



March 2026

Chair's Message

Hello Everyone

This newsletter seems to have come round quickly – I always forget how short February is.

But 2026 continues to be a positive year for us at Oxton and Prenton u3a, we've had some more excellent Thursday meetings and our membership numbers are still growing. I hope you all take the opportunity to encourage new members when you are out and about. Tony, our Membership Secretary, never stops – I spotted him recruiting at the recent Bus Pass Group visit to Sudley House! We are a small u3a compared to many others and have no plans to exceed 200 members (the Third Age Trust's definition of a small u3a), but more members means more opportunities for interest groups and more "hands on deck" makes things run more smoothly.

Please look at what you have to offer to help our u3a continue to thrive and to be the warm and welcoming group we want it to be. Joan is always on the lookout for more help with Teas and Coffees on Thursday mornings, the more volunteers she gets, the less frequently they have to do it. And it is an excellent opportunity, if you are relatively new, to speak to other members. Also, our Meet and Greet team, who do such a wonderful job welcoming people as they arrive, could always do with more members – again another great opportunity to meet members.

There are occasions when Committee members are not available for setting up and taking down chairs etc for our Thursday meetings, a case in point when I left early with Tony and Margaret to attend a funeral on the 12th February, and I am so grateful to those who step up and help out – it makes life so much easier.

And finally – If you have an idea for an Interest Group or a trip out – let us know and together we can see if we can make it happen.

Oh, one more "finally" – thanks to all of you asking how Rex (the noisy Bengal cat I adopted 3 years ago) is getting on – he is a lot better, him being so miserable was the only real negative I had in February but he is responding to treatment and may well be with me for a little longer.

My thanks to you all

Corinne

The Magic of the Wooden Beads: A Soroban Showcase



In an era of sleek touchscreens and instant digital answers, Praba and her son Rani, recently proved to a captivated audience of Oxton & Prenton u3a members that some of the best tools for the mind are centuries old. The duo hosted a demonstration of the Soroban, the traditional Japanese abacus, bringing with them enough equipment for us all to take part in a hands-on learning

experience.

While many in the audience initially viewed the device as a simple low-tech calculator, they quickly realized this ancient art is far from a relic – it is a workout for the modern mind with profound benefits for brain health.



The room was buzzing with concentration and laughter as members tackled the challenges Praba was setting us.



Always looking for fun ways to keep our minds sharp, this demonstration certainly highlighted a method to improve cognitive function and memory with the usage of the tactile beads honing our fine motor skills.

The session was such a hit that several members asked about the possibility of learning more about Soroban, proving that

even in 2026, a wooden frame and a few beads can still spark an interest. There is now a signup sheet available at meetings.

The History and Work of the RNLI

Brian Jordan

Brian Jordan came to speak to us about The Royal National Lifeboat Institution. The RNLI has been saving lives at sea for over 200 years. It began in 1824, when Sir William Hillary—living on the Isle of Man—witnessed countless shipwrecks and called for a dedicated, organised lifesaving service.

In its early days, lifeboats were powered by oars and sheer determination. Crews were made up of local volunteers who braved storms, darkness, and dangerous seas to rescue those in trouble. As technology advanced, so did the RNLI's fleet: from rowing boats to steam-powered craft, and eventually to today's modern, high-speed lifeboats and hovercraft.



Despite these changes, one thing has remained constant— Their work is funded almost entirely by public donations and is still largely run by volunteers giving their time to crew lifeboats, and operate and support fundraising efforts.

Brian mentioned tours of Hoylake Lifeboat Station before he finished his talk and plans are now underway to organise those.

Bus Pass trip to Sudley House



This month Tony led the group to Liverpool to visit an art gallery and museum, out of the city centre and accessible by bus and train – ideal for users of free travel passes! We made our own ways to Liverpool and took a bus together for the first part of our day out.

Sudley House is a historic house in Aigburth. Built in 1824 and much modified in the 1880s, it now contains the art collection of George Holt, a shipping-line owner and former resident. Part of National Museums Liverpool, entry is free. The original furniture is missing – but we could see the rooms where the Holts entertained their wealthy friends. There is a lot of art on display by some fine artists and the childhood rooms upstairs were also of interest.

Of course, we checked out the refreshments available at the café and explored the gardens before assembling for our return journey by train.

Art Appreciation

Williamson Gallery Artist in Residence – Steve des Landes



Steve des Landes’ bold palette and distinctive style greeted us the moment we stepped into the gallery, setting the tone for a memorable meeting. As we took in the first impressions of his work, Bernadette offered a short introduction, and soon after, the Williamson’s “Artist in Residence” himself joined us to share the stories behind his paintings.

Steve was generous with his time and told us about his journey into art and his influences. He explained that his inspiration comes from memory and imagination rather than direct observation. Much of his work explores the subtle, often unspoken dynamics between men and women. He is fascinated by the everyday moments that reveal deeper emotional undercurrents—those quiet, sometimes awkward scenes that hint at unfulfilled hopes, complicated relationships, and the inner lives we don’t always show.

He discussed several pieces in depth, and his explanations of the symbolism woven into his paintings added new layers of meaning to the works around us, making the exhibition not just visually striking but emotionally resonant.



It was a pleasure to hear directly from the artist and to experience his work with such personal insight.

Alistair Richards CEO of NWCR



Alistair gave a talk at our meeting on 26th February. He covered the history of the charity. It was good to hear that NWCR puts our region’s cancer needs first, because we heard that we were 25% more likely to be diagnosed with cancer than anywhere else in the UK. The NWCR funds pioneering research to find a cure for cancer but also to improve the care and education to tackle the cause, Of course, all this needs public support. Alistair was a very interesting and able speaker.

