

CHEADLE AND GATLEY U3A

Registered Charity Number:1172853



SEPTEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Message from the Chair

It was lovely to get together again on a beautiful sunny afternoon to celebrate our 10th Anniversary.

Though we had to limit numbers and observe some restrictions, those who attended had a very enjoyable time hearing about the foundation of the U3A Movement and the early days of our own U3A and partaking of some delicious refreshments!

Several of our Groups had mounted displays around the hall and it was very encouraging to see what they have been doing.

As I went round chatting to members it became clear that one of the great aspects of our U3A is the opportunity it gives to members to share in good company and lively conversation!

We intend to start up our Wednesday meetings again and hope to be able to offer an interesting selection of speakers. However, we must be mindful of the fact that there are still risks to health and we must guard against exposing our members to unnecessary risks. For this reason we will be restricting attendance to a reasonable number and asking members to register in advance.

We are delighted that most of our Interest Groups have resumed their usual activities and are keen to welcome new members. I'd like to thank all convenors for their efforts in keeping things going throughout the past eighteen months.

Lesley Witton

The September 2021 Welcome Back and 10th Anniversary meeting



Spaced-out seating in the main hall and on the patio



Some historical items



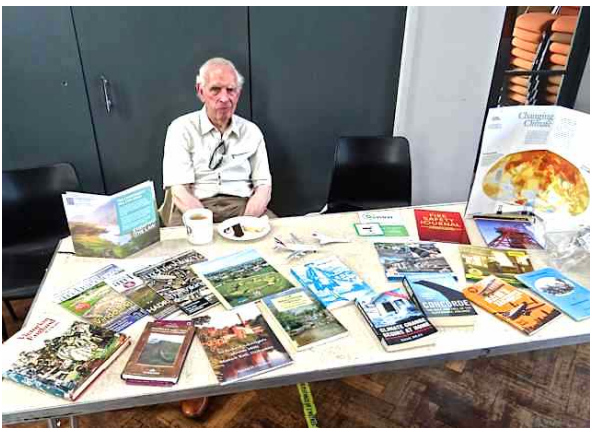
Explorers Group



The Painting and Drawing Group



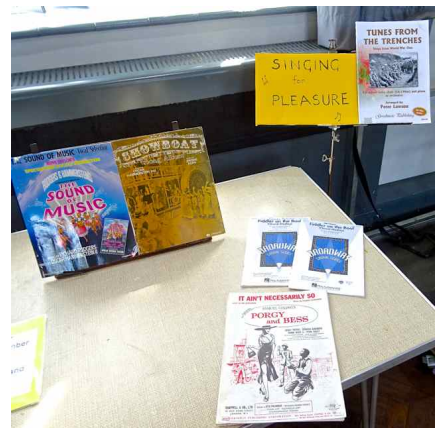
The Gardening Group



Peter Briggs and the Environment display



Music from the shows used by the Singing Group



Adult education has a long history in Britain.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1820s | The Mechanics Institute Movement was formed.
Birkbeck College London. |
| 1830s - 1840s | They widened their scope and Literary Institutes were formed.
In 1852 the Cheadle Literary Institute was built. |
| 1850 | The public Library Act was passed.
In addition there were subscription libraries. |
| 1880s | The University Settlement movement.
Extra-mural departments at Universities.
The Round House in Ancoats. |
| 1903 | The Workers' Educational Movement (WEA was formed). |
| 1969 | The Open University. |

All these movements depended on the leadership of a University or a further Institute of learning. They were tutor led and had an academic bias.

1973

The U3A Movement began in France. Pierre Vallas, a sociologist at Toulouse, saw a specific need for retired people. But his movement was, and still is on the continent, closely linked to the Universities and academic subjects are emphasised. Academic awards and certificates are bestowed by the affiliated universities.

1981

There were three academics who had already initiated many other projects in the area of further education and related matters:

Peter Laslett (1915 - 2001) Michael Young (1915 - 2002) and Eric Midwinter (1932 -)

They took the French model and adapted it to a British way of life. They were pragmatic in their vision for this new organisation and made four major changes to the French model.

