



# April Newsletter

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

At a time when social contact is somewhat restricted it feels very liberating to be able to sit here and have a chat with as many as care to join me.

What interesting times we live in! Though when I think about it the times have never failed to be interesting in all the years I have been on Planet Earth, however as each condition or set of events occurs they always present us with something new to consider and adapt to. There is, of course, a part of the human psyche that seeks for a degree of stability and predictability. We do not always take kindly to having our routines and expectations disrupted and can easily feel decidedly disgruntled when the unexpected happens and things do not go according to plan.



I know that in the current situation many people will suffer real hardship but standing back a little and trying to view what we are experiencing in the context of the human condition as a whole and our development as a race, one has to admit that it is our ability to adapt and be resourceful that has enabled humanity to survive successfully so far. In evolutionary terms we have come a long way in a very short time.

Intelligence has been defined as the ability to adapt to and take advantage of any given ecology. Well of course there is room for improvement here but our rapidly expanding population is indicative of our having got something right. The history of human development is a history of human adaptability and resourcefulness and it is usually loss, limitation and deprivation that are the driving factors.

In this context the occurrence of neuronal plaque as part of the aging process is interesting. A community of nuns donated their brains to scientific research. Many

were found to exhibit real evidence of neuronal plaque which should have been manifest in their behaviour prior to death. The fact that it was not in evidence suggested that alternative neuronal pathways had been developed that enabled the brain to continue functioning normally. I believe that this particular community was involved in working with deprived people.

It seems clear that it is not intellectual activity alone that is responsible or even capable of developing little use areas of the brain but rather the ability to cope with adversity and function in unfamiliar areas. From that point of view we now find ourselves with an amazing opportunity to go beyond ourselves and find ways of responding to life that are new and innovative. In the end it is all about relationship. Throughout the whole of creation nothing could happen if it were not for the infinite complexity of relationships that evolve to take care of every situation from sub atomic particles to the human race entire. It is no good our complaining that when placed in self-isolation there will be little opportunity to develop this aspect of our potential; we are profoundly blessed with all manner of points of contact, should we wish to employ them and if not one can simply BE.

The gentle art of being is so profoundly important that groups of people have dedicated themselves to its study since the beginning of time. For such people the world of being is just as real and as important to our development as any other aspect of the human condition and some would argue that it is the most important of all.

However we pass the next few weeks or months I look forward very much to our meeting up again when it is all over. I am sure that there will be some interesting tales to tell.

**Brian Gill**

**Chairman**

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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 23<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2020.**

### **A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR**

**The AGM is an obligatory event at which all members are entitled to a voice. It concerns the running and administration of your U3A.**

**All members of the Oxton and Prenton U3A are invited to attend.**

**Four committee members are coming to the end of their terms of office. Our constitution allows them to re-stand and they are all willing to do so.**

**Anyone wishing to stand for election to the committee should obtain an application form at least 30 days before the AGM and submit their application no later than ten days before the AGM.**

***NB: As present members are standing for re-election, potential new members will not only have to be nominated and seconded but will also need to stand, (together with those whose terms of office are expiring), for election by the general membership. This would take place at the AGM and ballot papers would be counted by someone who is not a U3A member.***

***Election to the committee does not necessarily guarantee a specific post.***

**As is our custom there will be a speaker to follow the AGM, which we hope will run as smoothly and efficiently as in previous years.**

**Yours faithfully**

**Brian D Gill**

**AS YOU WILL APPRECIATE THE ABOVE HAS BEEN POSTONED UNTIL NORMAL ACTIVITY IS RESUMED.**

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## **CORONA VIRUS**

*As you know, all meetings and group activities have been suspended until further notice. I HAVE REMOVED DATES OF GROUP EVENTS FOR APRIL and MAY which are definitely cancelled. For the moment dates for June and July remain listed though it is unlikely that anything will be going on before the summer recess.*

*We hope that none of our members is unfortunate enough to suffer severely through the virus and entreat everyone to obey government advice on avoiding it. We will keep you informed of any relevant developments regarding our return to normal activity. ED.*

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## **ROTA 2020 COFFEE & TEA**

**If you cannot do a duty, please ring me, JOAN BENTON, ON 608 6226. Please let me know if you don't think that you are on my list and you would like to volunteer**

**\*The April and May dates are definitely cancelled we will keep you informed regarding when the closure is lifted**

**4<sup>th</sup> June**

**Marion Jackson**

**Barbara Riley**

**Mary Potter**

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## VISIT TO THE BOAT MUSEUM AT ELLESMERE PORT



Our visit to the Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port on March 5<sup>th</sup> proved a great success, particularly as the day dawned with clear blue skies, something of a rarity in recent days. There was an excellent talk on the history of the canals going back to the seventeen hundreds, their popularity prior to the advent of the railways in the nineteenth century, the freight they carried and the lives of the people who lived on the barges. Afterwards we were given a guided tour of the buildings which included cottages for the workers dressed to cover different time scales from the early 1800s to the fifties. Our thanks to Elizabeth Harding for organising the trip. Ed.

