



# JULY NEWSLETTER

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Since our last news letter and our meetings returning to normality we have had some very good speakers talking about very interesting and varied topics. For this we can thank Colin Stredder.

Things are looking bright for the future. How about a trip to "The Blackpool Illuminations?" Tony Swarbrick has offered to organise this.

We also have two new groups on the horizon:

Eliane would be prepared to offer a Play Reading Group (with a twist). To find out what the twist is you would have to attend. With Eliane's many years of experience in Theatre, it would be a very entertaining group, a must for Theatre lovers.

Pauline Horner has kindly offered to start a drawing group. She is a trained Artist as well as a trained Teacher. Delve into your imagination, something I have always wanted to do but never got around to it. Now is the time!

If anyone has any ideas for Groups or Outings/Trips please let any Committee member know about it and together we can do our best to make it happen. We want our U3A to flourish and we need your help to do so.

## GOODBYE TO THE VIKINGS

The term "Viking" as it is commonly used is misleading, warping our perception of the Middle Ages. It should be retired. There was no such thing as a "Viking" in the medieval period. Use of the term emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The word 'Wicing' occurred in Old English and 'Vikingr' in Old Icelandic, but were used differently, to mean something like "Pirate". Academics nod to this when we assert that 'Viking' was a job description rather than ethnicity, but we don't always take on board the full implication of this distinction. In Old Icelandic, 'Viking' could be applied to any

pirate regardless of where they came from or when, or what language they spoke. They might be Estonians or Saracens, for example. It is also noteworthy that it is never used to describe the people who we today call "Vikings". Many of the men labelled "Vikings" in text-books and popular histories were warriors led by Kings on military expeditions with clear political objectives, such as the Great Heathen Army that fought Alfred the Great, or the Norwegian force that accompanied Harold Hardrada to his death at Stamford Bridge in 1066. Calling such people "Vikings" would be like calling 18th Century British, French or Dutch Naval officers "Pirates" simply because they wore vaguely similar hats and sailed vaguely similar ships to that of Blackbeard.

The word "Viking" appears to have entered modern English in the early 19th Century, when Medieval Icelandic literature was beginning to be translated into major European languages. Initially it was used in the original medieval sense, but by the 1860's it was starting to be used to describe all early medieval warriors from Scandinavia. The final development, the "derivation" of the word that allows the use of terms such as "Viking Farms" and "Viking women and children", is much more recent and has gradually crept up since the Second World War. This is insidious; by linking military prowess and savagery to an entire ethnic group; it encourages its appropriation by racial supremacists.

#### No Such Thing

The issue with the term is not nearly semantic. This conception of the Vikings seriously distorts our understanding of European History. We have tended to group almost all Scandinavian activity between the 790's and the mid 11th Century together under the "Viking" label, creating a distinct "Viking Age" and imagined "Viking" culture and identity. The evidence does not support this analysis.

First, the Scandinavian homelands were extremely varied in environment, social structure and history. Denmark is flat and fertile, its Islands cleared, by the year 800, of predators for millennia. It had a complex settlement pattern that was at least as sophisticated as anything found in England. Danish Soldiers and Settlers coming in to the 9th Century eastern England, found landscape and settlement patterns very like those with which they were familiar and people who shared very similar economic and social structures. They were not savage barbarians penetrating a more civilised realm. The Dutch Lands had the greatest capacity to sustain population in Scandinavia and it is likely that the majority of Scandinavians lived in Denmark in this period. Norway, whose western fjords provided the stereotypical backdrop to the Vikings was a relative backwater with a tiny population and was not important as a route, the "North Way" to the Arctic Regions and the luxury of goods, such as furs and Walrus Ivory that they provided.

To be continued in our next News letter.

#### As an Aside:

The most common name in the World is Mohammed.

When the Moon is directly overhead you will weigh slightly less.

Camels have three eyelids to protect themselves from the blowing Desert Sands.

There are only 2 words in the English language that have all 5 vowels in order "abstemious" and "facetious". Keep smiling!