1. The U3A must have a wider educational reach. Academic subjects alone were too restrictive and excluded many other activities, hobbies and interests.
2. They wanted DIY learning. Members themselves were to shape the courses and deliver them. Learning should be a shared exercise.
3. Each branch had to be self-financing.
4. Young in particular was very suspicious of 'big government', and the remit of the central coordinating authority was to be confined to the essentials:
 - insurance;
 - regulations regarding charitable status;
 - offering guidance for subject leaders.

The movement took off but has always been restricted by its title and it was felt that the movement would be more accessible and popular if it were re-branded. This actually took place in 2020 and it was decided to drop the word University in promotional material, though the initial still appears in the logo!

Stockport established its branch in 1984 and Cheadle Hulme was founded in 1997.

I first heard of the organisation around 2008 when one of my wife Mary's friends mentioned the activities available at Stockport and Cheadle Hulme, but membership of both these had been capped. In 2009 we heard of the launch of the Bramhall branch and we joined in the spring of 2010. I mentioned to John Houghton that it was a shame that Cheadle and Gatley, a significant and sizeable area of Stockport, didn't have its own branch, and we set about looking into the possibility of setting one up.

We spent a considerable time touring the area enquiring about suitable venues for our Monthly Meetings and rooms that Interest Groups could hire for their meetings. In the end we decided on Gatley URC for our Monthly Meeting and for most of our Interest Groups, and we have been well served for the last 10 years.

The Start of Cheadle and Gatley U3A

John Houghton

Having made arrangements for our first promotional meeting at the URC, I remember very well wandering round the Cheadle and Gatley area looking for suitable notice boards and lamp posts on which to stick the posters we had prepared to advertise our initial meeting on June 8th 2011.

When the day came it was rainy. Would the rain put people off, and would anybody come? We were surprised and delighted that the hall filled up with about 70 - 80 people. Our proposed group was obviously going to fill a need in the area. Various people spoke about the outline plans, including John Ellison, the U3A North West Region Trustee, who was guiding us in setting up our new group.

As a result enough interested individuals came forward to form the first Steering Committee.

Chair I agreed to take on this role.

Vice Chair Tom Fanning

Secretary Lois Evans

Treasurer Martin Davey

Assistant Treasurer Nuala Lynn

Membership Secretary Judi Marsden

Refreshments Pauline Hadfield

Webmaster and Computing Peter Bayley

Groups Coordinator Allan Witton

I hope you will all agree that the Steering Committee worked hard to build the framework which has served our U3A well over the last 10 years.

We are also very grateful to Gina Gibson of the URC for all her help in accommodating us in the beginning and for her continuing assistance over the years.

The Beginning of the Cheadle and Gatley U3A Singing for Pleasure Group

Barbara Wingard

It was a very rainy day in June 2011 for the first meeting of the Cheadle and Gatley U3A. Reluctantly I took my car and was amazed to find no available parking anywhere near the URC, so had to drive some distance before finding a space.

I will never forget entering the packed hall to listen to those welcoming us and explaining about the setting up of this new U3A group. Most memorable of all were the words of John Ellison, the U3A North West Region Trustee, who was guiding us. He said in a very firm voice:

'A U3A will succeed only if members volunteer to lead Interest Groups.'

He urged anyone with specialist knowledge or interests and enthusiasm to come forward.

As I came from a very musical background, had sung in many choirs and conducted small groups I decided there and then to volunteer to run a singing group.

At a second meeting 2 weeks later, around the hall there were arranged tables and chairs, a cluster for each Interest Group, with the name of the leader and the group clearly printed. Prospective Group members wandered around and spoke with the leaders about the group. Eventually I had 15 people sign up. At least a third said they had never sung in a choir before, with the rest having had experience at school or afterwards. Some of the original singers are still in the choir today.

At our first rehearsal most of us were in a queue at the entrance while a brave soul at the front struggled with the keys! This gave me the chance to move round and chat to people. Suddenly a lone man appeared and as I approached to welcome him he turned and fled!

What did we sing at our first practice? It had to be something well-known so we sang songs of the British Isles such as *Rule Britannia*, *Loch Lomond*, *Men of Harlech* and *Londonderry Air*. It was a good start. At our second meeting we got a bit more organised with Nuala Lynn offering to keep the register, and Ginny Stephenson in charge of the tea. A little later, to my great relief, Dorothy Walker started to accompany the choir, and what a great support she has been over the years.