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## HISTORY FAMILY GROUP next meeting after reopening

Our February meeting was a lively occasion with everyone sharing their triumphs and ideas about their research.

There were some interesting results with detailed information from websites such as Lancashire Online and the 1939 Register. This Register was made just before World War 2 to record the people living in each house in the country.

New ideas included a clever way of using squared paper to draw a family tree – everyone liked that idea to keep the lines straight!

We finished with a look at the Census Records from 1801 to 1911 and the type of information recorded. Every ten years, on a particular night, the occupants of each house were recorded.

There is plenty of useful information for researchers such as addresses, names of family members, occupations and some disabilities.

There were also some amusing entries over the years. In 1911 a family from Birkenhead recorded a family member as “Tom Cat whose occupation was catching mice”.

Some people tried to avoid being counted altogether. In 1841 the artist JMW Turner rowed his boat out onto the River Thames on Census night so he could not be recorded at any address

One member had put all her old photos into a lovely Victorian style photo album. Another had been given a Family History Record book as a gift and found it useful for keeping all the facts in one place.

If you are interested in joining us, please email me on [familyhistory@oxtonu3a.com](mailto:familyhistory@oxtonu3a.com) for the venue for our meetings – and don’t worry we are all researching in different ways but it’s good to share our problems and successes!

**Pauline Horner – Group Leader**

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### **LUNCH GROUP**

Meet at 12.45 for 1pm

June 16th 2020                      The Boathouse, Parkgate

July 21st 2020                      Sheldrakes, Heswall

**COLIN STREDDER**

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### **NOTES OF ACTIVITIES AT NON - SPEAKER MEETINGS 2020**

**Cancelled until further notice**

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### **SPEAKERS 2020**

Thursday 18th June – Keith Warrender                      Dunham Massey Ship Canal

Thursday 16th July – John Michael Corfe                      China Farm Story

#### **AUGUST BREAK**

Thursday 3rd September – Glynn D. Parr                      Under, over and up the River Mersey

Thursday 8th October – Brian Anderson                      Images from the edge –

Thursday 5th November – Michael Murphy                      The terrible tale of Gin

Thursday 3rd December – Barry Humphrey      Christmas songs – a look back

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 23rd April 2020 -                      AGM                      postponed**
- 30th July 2020 -                      Last meeting before Summer Break**
- 3rd September 2020                      First meeting after Summer Break**

**PLEASE NOTE IN YOUR DIARIES:** there are three weeks between the meeting on September 17<sup>th</sup> and the following one on October 8<sup>th</sup> after which they will continue at fortnightly intervals.

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## Windermere Walk Friday April 17<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Cancelled for the moment**

**Gerry Riley**



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## ART APPRECIATION GROUP

**Dates for U3A Art Appreciation Group meetings.** All meetings in Trinity Session room start at 10.15a.m. unless otherwise stated.

- June 17<sup>th</sup> 2020                      Tate Modern, Liverpool: Don McCullin  
Photography Exhibition**
- July 15<sup>th</sup> 2020                      Session Room TPG: Understanding Paintings.  
(Presentation by Bernadette Hamilton)**



**NO MEETING IN AUGUST**

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## SHORT STORY    CREATIVE WRITING

One mile beyond the Lancashire town of Wigan is the small township of Ince in Makerfield which, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a visiting French Emperor called “The Vale of Flowers.” History records that it was indeed an area of exceptional loveliness and was a much loved beauty spot in those days. It certainly was not beautiful in the 1940s and 50s when I grew up there but it had schools and shops, factories and two cinemas, the Regal and the Bug (the latter so named because it was filthy) and, if not exactly lively, Ince fulfilled our needs at the time. It was home.