**Alan Harding - Chairman**

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## BRIAN'S MUSINGS

When putting out the green bin for emptying last Friday, it became immediately clear from the smaller number than usual of bins similarly placed, that several of our neighbours must have actually managed to get away on holiday, in spite of all the cancelled flights and interminable queues. One cannot help but feel real concerned for all those whose hopes of a holiday abroad had to be abandoned at the last minute. While it is true that with high expectation we are more likely to be exposing ourselves to disappointment, such are the pressures on people nowadays that it is difficult to abandon all hope of escaping, if only for a few days.

I fell to thinking about a childhood in which travel was virtually impossible. Posters asking us to consider if our journey was really necessary were displayed at regular intervals in public places. The intrepid might take a trolleybus ride into Derby for tuppence – but not very often. We were not able to while away our leisure hours chatting with friends on the phone. No one in our street had one nor, as far as we knew, in any other street for that matter. There was, of course, the radio and we had each other. The few who had cars kept them shut in their garages for want of petrol; airports were for the exclusive use of the RAF and we were discouraged from travelling by rail. Now people think nothing of commuting fifty or so miles on a daily basis in order to work.

An aspect of life that we frequently shared with those who currently submit to the frustration of the baggage and security checks, is the necessity of standing in line. During the war-years if one saw a queue one tended to join it first and ask what it was about once one's place was secured. These restrictions were not a temporary imposition of course. They went on for years. It became second nature to make do with less and queue for the little that was available. I grew up with them. Now I find all sorts of extravagance and excess difficult to bear and constantly feel guilty when caught up in subscribing to such. A good two thirds of my fellow humans are supporting a life-style that I find totally alien and in which I am every day less inclined to participate. I find expressions of fashion wasteful and unnecessary.

Fortunately there are of course phenomena - artefacts, relationships and statements of being that, for their own sake, and for ours, embrace us with meaning, function, purpose and identity. Mercifully we need neither transportation nor fuel in order to find them. All we need to do is recognise that they are there and to do that we might need first to be still and look beyond all the hyper-activity and gloss with which we are constantly surrounded with the assurance that we need it and that it is our right. I cannot help but question such assurance.

Brian Gill

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## Meetings 2022 Social

July 21<sup>st</sup>: DVD: The Mersey Tunnel - 60years

## Speakers (so far) 2022

July 7<sup>th</sup> 2022

Philip Caine -

Barrow to Bagdad



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## Art Appreciation Group Led by Bernadette Hamilton

### U3A Art Appreciation Group visit to the Walker Art Gallery – Revue by Pauline Horner

On 15<sup>th</sup> June we visited the Walker exhibition “The Tudors: Passion, Power and Politics”. This exhibition includes many paintings from the National Portrait Gallery which is currently closed for refurbishment. I think we all found that there was just too much to be seen in one visit!



There were several portraits of each of the Tudor monarchs, their courtiers and politicians. We were greeted by the life-size portrait of Henry VIII, which I remember used to be in the entrance area of the Walker when I was a child.



There were several portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, each showing a striking



resemblance so that you felt you were really seeing the woman. One known as the 'Pelican' portrait was produced in 1575 when it became clear that the queen would never marry. The pelican on her pendant feeds her young with her own blood and this was seen as a symbol of Elizabeth's commitment to her people. Another painting from the same time was known as the "Darnley" portrait and this was used to produce images of her for many years. One can only assume that she was pleased with the likeness in the portrait if she allowed it to be copied.

As well as portraits, there were beautiful examples of Tudor embroidery and leatherwork, including a magnificent set of gloves made from leather, gilt metal, silk and lace. Elaborately decorated or specially perfumed gloves were often given as gifts. Many were solely decorative items, displaying the wealth and status of their owner. There were also two mannequins displaying reproductions of Tudor dresses.



The Westminster Tournament Roll, a scroll similar to the Bayeux Tapestry, was partially unrolled for viewing and a screen above showed it in full. Included on this scroll was a group of king's trumpeters, one of whom was a black man named John Blanke. There were details of aspects of this man's life including asking for a raise in pay from Henry VIII! These pictures of John Blanke are the most famous images of a named African person living in Tudor England.



Throughout the exhibition there was very soft Tudor music which was recorded by the Claremont Ensemble, a musical group based here on Wirral. It was a very informative and friendly morning and I think some of us will be going again.