Gradually a few brave men joined the group and we eventually had a reasonable bass line. Among the male singers was Ian Ewing who with his guitar skills and vast folk song repertoire was persuaded to do a regular session after the tea break to give the conductor a chance to sit down.

Folk songs with guitar were a great addition to our repertoire, which has included music from the 16th century onwards. In recent times our theme has been post-war American musicals. Starting with *Oklahoma* we found that two members of the choir had attended very early performances. Lee Fairlie had seen the show with her father when it opened in New York in 1945. Rosemary Round told us about her visit to see the show in 1951 at the Opera House in Manchester where it was given a pre-London run.

Other musicals followed such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *My Fair Lady* and *West Side Story*, which was possibly our favourite with excellent arrangements for sopranos, altos and basses. We managed pretty well and have been able to include them not only in our U3A concerts but also on other occasions as well. These have included performances at Stockport Town Hall, local care homes and at three churches. At one of the latter in Cheadle Hulme we presented a Victorian musical entertainment which was one of our best efforts. However, perhaps our greatest challenge was the *Hallelujah Chorus*, which was very well received as part of the Christmas entertainment in 2017.

The Beginning of our U3A

Allan Witton

[I am repeating this article from the June Newsletter, so that all the articles about the formation of our U3A Group are in one edition of the Newsletter. Editor]

Soon after Lesley and I retired in 2007, we were looking for something to join to help us pursue our interests and get to know the local community better. In the autumn of that year we heard about the U3A from someone we met on a Ramblers' Holiday in Peru of all places! We knew nothing about it, but she heartily recommended it and so we thought we'd look into it later. When, in 2011, I saw a poster about a new U3A group starting up in Cheadle & Gatley we thought this might be just the thing.

The launch meeting was held at the URC on an afternoon in June 2011 when it poured with rain. Lesley remembers the water cascading down above the entrance to the foyer! Given the weather, there was a surprisingly good turnout and the main hall was nearly full. Tom Fanning and John Houghton were the two instigators of the idea for a local U3A and they addressed the meeting along with the NW Trustee, John Ellison, and the Chair of Bramhall U3A and Jean Layton from Stockport U3A, who was to be our advisor.

Towards the end of the meeting, anyone interested in joining a Steering Group was invited to meet at the back of the hall and to Lesley's great surprise, because I had never been a committee sort of person, I joined them!

Although we didn't receive official recognition until September 2011, the first monthly meeting was held in July to invite people to pay their subscriptions and to set up Interest Groups. I had met with Alan Lynn and Stuart Forsyth in The Horse and Farrier to discuss Walking Groups that we were interested in organising, and Lesley proposed a Book Group to get us started. Soon other members offered Interest Groups and before long we had around 20 groups, most of which are still flourishing.



INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Autumn Leaves

Josephine May

Autumn leaves are falling,
Gold, hazel, red and brown.
Dancing, turning, twisting,
Like a fall ballet, to the ground.

Once there, a magic carpet forms.
What a sight to see!
Who would have thought such beauty
Could come from just one tree.

Glistening like jewels in the sunshine.
Rustling in the breeze,
Then waiting, oh so silently,
Until the winter time.

The Angel Tree

Roisin Davies

This short story comprises 3 pages and so to avoid a large number of text-only pages at the start of this Newsletter the story appears after the Group News section.

Escape to the Country

Nigel Bann

I can remember as a youngster, escaping to the country on a regular basis. I probably had the best of both worlds. Let me explain. I lived my early life in Hazel Grove, near the Fiveways Hotel. A number 20 bus on Macclesfield Road, or a short walk to the Rising Sun terminus to get a number 92 bus, would take me and my parents to Stockport and Manchester. Sometimes it would be the Number 92 to Mersey Square and change to a number 16 to visit my cousin in Chorlton. I took in the fact that, from the Fiveways through to Manchester and Chorlton, everywhere was built up continuously. In fact the A6 was built up practically all the way to Bolton.

Weekdays saw me walking to school and back along the A6 to Chapel Street school in the middle of Hazel Grove. The A6 was busy even then in the fifties, with Sammy Longson's stone lorries rumbling through from the quarries around Buxton, and regular buses going everywhere, Marple, Mellor, Buxton, Poynton, Macclesfield, Bramhall and Wilmslow. However, at weekends, when I was younger, and then when I was a teenager, sometimes on light summer nights as well, I would walk or cycle in the opposite direction. At the end of my road was Mill Lane, which ran from the Fiveways to the Buxton Road at High Lane, coming out at Stimfig's factory, which was better known as Simpson's Sausage factory. My friend Ian lived up Mill Lane, not far from Old Mill Lane, where another friend called John lived. I would pick up Ian and then we would walk on to John's house.