In the 1940s schools finished at 4p.m and in the winter months, twilight was falling as those of us who lived at the far end of the town reached the railway station, a place which terrified every child in the area. Rumour had it that a witch, "Owd Nanny Greenteeth," was waiting in the long dark entrance hall to grab children if they got too close. We would automatically cross the road when the station came in sight and although some of the boys would dare each other to run in no-one ever did because a faint green glow – Nanny Greenteeth – showed that she was waiting. We could hear the hissing noises she made and that were enough for us.

"I'm not goin' in there. Tha' can get lost," the lads would shout and we girls would laugh and make fun of them, though nothing would have got us over the threshold either. We wouldn't tell them that, though.

One stormy November evening it was raining so hard that we would all have loved to take refuge in the station on our way home but only Albert, a nine year old boy, who was older than us, dared to do so. Albert had to ferry his two younger sisters to and from school every day and they had much further to go than the rest of us. They had gone to school without coats that day and were drenched and shivering with cold by the time the station came in sight.

"Gerrin' here you two," Albert ordered as he stepped boldly into the entrance hall. We all yelled in shock and disbelief. When the girls just stared at their brother but didn't move he lunged at them and grabbed their arm

Albert's sisters, Christina and Ellie, screamed in terror as their brother dragged them into the station and the rest of us ran for it, impressed by Albert's daring but terrified that he would drag us in as well.

"He'll have a job to quieten them girls," Billy Wheeler, who lived next door to me, said. We could still hear the girls' screams when we ran down the road.

Albert quietened his sisters – no doubt with a smack or two – and, in the account he gave to everyone later, he had to hold on to the girls firmly to prevent them from taking off into the rainy afternoon. The green glow we all fantasised about was only a few yards away and Albert suddenly realised what it was and turned his sisters to face it.

"It's nowt but the gas lamp thi soft haporths," he told them but as the girls turned round, still crying, a figure dressed in green appeared from nowhere and began to hurry towards them.

"It's Owd Nanny Greenteeth," screamed Christina and tried to drag her brother away but Albert stood his ground. The stranger was certainly a woman but as she drew nearer there was nothing scary about her. She wore a green tunic and she held out her hands to the children.

"Don't be frightened," she said softly and Albert thought later that it was a miracle they heard her, with the noises of the storm outside and his sisters' loud crying.

"Shut thi gobs!" he ordered sharply. "There's nowt to be scared of."

The girls were suddenly quiet and when Albert stepped forward to meet the stranger they didn't hang back.

"The storm has uprooted a large tree about a mile down the track and it's fallen across the line," the lady said. "A train from Liverpool will be along in twenty minutes and it's so dark it will go straight into it. Run down and tell the station master to alert the men in the signal box to stop the train or there'll be a terrible accident."

Albert, followed by his sisters, ran down the steps on to the platform. He found the station master's office but although he banged hard on the door and the window there was no response. He could hear a radio blaring inside but Mr. Robinson, the station master, was nowhere to be seen.

"He'll probably come out just in time for the train," Albert said, thinking the woman in green was behind him but when he looked round there was no sign of her. He banged again on the window, this time bringing out the angry station master who began to shout but stopped when Albert blurted out what had happened. Then Mr Robinson acted quickly. He bundled the children into his office, then picked up a telephone attached to the wall. The children listened fascinated as he spoke rapidly into the receiver. He replaced it and turned to Albert.

"If what you say is true many lives will be saved tonight," he said and at that point his telephone buzzed. When he had finished speaking to whoever was at the other end he said "They've done it. They've stopped the train. Thanks to you children the passengers are safe."

"It wasn't really us," Albert told him. "It was a woman up at the entrance who told us to come an' tell you."

"We'd better find her and tell us they've stopped the train," Mr Robinson said. "You children sit in my office and get warm. I won't be a minute." He hurried up the steps into the entrance but quickly came back.

"There's no-one there," he told the children. "You'll be the heroes if she doesn't come forward. A miracle has happened tonight."

The woman in green was never found. Albert and his sisters' pictures were in all the papers and they received awards from the town council and were asked to tell their story over and over again. Many of the passengers on that train attended the award ceremony and contributed gifts of money which made a huge difference to the children's family.

"Who do you think the lady in green was?" Albert was asked by our Headteacher a few days later when he was asked to stand in front of the whole school and tell us all about it.

"We thought it was Owd Nanny Greenteeth, the witch that lives in the station," Albert explained. "If it was her she was kind, she wasn't out to get us," he added.

When our teachers heard about Owd Nanny they thought Albert was braver than ever to go into the station when the rest of us wouldn't set foot in there.



