Sonya and Len get here? Perhaps I could pick them up from the airport."

Jane grinned her delight at his unexpected arrival and pulled him inside. "There's a taxi ordered - *they'll* be in touch with the airport to find out what the E.T.A. is. Take off was delayed. Where's Fiona? Would you like a cuppa or a scotch as it's Christmas?" she started towards the kitchen.

"Fiona's spending Christmas in Madeira and I'd love a cuppa for now, thank you. To be honest Mum, you may as well know, it's over with us, we decided things weren't going anywhere and have called it a day. It's for the best really and hopefully we will stay friends but I've been feeling so unsettled lately with work and everything that I feel that I need to sort myself out before committing to anything permanent. "He had taken off his coat and was sitting in front of the fire as Jane re entered with a tray.

"I'm sorry to hear that Peter though I can't say I am surprised. Although I liked her a lot she didn't seem ready for marriage. Tell me, what is it you really want to do with your life?" She looked straight at him, anxiety written all over her face. Her mobile played its tune breaking the moment. Jane picked it up, listened for a moment before her face broke out in a huge grin, "They're almost here; on the Preston bypass! Ten minutes at most." She bustled about finding extra teacups, plates, cake etc. as Peter regarded her thoughtfully.

Later, as surrounded by her family, dinner eaten, tired and excited children packed off to bed, Jane raised her glass, "To a lovely family Christmas; I feel blessed to have my family together tonight! I must tell you, I have had such strange dreams these last few days about my early childhood; incidents long forgotten. About war time and Christmas then. My last memories of my Father, your Grandfather. It was towards the end of the War, he must have had a few days' leave because he was mostly away in the R.A.F. I had been recovering from measles over Christmas but there was a dance on in Preston on New Year's Eve and my parents went with some friends. The children; myself and two others, from family friends, were to stay overnight in their hotel. And after our baths we were taken to the top of some stairs to glimpse the dancing down below in the ballroom. Mummy looked so happy and beautiful in her long dress and my Father so handsome in his uniform! Most of the men were in uniform and the ladies in evening dresses, from before the war I expect - anyway Daddy went back to War and I never saw him again; a telegram came to tell us that his plane had been shot down.....it was a long time till I saw Mummy look happy again." She gazed for a moment, lost in her memories, then, "Wasn't it strange after all those years to remember it so clearly; I was quite small at the time. It must have been thinking of you all coming home, the flight, the children and their stockings reminding me. I *have* missed you all.

They were staring at her enthralled. Jane realised that it was probably the first time that she had mentioned these memories. Sonya broke the silence, “Mummy we want to talk to *you* about something too. We have discussed it for some time and would be delighted if you would think about it carefully. Our house is really too small for us and we had contemplated moving. The final decider was a job offer for Len from his firm which involves moving to Victoria Island. It will be a good promotion and the children are coming up to school age so a good time for the move. We would all very much love it if you would think about coming out there to live with us. The house we are buying has an annex so you could be as independent as you like; we'd also have room for Peter to stay while he settles over there. He thinks it's a great idea!”

Jane stared at her family, wide eyed. This was totally unexpected and she needed a little time to think about it. The clock read ten thirty; not long now till Christmas Day, “Could we do the stockings while I get over the shock?” she managed at last. General laughter ensued as the family realised that their plan *would* get some *thought*, and they rose as one to find the goodies for two very lucky boys.

It wouldn't take so long to ponder, Jane realised. What a Christmas this was turning out to be! For all her family! – Perhaps *they* would remember it for as long as she had been remembering that one long ago. Excitement rose in her as she contemplated new beginnings and new adventures in a new country. Sweeping her eyes round to embrace them all she spoke firmly, “Goodnight and happy Christmas everyone and in answer to your question, yes PLEASE!”

ELIANE DAVIE

REMINDER

Please don't forget to bring your donated goods for the Charles Thompson Mission to the next meeting on December 6th. The Mission cares for homeless people and also local families who are struggling to make ends meet. For their Christmas Appeal they ask for warm clothing, (gloves, scarves etc.) toiletries, non perishable foodstuffs and toys, (for all age ranges of children). We will be buying toys with the funds from our recent draw. As the gifts are for Christmas we are donating NEW goods only.

You may be interested to know from head office:

The latest newsletter has gone out direct to the 'opt in' list of U3A members. It is packed full of news from U3As, news from the Trust, including upcoming events and new subject advisers and much more.

You can view it here if you have not already signed up yourself. Your members can view all back copies and sign up to receive it direct on our website <https://u3a.org.uk/about/newsletter> and also by clicking on the link below.

***U3A EMAIL NEWSLETTER** Click here to add your name to the U3A email newsletter list, or visit u3a.org.uk/email*

AND FINALLY , As usual we have chosen our charity for Christmas; this year it is to be the Charles Thompson Mission so please remember to bring your gifts to the meeting on December 6th. I would like to thank you all for supporting our U3A Raffle which has produced £ 202 to be used to buy goods for the C.T. Mission . Wishing you all a very happy Christmas

elianedavie@hotmail.co.uk

Eliane Davie Editor



Merry
Christmas