Old Mill Lane was a very short lane, and it was one of the entrances to Middlewood. We walked over a rickety bridge at the end of Old Mill Lane and we were in Middlewood. Suddenly we were in the country. We followed Norbury brook through the woods all the way to Bennet's pigstys, where another friend, Douglas lived. We played in the woods, climbing trees, making dams in the stream, all the things young children do in the countryside. Sometimes, Douglas's dad would get us to help out in the pigstys. To the right of the brook and woods was a large meadow which stretched all the way across to the slag heaps behind Towers Road in Poynton, a reminder of Poynton's mining past.

In the slag heaps was a stagnant pond where we could catch minnows and newts, and there were always brightly coloured dragonflies patrolling around. A favourite memory of mine is lying on my back in the meadow amongst buttercups and other meadow flowers, in the warm sun, staring at the blue sky and fluffy clouds slowly chugging by. Listening to the sounds of the countryside around me. Insects buzzing round, different bird sounds. Watching skylarks hovering in the sky singing, and lapwings with their distinctive "Peewit" call.

Not far from home there was Poynton pool, and Norbury brook crossed under Macclesfield road to become Ladybrook, and wend its way through the fields of Happy Valley down to the back of Bramhall Green. From my parent's bedroom I could see Lyme Cage, and on the horizon above where hill met sky, "Bowstones", or to be more accurate, the white Bowstonegate farm.

So there you have it, I had the best of town and country when I was growing up, and I have always appreciated the countryside.



Sea Eagle



Basking seals

GROUP NEWS

Book Group 1

Lesley Witton 428 1522

We held our first 'hybrid' meeting in September with four members meeting in my front room and two others joining us via a Zoom link. This arrangement worked well and it was very good for all of us to be able to take part in the discussion. Sadly, those on Zoom could not partake of the refreshments! This month's topic was books on the theme of 'Archaeology' and a very interesting range of fiction and non-fiction was read. August's theme was 'Walking' and books read were *The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn; *Journey Through Britain* by John Hillaby; *The Old Ways* by Robert McFarlane; *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce; and *No Destination: Autobiography of a Pilgrim* by Satish Kumar.

Book Group 2

Tina Kelly 376 7909

We are meeting regularly now on the first Tuesdays at the library. Everyone is now participating and we have read a couple of books I think since our last report. We have an "archivist" who I can ask if you are interested. We even have a waiting list of 2 persons!



Bridge Group

Linda Ewing 312 5072

The Bridge group has been meeting as usual on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month since May. I am pleased to say that everybody has returned to the group but we are always open for new members. We play contract bridge and we are not a particularly serious group. We currently have 2 or 3 tables at each meeting. I am told that we also provide the best biscuits of all the U3A groups!!

So please come along and join us. If anybody wants to see what it's like just come along on the appropriate Wednesday at 1-30 at St James Church Hall or contact me on the above number.

September 21st was a special date for the Craft Group - we were back with our first meeting since the Covid pandemic restrictions closed the groups. We were nearly a complete attendance with one member on holiday and another who has sadly had to leave the group. It was good to be back chatting, laughing and generally 'putting the world to rights' (oh, and doing craft work as well!). In spite of various illnesses and ailments everyone was in good spirits and it was really good to meet up again.



We have continued doing various craft works at home. In some cases it has been quite therapeutic and almost meditative to work quietly away during the often worrying times, but somehow the motivation is less when you don't have your friends to encourage and support you.



Sloth for Kessia



Worm for Zak

We are now back to our regular meetings, the third Tuesday of every month, in St James' Church Hall, 10.30 - 12.00. Please get in touch if you would like to join us. We don't usually do tutorials as such, we do our own work, and are always happy to share our skills and tips with one another.

The Creative Writing Group will resume meetings on the second Monday of the month, beginning on 11th of October. We meet at St James small hall from 2 - 4 p.m.