For a while we didn't cross the road when we reached the station. We were all curious to see the lady in green but she didn't appear again and the story passed into legend. Most grownups thought Albert and his sisters had imagined the lady in green but when we left Albert and his sisters at the station that evening they knew nothing about the tree on the railway line so how could they have known unless someone told them?

Monica Price

## THE DINNER PARTY

## CREATIVE WRITING OCT. 2019

"Are you nearly ready, darling? They'll be here soon." Bill popped his head round the bedroom door and grinned as he caught his wife checking herself in the dressing table mirror. Moving behind her he bent to kiss her neck, "You look absolutely ravishing as always and I love that colour on you! Is there anything you'd like me to check for you?"

Joan smiled at him; she knew that she looked good in the kingfisher blue dress which set off her auburn hair but it was nice to hear *him* say so. "No thanks, I think things are under control and we've all know each other for so long even if the meal was a cooking disaster, we'd take it in our stride! You *could* check on the drinks if you like; make sure there's lemon and ice for the G and Ts, open the red and get the white wine into the fridge to chill. I think Pam and Tom are sharing a taxi with Jenny and Ken. David and Sue are coming by car so *one* of them will be driving – make sure we've got some decent soft drinks on offer."

Ten minutes later Joan heard voices outside by the gate and looking out of the window, saw Ken paying off the taxi while the girls walked up the drive. "Bill they're here." she called as she hurried down the stairs, "Could *you* let them in and see them to the terrace while I have a quick glance at the food. " Reaching the hall she was just in time to open the door for her last guests, Sue and David, who having hugged her affectionately, followed the others out onto the back patio. As Joan plated the starters, a smoked trout pate in lemon shells, she could hear laughter and chat wafting in through the open doors and smiled in anticipation of one of her favourite evenings. A final check of the table and she hastened to join the others for a pre meal drink.

Pam was looking radiant this evening in cream silk slacks topped by a coffee shirt, her blond bob gleaming in the early evening sun. She was about to speak! "Pay attention friends, I have some news for you! Tammy is getting engaged in two weeks time and you are all invited to a celebratory party at our house. They seem to be really well suited and we think he'll make a great son-in-law." Everyone laughed and raised a glass to them. These friends had first met some twenty five years ago when their children were small. They had all belonged to the local tennis club and tennis plus family had entwined their lives through all the usual ups and downs of family life. There was an easy familiarity among them, making occasions such as tonight's dinner enjoyable and relaxed. The group were mainly in their fifties now and their children either settled with their own families or at Uni. Only Jenny and Ken still had a son living at home full time and he was out more than he was in.

Ken was speaking, "We were saying in the taxi how much we look forward to our 'get-together'. What's not to like? The girls feed us splendidly and it goes without

saying the company is great! By the way Pam, if we're all coming to Tammy's engagement party is there anything special that they would like by way of a present, something we could all get together?"

"We could make some discreet enquiries along those lines couldn't we, Pam? It's an idea, thank you; I'll give you a bell during the week." Tom nodded and his wife smiled agreement then turned to Bill, who had been asking about what her youngest was hoping to study at Uni.

Joan had returned to the kitchen, accompanied by Jenny who had offered to help carry the food through. Having been invited to come inside to eat, her guests made for the dining room still chattering away. "That looks so good Joan, You certainly know how to put on a spread" David's eyes sparkled in anticipation. Silence reigned briefly after the starters were complimented on, before being demolished. Chatter resumed as Bill charged up the glasses again and the girls cleared the dishes. Joan re-entered bearing a delicious smelling cassoulet of lamb.

Mellow with good food and wine, the conversation continued around tennis, current films, the expected General Election, plans for holidays and their children (familiar to them all, having followed their progress since childhood) As always there were no awkward pauses only laughter and the ease of long time friends. Ken was talking across the table to David. "I was surprised to see you in Town last Wednesday Dave; I thought you usually work in Marlowe? I waved and tried to get your attention but you were deep in conversation and didn't notice. I thought it must have been something important so I didn't push it. Thought she might have been a client."

Sudden silence as the group registered "she". Sue raised her head sharply from her meal, "Weren't you in Manchester last Wednesday seeing a client about his 'buy to let' investment up there?" All eyes turned to her then back to David who had paled. There was a short pause – the group held their collective breaths.

"No darling, the meeting got switched to London due to unforeseen circumstances. I was talking to a client who has a serious problem. Sorry I really didn't hear you Ken."

