



January Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MUSINGS



With the coming of a new year it is customary to look forward to the year ahead, attempting to prognosticate future trends and outcomes, whilst at the same time looking back over the year past to assess where we might have gone wrong. As we have been doing this for millennia it is a little disappointing to observe that we are still not very good at it and continue repeating the same mistakes and, what is more, the solutions we devise in order to spare us from the worst exigencies of our follies tend to become problems in their own right. This trend is of course inevitable in a culture and social structure that is primarily dualistic.

Enter the STAR.

I'm delighted to be able to assure us that we are still in the pantomime season in which no self respecting good-fairy would dare to appear without a star firmly attached to the end of his or her wand. And whilst we are on the subject, we are actually still in the Christmas season too, which I believe ends on 2nd February with the celebration of Candlemas or at the very earliest with Epiphany on 6th January, when the three Wise Men visit; and as we all know they would never have got there had not been for the star that determined both their timing and their direction.

I do not care that none of this is verifiable, logical truth and that we are in the realm of mythology and fairy tales. I am a psychologist and better men than me have shown us the extent to which human affairs are directed more powerfully by subconscious urges than they ever are by logic and intellect and it is these very urges of which the language of symbols and images speak.

Both pantomime and religion have a vested interest in acting out the conflict between the forces of good and evil, the dark and the light, and you may have noticed that a similar conflict currently prevails in our political system. Whilst this conflict seems to be germane to the human condition there are clearly times when it becomes more pressing and the Winter Solstice is clearly one such time. Though the great dramatic theme of death and rebirth reflects the relationship of our planet to its sun in an act of seemingly eternal, cyclic recurrence, it can fail to be specific when it comes to finding the viable escape that the solstice mythologies seem to offer. Marriage is offered as the preferred route: Cinderella finds her prince and all is well. Now this is not to denigrate the splendid and noble institution of matrimony but some of you may have noticed that it does not always come with the realisation of eternal bliss offered by fairy tales and religion. Marriage to God is not an easy proposition to undertake either, whilst an earthly partner is, as previously indicated, a solution that can bring its own set of problems, either because it can and will end in separation and/or death or because it does not end quite soon enough for some.

Stars are not subjected to the planetary cycles to which our Earth is bound. Though they conform to their own laws and trajectories, from our point of view the time-scale in which they function speaks of a different order and level of existence. Seen from a stellar perspective our earthly struggles become somewhat diminished. In the realm of images and symbols speaking directly to the subconscious, stars remind us that human consciousness does not always have to be bound to the conflict of opposites, that there is a mode of being that can access a timeless, stress-free state in which for a moment everything is made whole. From a psychological point of view, something in us knows this to be true. Why else would we continually re-visit those symbols and images that have the power and authority to remind us of other dimensions and other possible modes of being - especially at this time of year?

BRIAN GILL

CHAIRMAN

ROTA 2nd JANUARY 2020 TO 20TH FEBRUARY 2020 COFFEE & TEA

If you cannot do a duty, please ring me, JOAN BENTON, ON 608 6226

2020

2nd January 2020

Jackie Ritson

Wendy Devonald

Lorraine Malyj

16th January 2020

Ursula Cook

Judith Wylie



30th January 2020

Gwyneth Thomas
Arlene Hinton
Margaret Yeardsley
Kate Walton

6th February 2020

Mary Hamilton
Greig Roberts
John Roberts

20th February 2020

Joan Parfect
Sylvia Hunt
Bernadette Hamilton



What an optimist I am! I am still hopeful of finding more volunteers. Please ring me (Joan Benton) on 608 6226 if you would like to offer your services.

MEMBERSHIP SUBS DUE FROM OCTOBER 24th

PAYMENT TO GWYNETH WILLIAMS

Cost £12 (payment preferably by cheque, made out to 'Prenton & Oxtan U3A')
Subs should be paid by the end of January after which names will be removed from the database. Remaining dues can be collected at January meetings on the 2nd, 16th or 30th.



CHARLES THOMPSON MISSION JANUARY 16TH

Please remember to bring any gifts for the mission to the hall on January 16th when we will be passing them over as our Christmas gifts from you. Gifts should be warm clothes in good as new condition, toiletries, gloves, scarves, toys and dry foods etc.