Below from left to right: Henry VIII with Catherine of Aragón, Sir Thomas More, Mary, Queen of Scots, Edward VI, and John Fisher

Pauline Horner

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Our thanks to Bernadette for all the work she does in organising these visits. Ed.

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## GROUP NEWS

### A Book and a Glass of Wine: Judith Whale

Meet on last Thursday of month. The group is full at the moment, but vacancies may occur if all do not return.



### Amateur Astronomy

### Paul Cullen, Judith Wylie

Paul will inform members of what events to watch out for.



### Bridge:

### Tony Swarbrick, Joan Perfect [bridge@oxtonu3a.co.uk](mailto:bridge@oxtonu3a.co.uk)

Meetings will be in "The Cabin" at Trinity. Meetings on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays each month, 10.30a.m. to 12. We meet to play friendly relaxed bridge, Joan and myself are on hand to offer advice to less experienced players and from time to time offer "teaching" sessions for people new to Bridge.



### Book Club: Mary O'Neill

Meetings take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 2pm. Mary has room for one or two more members; anyone interested should contact Tony Swarbrick our Group Co-ordinator.



### Lunch Circle: Colin Stredder

The next Lunch Circle meeting will be on July 19<sup>th</sup> at the Eastham Ferry Hotel, 12.45 for lunch at 1pm.



**Music Appreciation:**

**Paul Cullen**

There will be no meetings in July and August – return in September.

**Walking Group: See below.**



**Rummikub: Joan Parfect**

**2nd and 3rd Wednesday of the month from 10.15 - 12 noon** in the Cabin. There is a charge of £2 pp to cover room rental and coffee.

**Art Group Bernadette Hamilton**

Bernadette will be giving a talk on 'Raphael' from 10am, on July 20th, in the Sessions room at Trinity and Palm Grove Church.



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## Lunch Circle

**July 19th** At the Eastham Ferry Hotel, 12.45 for lunch at 1pm.

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## Tea and Coffee Rota

**July 7th**  
Wendy Devonald  
Lorraine Molyj  
Joan Beedles

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## CHRISTMAS DINNER

Barbara Winstanley is organising the Christmas Dinner this year which is booked for December 15th at the Prenton Golf Club. Bookings will be taken soon and a menu will be available. Barbara has been organising these meals very successfully for some years now and we are grateful to her for offering to do so again.

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## BLACKPOOL OUTING

Tony Swarbrick has offered to organise a trip to Blackpool to see the lights, if enough people show interest! There needs to be a minimum of thirty five for it to be viable.



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## Books and Jigsaws



Thank you everyone for thinning down the books and jigsaw collections; they are at a much more manageable number now and we can return to bringing in books and jigsaws for exchange again. In the interest of not getting stock in excess of storage space again, please keep to only bringing the number of books that you take – it seems to work really well!

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## Friendly Ear



If you know of any member who is sick, in hospital or in need of a friendly chat please let Mary Hamilton or Dot Matthews know. They will contact them to see whether they need help and send cards (where applicable)

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## Committee News

As we are still short of Committee Members, Brian Jones, who is new to this branch though not to U3A, has agreed to be co-opted onto Committee to help with re-energising our Group. We intend to start a recruitment drive for new members drawn from the recently retired. Please spread the word among anyone you know who is recently retired and looking for friendship and activity and who you think might enjoy getting involved .

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## Walking Group



- Date: Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June
- Led By: Ken Jackson
- Meet at: Port Sunlight Station at 10.15 for 10.30 start (toilets are available!!)
- Route: 5 miles from Port Sunlight Station, via cycleway to Stadium Rd, through Brotherton Park, Dibbinsdale and Marfords Park then on to Bromborough for lunch.
- Lunch: Merebrook Pub at Bromborough. Station is next door for return home or to car at PS.
- Other Info:
  1. Ken has Menu, and pre-ordering is recommended to speed-up service.
  2. You might wish to bring a torch for the tunnel!!