"She didn't seem to be much like a business woman; she looked young enough to be your daughter, very pretty though." Ken laughed, "If it had been me I probably wouldn't have noticed me either! You'll have to keep an eye on him, Sue." he laughed again and the room relaxed a little.

Sue stood suddenly, "I don't believe you David, you're lying! Who was she? This girl, young enough to be your daughter, with serious property problems in Manchester\_or London? You never *mentioned* the change of venue, nor that it was a *woman* you were meeting." Her strained face displayed her unhappiness while her friends, *their* friends looked on in horror wondering what they could say or do to alleviate the situation. Jenny glared at her husband, why hadn't Ken kept his mouth shut? Though knowing him he almost certainly hadn't realised the upset he would cause – he would have assumed that David had told the truth and that Sue would have laughed it off. Men were so stupid sometimes.

David had the look of a hunted man, his eyes beseechingly on his wife, "Oh God Sue I was going to tell you – it should never have come out like this." he turned to Ken, "You said 'young enough to be my daughter', "she *is* my daughter and I only found out a couple of weeks ago; it was the first time we had ever met. Her mother and I were an item briefly at university, before I had ever met you darling,(he turned to his

wife) we thought we were in love and she ended up pregnant. She was only nineteen and neither of us were capable of bringing up a child; her parents wanted her to have it adopted; it was a truly terrible time for us both but in the end that is what happened. Recently she started looking for us, curiosity I suppose, anyway she, Poppy - her name is Poppy now, managed to trace me through her birth mother – who is now married with a family. I was completely taken aback but agreed to meet her to discuss things. I should have told you first but I was afraid of your reaction ----”

The men, Tom, Bill and Ken, were looking at David, appalled sympathy written all over their faces while their wives seeing Sue's ashen face gathered round Sue staring accusingly at a miserable looking David. Eyes brimming with unshed tears, Sue somehow managed to stand and address the hosts, “I'm so sorry to have ruined your evening everyone but I need to speak to my husband privately. I'm sorry Joan – Bill, I have to go.” She fled the room sobbing, closely followed by a distraught David. The front door slammed behind them.

Completely stunned by the turn of events the remaining friends were silent for a moment, Joan looking to Bill for guidance. None was forthcoming. Finally after what seemed an eternity she asked whether they were ready for dessert and somewhat relieved to have found some normality they assented.

“They'll sort things out – we've all had our ups and downs.” said Ken. “Not like that, we haven't!” chipped in Pam . “He'd never even told her that he'd fathered a child before they married.” Bill clearly couldn't get his head round it and glanced nervously at his wife. “Poor chap would have thought it was all in the distant past and that it would never crop up again.” Tom shook his head in 'There but for the grace of God 'style. The thought in everyone's mind was whether anything could ever be the same again.

“Would anyone like a cognac with their coffee?” Bill queried, “Perhaps we could use one?”

“Yes please,” came a heartfelt chorus.

**Eliane Davie**

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## **THEATRE OUTINGS - SOCIAL OUTINGS EVENTS**

**A Trip to See “The Northern Lights” Wednesday 7th October 2020**

**YES! A Trip to see the World Famous Northern Lights Blackpool Illuminations**



Coach will leave Trinity at 1pm. Arriving Blackpool about 3pm, you will have an hour or so to walk the prom and see the sights followed by a Fish&Chip Supper before the coach trip through the lights. Return trip will leave Blackpool at 8pm to arrive back at Trinity about 9.30pm. Cost will be about

£16 (+ Fish&Chips) dependent on numbers. Coach needs to be booked well in advance and I need to know that we will have sufficient numbers before booking. So please let me know if you are interested (There is NO COMMITMENT at this stage). Please add your name to the list on notice board or email [groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk](mailto:groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk)

**Cancelled – hopefully postponed.**

**Manchester Ship Canal Tuesday June 9<sup>th</sup>**

Cost: £42 **Cancelled – hopefully postponed**



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**Regional Web site:** [www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events)

For regional news and events.



Registered Charity number 1159091

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## **AND FINALLY-----**

The last month or so has been a difficult time for many of us with the uncertainties and restrictions caused by the Corona virus. Sadly, as with many activities, we have had to shelve our meetings and groups for the moment. Please adhere to public health advice to keep yourselves safe; we hope that none of our members experience severe ill health through it. We will of course keep you informed as far as possible as to when we are able to resume normal activities and please let me know of anything which might interest or amuse our members.

Take care everyone – I hope we are able to meet again before too long!



*Eliane Davie - Editor*