The Mission does excellent work for the poor and homeless and you can be sure that any gifts go where they are most needed.

LUNCH GROUP

Meet at 12.45 for 1pm

2020



January 21st 2020	The Shippons, Irby
February 18th 2020	The Caernarvon Castle, Oxton
March 17th 2020	The Travellers Rest, Bebington
April 21st 2020	The Toby Carvery, Landican
May 19th 2020	Pesto, Bromborough
June 16th 2020	The Boathouse, Parkgate
July 21st 2020	Sheldrakes, Heswall



COLIN STREDDER

On our last meeting before Christmas, December 5th, we were entertained by Barry Humphries who sang and played a selection of Christmas songs on his guitar. These were accompanied by slides reminding us of stars from past years who had made them famous.



It was a fitting start to Christmas and Barry had stepped in at short notice after the original speaker for the day had cancelled. A large attendance gave him an enthusiastic reception.

Ed.

NOTES OF ACTIVITIES AT NON - SPEAKER MEETINGS 2020

16 th January 2020	The Eye Fund
13 th February 2020	Further information on scammers.
12 th March 2020	Sing Along with the Killenwood Accoustic Duo
9 th April 2020	Wirral memories.
7 th May 2020	Spot the Landmarks



Further dates to be announced later.

Colin Stredder

SPEAKERS 2020

Thursday 2nd January – Roger Browne.
musical journey.

New Orleans to New York; a



Thursday 30th January – Max Hall

Last Great race on earth.

Thursday 27th February–Anthony Annakin-Smith. The Neston Collieries
Wirral’s industrial revolution.

Thursday 26th March – Sheila Walsh

Hullabaloo and Penguin Poo

Thursday 23rd April – Ruth Moor-Williams
(true story)

Wirral and Wales humour and song

Thursday 21st May – Gavin Chappell

Smuggling in the Wirral

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2nd January 2020 -

First meeting after Christmas break.

23rd April 2020 -

AGM

30th July 2020 -

Last meeting before Summer Break

3rd September 2020

First meeting after Summer Break

CREATIVE WRITING (A TRUE STORY)

I loved it when the great aunts came to visit. They would sit with my grandmother round the kitchen fire and reminisce about their shared childhood in a cottage on a Cheshire hillside overlooking 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 19th century. We knew the cottage was in the village of Tattenhall, county of Burwardsley 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; I 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 only met one of my great uncles I felt I knew them because of these annual gatherings. There was a fourth sister, Aunt Betsy who came between Grandma and Aunt Belle but she was never invited to the gatherings. I had two older sisters and my sister Gill who was four years my senior said she'd met great aunt Betsy once.

"She had long hair like a witch and I was scared of her and ran out of her house," my sister confided. "Grandma was cross with me and said I'd forgotten my manners."

"Why doesn't Aunt Betsy come when you do?" I enquired one day and Great Aunt Belle looked stern, "Because she is no better than she should be so don't ask again." She said sharply.

"What does it mean?" I asked my eldest sister, Sheila. "Why isn't she better than she should be?"

"Oh, I believe she was a naughty girl in some way when she was young," Sheila said vaguely.

"And they've never seen her since?" I asked in amazement.

"Oh, yes, they've seen her, Gill went with Grandma to see her and her son, our Uncle George comes here. You like him."

Uncle George was big and jolly and I did like him but if he could come why couldn't his mother?" It was a few years before I discovered that Aunt Betsy had a baby before she was married.

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 I, "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 jug 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.

“You know how hot tempered James Roscoe is,” he said sharply. “If young Madge goes home without his ale she’ll be in serious trouble.”

Madge tried to hide behind the landlord but the women were not easily silenced. 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.

The landlord, thoroughly alarmed, urged “Don’t do it, lass, 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 the women’s heckling.

“She has done well,” he said when Elizabeth, their mother had taken Madge upstairs to bed. “We’ll say no more about it.”

Uncle Walter, Aunt Madge’s husband always came with her to visit us but he stayed out of the way as much as possible because Grandma and Aunt Belle were horrible to him.