Two major environmental events are taking place in the UK this year: -

(a) The Government plans to publish a significant new **Environment Bill**, which will introduce long-awaited legislation to protect our natural world and to restore environmental damage that becomes increasingly worrying in the continuing climate changes witnessed by us all (especially heatwaves, wildfires, heavy rain, landslides and flooding).

(b) In November, the UK is hosting the **Cop26 Conference** in Glasgow. The President of this conference will be Alok Sharma, who has the responsibility to ensure that the delegates can achieve their key aim to keep future global heating to a temperature rise of less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The UK Environment Bill (2021)

The UK Government is required to set 15-year improvement targets for biodiversity, air and water quality as well as controls on waste. We hear much about electric vehicles replacing petrol and diesel cars, but many people are just beginning to understand what will be required in their homes (for example, replacement of gas-fired boilers) and installation of better insulation and ventilation in workplaces and in schools.

The Bill addresses recycling of plastics but it does not go far (or fast) enough to track and enforce a wider range of plastic products. The Bill plans to reduce (or eliminate) illegal deforestation, but it does little to encourage increases in UK tree cover. There is also not much to reassure the UK public about chemical safety standards; for example, there must be stronger enforcement of the disposal of sewage and industrial waste into rivers and coastal waters.

An important step in the development of this Environment Bill is the establishment of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). This new watchdog must demonstrate firm control on all environmental laws that are required by the UK Government. Some campaign groups believe that the OEP is too weak at present and that the new watchdog must be strengthened and guaranteed to be independent.

The Cop26 International Climate Change Conference (Glasgow 2021)

Recent scientific research studies have concluded that most of the world's fossil fuel reserves must remain in the ground if the climate crisis is to be ended. There are other major factors (such as food production and deforestation) which contribute to this desperate situation. However, it is the expansion plans of the fossil fuel industry that are causing the most serious concerns for scientists.

Research has found that 90% of coal and 60% of oil and natural gas reserves should not be extracted if there is to be a 50% chance of keeping global heating below 1.5°C. Most unconventional oil or gas reserves (such as those from fracking) must also remain in the ground.

The denial of potential tipping points by big international producers is a major challenge that must be tackled by those organising and discussing the climate crisis in Glasgow; Mr Sharma deserves our best wishes for success with his endeavours in Glasgow during November.

Wind power used in a novel form of windsurfing on West Kirby Marine Lake - of no commercial value, but good fun.



Future Activities

I am currently preparing a programme for future activities (mostly outdoors). Members can contribute to our recalibrated programme by sending their proposals to me and other u3a members so that in 2022 we may together look forward to new conservation experiences and to varied enjoyment of our local environments.

“Explorers” rolls off the tongue easier than “Bus Pass, Day Trips & Holiday Group” so that is our new name.

On the 12th August our Welsh Wanderer trip was to Betws-y-Coed and Rhos-on-Sea and we were very lucky to enjoy excellent weather. August 21st was a meander through Cheshire’s leafy lanes for a visit to Nantwich. The next trip is on the 16th October to Hebden Bridge and Howarth. Names are still being taken and any members interested can contact Janet.



On the promenade at Rhos-on-Sea

We meet every third Thursday in the month at Piccolos Restaurant (near Gatley Green) at 10.30am Notices at 11am to let you know what is being planned. We are a very sociable, educational group. Do come, you’d be very welcome, if only for a cuppa, cake and a chat.



At the Monthly meeting at Piccolos

Our group has now had 3 meetings since resuming in July. We are a small group, currently numbering 5, and have started on a series of short presentations on various relevant topics. So far we have covered DNA testing and this month David Wrigley gave a very interesting talk on the historical collection of birth, marriage and death records - invaluable to family historians - but which were actually introduced as a method of raising government revenue! Our next planned presentation will be on military records and we will be continuing, as always, to help each other with our own individual research.

When the Covid restrictions were eased we met on Thursday 22nd July in Heather's garden. Despite it being a sweltering afternoon we all enjoyed the chance to meet again after such a lengthy time. We are resuming our monthly meetings, on the fourth Thursday of each month, but we're not planning too far in advance. One thing Covid has taught us is not to be too ambitious!

We didn't meet in August, but in September we went on a visit to Dunham Massey gardens. If the situation remains the same, by the end of the year we will plan our yearly programme of visits & activities.



Spring Martagon lilies



In Heather's garden in July



At Dunham Massey in September

The Art History Group is ready to meet again in person at URC Church Hall Elm Road on the last Wednesday of the month in September and November. There will not be a meeting in October because the venue is unavailable.