Play Reading Group with Eliane Davie

Next meeting is on March 10th at 10.30am-12.30 when we will be reading 'Picnic at Hanging Rock', set in Australia. It is an unusual play taken from a book by Joan Lindsay and adapted by Tom Wright and was first co-produced by Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne and Black Swan Theatre Company, Perth in 2016. The European premiere was at the Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh in January 2017.

The story is taken from an account of the disappearance of three girls and a teacher on a visit to Hanging Rock in 1913. It is a spectacular volcanic uprising below Mount Macedon. The girls were pupils from Appleyard College and were in a party of girls and teachers who went there to enjoy a picnic. One of the missing girls was later found unconscious; she later recovered but could remember nothing of what had happened. Over time police searched the area picking up few clues. The play takes an imaginary look at what might have been their fate.

It is different in style from our more usual readings but we think that perhaps because of that and because it is quite mysterious, it will be a good read. There is a cast of five, all female. I thank Judith who has been finding some good plays in Liverpool Central Library for us.

Tea and Coffee Rota

12 March 2026	Barbara Baker Kathy Sullivan
26 March 2026	Eileen Slater Linda Kinnear
9 April 2026	Gwyneth Williams Gwyn Thomas
23 April 2026	Hilary Robinson Maureen Oldham
7 May 2026	Ann Greenhalgh Norma Finlayson
21 May 2026	Aileen Lawless Joan Beedles
4 June 2026	Karen Little Hazel Stoll

Would you like to help out and meet more members?
Please contact Joan Benton on 0151 608 6226 or 07568563329

'Friends' newsletter

Signing up to the newsletter means you are up to date and in touch with all that's happening across the movement as it happens. You'll also gain exclusive access to our Friends Extra website – a range of offers, discounts and services.

The u3a newsletter shares news, learning opportunities and member stories from across the u3a movement.

No payment is required to read the newsletters and there is a survey about your experience of the u3a with a prize draw for entries of a £100 John Lewis Voucher in February's issue.

[Your u3a Friends Newsletter - February](#)

Speaker Meetings

Arranged by Pam Southall

12 th Mar	Special Investigation inside the Brighton Bombing	Barry Cave
9 th Apr	Solo Walk across Africa	Fran Sandham
7 th May	Peru in the Footsteps of the Incas	Dr. David Mottram
4 th Jun	The Liverpool Tobacco Industry 1642–2007	Robert S. Jones
2 nd Jul	'Operation Fish' – saving Britain's Gold from the Nazis	B Nevin

GROUPS

Art Appreciation – Held in the Session room in TWPG. 3rd Wednesday each month. Also, Gallery visits.

Next meeting is 25th March (NB. not 18th as previously planned). 10am for 10.15 start. Bernadette is giving a presentation on Mark Chagall

Contact Bernadette – <mailto:art@oxtonu3a.co.uk>

Near and Far with your Bus Pass – Thursday 30th April – Mersey River Cruise.

11.20 Ferry – Seacombe to Liverpool. Return ferry 4.00pm. Three hours in Liverpool for museums, shops and lunch etc. Attractions of your own choice can be visited at your own pace. More information including meet up times is on the signup sheet and will be emailed out to those taking part. All transport is free with a travel pass.

Natter and Read

Meets at 10.30. – 12.00. in Wallasey at Joyce Woosley's home near Wallasey Town Hall on Thursday following the first u3a meeting in the month. Spaces available. All books are provided by the Library Service.

Contact Joyce: <mailto:book2@oxtonu3a.co.uk>

Lunch Group

Our lunch group hosted by Joan Benton is held monthly at the Refreshment Rooms. It is held on the third Wednesday in the month at 12:45 for 1:00pm. Numbers are limited so watch out at TWPG meetings for the signup sheet.

Walking Group

Usually 3rd Friday in month. <mailto:walks@oxtonu3a.co.uk>

Information and Sign-up sheet available in meetings. Next walk is the Liverpool 3 parks walk on 27th March

Nordic Walking

Come and join Corinne's Nordic Walking Group every Tuesday at 10.00 am at Birkenhead Park visitor centre. We walk for an hour then have refreshments at the café. All year round.

Bridge Group and Rummikub

Bill Nock is the leader with Tony on hand to teach bridge to new members. Meets in the cabin at TWPG fortnightly on Wed. at 10.00am. Next meeting 4th March.

Book Group 1

Meets in Oxtun at Val Edward's house on the second Tuesday in the month. Full at the moment. Contact: book1@oxtonu3a.co.uk

Craft Group

Meets on the last Monday of the month. 2.00 – 4.00. At Joan Benton's house. Full at the moment, but names can be added to a reserve list.

Contact: craft@oxtonu3a.co.uk

Play Reading

Thanks to Eliane for the notes about her group meeting. Get in touch with her if you would like to join and she will put your name on the reserve list.

2nd Tuesday monthly usually. Meeting: 10.00am – 12.30. Held at Eliane Davie's house.

Contact Eliane: <mailto:playreading@oxtonu3a.co.uk>

Care of members

Eve Felton has agreed to be the point of contact so if you know of any member in need of a kind word please contact

committeemember@oxtonu3a.co.uk

Please give some info – a different type of card is required for someone who has a broken leg to someone who has had a major heart attack!

Also, a bit of information for sympathy cards is helpful.

Thanks to Steve Cottam for proofreading, and to Corinne for photographs.

If you think you have anything u3a related to be included in the newsletter please send it to me.

<mailto:newsletter@oxtonu3a.co.uk>

Kathy