“Look at him, he’s backing horses again,” one of them would say if Uncle Walter dared to open a newspaper. He usually took himself off to the pub which didn’t please his sisters-in-law either. How he put up with them I don’t know.

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 “Fowlers’ 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 “Fowler’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 and 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

WALKING GROUP

. U3A Christmas Walk Friday 13th December 2019.

A History Walk around Oxton Village led by Oxton Society Guides attracted a high number of walkers. Split into two groups between two guides we headed off in different directions on a walk, which though really interesting in content, was somewhat marred by what developed into really heavy rain! As a result some of us arrived a little early at the Queens Arms for lunch. We all agreed that our guides were excellent and the walk would be well worth doing again in more clement weather. The varied architecture



alone is full of character and it was an eye opener to see the old photos of the village as it developed from the mid eighteen hundreds, compared with the present and to hear some of the history of this part of our area.

Lunch was excellent and in spite of the rain and chill we enjoyed the morning. Many thanks to Gerry who organised it.



ART APPRECIATION GROUP

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

Here is our programme for January to April 2020. Please make a note in your diaries



2020

January 15th 2020 Visit to World Museum, Liverpool. **DRAWING ON NATURE:** Taki Katei's Japan exhibition.

February 19th 2020 Session Room TPG: **WINTER WONDERLAND IN ST. PETERSBURG.** Presentation by Pauline Horner.

March 18th 2020 **WILLIAM BLAKE-** presented by Bernadette Hamilton

April 15th 2020 Visit to Tate, Liverpool: **THEASTER GATES: AMALGAM EXHIBITION**

Bernadette Hamilton

MUSIC GROUP



The next meeting on Wednesday January 8th will feature a presentation from Bruce Dunn of music by Gerald Florzi. Introducing electronic sounds, Euphonics; it should be interesting.

Paul Cullen



THEATRE OUTINGS - SOCIAL OUTINGS

EVENTS

Elizabeth Harding is organising a visit to the Boat Museum on February 20th.

Tickets are £10 to include entrance, guided tour and a talk. Lunch or snacks are available on site (to pay for individually) and parking is free. Meet at 10am outside the Museum. It is suggested that we share cars to get there – book at the January U3A meetings.

THEATRE

All booking until meeting on 16 January

THE KING & I

Liverpool Empire

Part of world tour

6 Olivier Award Nominations

Thursday 19 March 2020 @ 2.30pm

Tickets £35



NEW and also available to book until 16 January only

Liverpool Empire

Matthew Bourne's production of THE RED SHOES

Thursday 27 February @ 2.30pm

Tickets £20.50

Double Olivier award winning show



NEW and also available to book until 16 January only

J. M. Barrie's QUALITY STREET

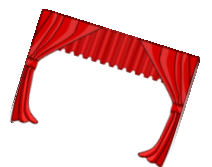
A hit that inspired a brand of chocolates based on play's characters

(Pre Peter Pan)

Liverpool Playhouse

Tuesday 17 March 2020 @ 7.30pm

Tickets £17



Please note if less than requisite numbers to constitute group bookings slight increase will be necessary to cost of tickets

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

CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT PRENTON GOLF CLUB 2019

We enjoyed a most enjoyable Christmas Lunch on December 19th – a really happy occasion. Our thanks to Barbara Winstanley and Barbara Lloyd who organised the event



Ed.





Registered Charity number 1159091

A LETTER FROM U3A NORTH-WEST:

Dear members,

This is just a very brief news flash to update you on forthcoming events.

Please pass this information onto other members of your U3A and check the regional website

www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events

for further information.

Best wishes for the coming festive season, however you choose to spend it.

We'll catch up again next year.

Gill

Gillian.russell@u3a.org.uk

Rummikub – New Group

If you want to join this new group, contact Joan Parfect using:

e-mail address rummikub@oxtonu3a.co.

AND FINALLY-----

On behalf of the Committee I hope that you all enjoyed a peaceful Christmas and would like to wish all our members a very happy New Year for 2020.

Eliane Davie (Editor)



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