3. If you prefer a slightly longer walk, Ken will include a stroll around PS village at the start.

\* Please note: in a case of train strikes occurring the walk will be cancelled

**Please let Tony Swarbrick know if you will be walking.**

**[groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk](mailto:groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk)**

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## JULY WALK

The July walk will be on Thursday July 28<sup>th</sup> and will be led by Judith Wylie and Eliane Davie. We will meet at 10.15am, for a prompt departure at 10am, in the car park of The Cottage Loaf, Thurstaston where we will have lunch on our return.

The walk will be about 4 miles long starting with a walk down to the Visitor Centre on the Thurstaston headland where there are toilets and a Bird Hide. We continue down steps to the beach turning left to walk to beyond the cliffs where we turn inland walking towards the Wirral Way which we join for a short stretch before turning inland again and walk on pathways alongside fields, until reaching The Dungeon. Here there is a steep but short climb through woodland then onwards through country towards the village of Thurstaston where we emerge by the church. A short walk from there takes us back to the Cottage Loaf for lunch.

Details of the menu and the signing on form will be available at the first July Meeting, July 7<sup>th</sup>. Walkers might like to take their sticks for the steep (wide) steps at the Dungeon and robust walking shoes. Most of the walk apart from that and the steps down to the beach is pretty level.

**Eliane Davie**

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## LUNCH GROUP June 21<sup>st</sup> at the Dibbinsdale Inn (Pesto Restaurant)

Led by Colin Stredder, members of the Lunch Club enjoyed lunch at this attractive venue in Bromborough. Something a bit different: diners can choose any three tapas dishes from a large choice – great to try six if you share with a partner! It must be at least three years since the group were last there and all enjoyed the occasion.

As always, our thanks to Colin who organises these lunches at various venues.



ED.

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## SUMMER SCHOOL 2022

Bookings are again being taken for the

Summer School at the University of Cumbria at the Fusehill Campus, Carlisle, CA1 2HH. This is organised by the North West Region and has always had excellent reports. For further information regarding courses available contact Tony Swarbrick:

[groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk](mailto:groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk)

[events@u3asites.org.uk](mailto:events@u3asites.org.uk)

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**The next U3A meeting at TWPG is on July 7<sup>th</sup>**

## Thoughts regarding the possibility of two new groups mooted?

The Committee would like to know the response to suggestions for two new groups: firstly, Pauline Horner would be willing to organise a Sketching Group depending on how many would be interested in joining. She is a retired teacher and has a great deal of experience of exhibiting her own work around Merseyside. We need to have an idea of the level of support there would be?

Secondly: Many of you will remember June Wilson who died during lockdown (though not of Covid) She was a great character who led a Play Reading Group until a couple of years before her death at 91 and also took a movement class for the church. The group had become very small in recent years but I wondered whether there might be any interest if I started another one from my house, reading scripts

but also discussing characters and the structure of the plays. How to create atmosphere with lighting, sound, techniques to help with character development etc. About eight people would be an ideal number for it to be viable but it would be possible with six.

Pauline and I will both be at meetings where you will be able to ask questions. If any of you have an idea for a group that you would be prepared to lead please come forward. Perhaps you have a skill that you could impart or share with others?

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## Late Extra:

### A Visit to Ron’s Place.

Ron’s Place, a local Oxton residence, has been featured in various Local and National Newspapers and on BBC’s North West tonight. It was the home of Ron Gittins for 33 years. In that period, he decorated almost every surface with murals depicting historical scenes.

We have been offered a guided visit for between 12 and 15 people – date to be arranged, probably September/October time. A donation of £4 is requested.

If you are interested, put your name on sheet by the Notice Board.

Tony Swarbrick

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## And finally.....

As most of you are aware of, there are no meetings at TWPG during August although sometimes a few of the Groups meet away from our venue. There will be no newsletter for August either, although it will be back for September and I will send it out before the first September meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup>. so that you will be up to date.

Many of you will be going away for holidays or to spend time with families and I hope that you have an enjoyable summer and return refreshed. Don’t forget to take photos of anything unusual that could go in the newsletter and send them to me! As you can see, we are working towards energising our U3A to return to the vibrant group we were before lockdown; we do need your help though, so ideas please for outings etc. and if anyone could lead a group??

*Eliane Davie - Editor*

Happy Summer,