We will learn about the history of art through university lectures from various sources. It is also a hope that we can occasionally visit galleries and exhibitions. New members will be warmly welcomed.

These are the remaining 6 images I took of the Group's artwork when I visited their 'garden studio' meeting last June. (Editor)



Val Davison



Janet Davies



Val Davison



Chris Healey



Mavis Wynne



Val Davison

Despite the few remaining restrictions, we were delighted to be able to meet up again in September and resume singing together. Some old favourites were resurrected and we then started on our new Beatles theme, with some memorable reminiscences of music in the 60s.

We meet in the large hall at the URC on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.



The last couple of months' meetings have been disrupted by many of our group going on holiday!! Our weekly Zoom meetings have continued when no more than 2 of us have been away either in the UK or Europe. When together, either on Zoom or in my garden, we have been concentrating on trying to remember the conjugation of our Spanish verbs.

I am recently back from a week with Saga in Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife. The large hotel was full of mainly Spanish families enjoying their staycation; there were just four of us in the Saga group.

My journeys there and back were fine, the resort was lovely, the sun shone every day, the food was great and the vino tinto was wonderful.



Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife



Cala Galdana, Menorca

Val Roberts has just returned from Cala Galdana on the Island of Menorca. She really enjoyed the resort, which is one of the most beautiful on the Island. There were more Spanish on holiday than usual but, at the hotel, there was a good mix of people. The accommodation was excellent, and the entertainment was some of the best she has had.

When we next have a monthly meeting I will make the offer of alerting members to the shows at our local theatres. At this moment I have no knowledge of what performances are being planned, but it would be helpful to know if any members would be interested in visits to our theatres. If such members offer me their emails then I can make suggestions as to what is being offered and suggest dates when we might attend.

100th Walk: Plans were in place to celebrate our 100th Walk in September 2020 with a stay at the New Inn and some walks in the Yorkshire Dales. Unfortunately, this had to be cancelled, but during the Covid restrictions we did manage a few walks with limited numbers when regulations permitted and so our 100th walk finally happened in August 2021.

In spite of the cloudy forecast it was a beautifully warm sunny day for our walk in the Longdendale valley, a slightly longer variation (7.8 miles) on our usual reservoir circuit to include the larger Torside Reservoir.



At Valehouse Reservoir car park as we were about to set off





Rowan berries and Torside Reservoir



Ferns, heather and rowan

Prosecco with lunch to celebrate our 100th walk



Sorry, Poppy, did the cork startle you?



In September Linda and Ian led a walk to Hilbre Island from West Kirby on the Wirral, beginning with a walk round the Marine Lake then across the sands to the islands.



About to set off, with the Marine Lake behind



On the path round Marine Lake, with Hilbre on the horizon



Approaching the first small island, Little Eye, with Hilbre beyond



Sea-sculpted sandstone on Hilbre



Lunch with a view back to distant West Kirby

The Group have restarted their walks since the summer and have undertaken walks at Tittersworth reservoir, New Mills and will be walking around Wigan Flashes next month. With few exceptions most of our members are joining in again. At a meeting we held in the summer it was decided that as from January we will issue a list of the walk leaders for the month, but not a destination. The leader will then send a review to the members before the walk. The distance will revert back to 4 miles and not too hilly. A request for the availability of toilets was mentioned. Any U3A members wishing to join us can contact me as above



Garden meeting to plan our future walks

The Strollers walking group is suitable for people looking for a walk of no more than an hour. Often we walk in nearby parks such as Bramhall, Bruntwood, Fletcher Moss or Wythenshawe. When it is practical we use public transport and we always finish with a cup of coffee and a chat. New members are welcome.

On Monday September 20th the Strollers met up for the first time since March 2020. There were 8 of us and we went on one of our favourite walks starting at St. Mary's in Cheadle. We walked round the back of the church and the cemetery, hopped over Manchester Road and into Abney Park, where unfortunately the cafe is never open on a Monday. The weather was wonderful and we all really enjoyed a relaxed bit of exercise and a good old chat. Our next walk is on Monday October 4th at 10.30 from Elm Road. See you there.



The Strollers at Fletcher Moss on a bright autumn day in 2017

Hayden skipped happily down the road, humming random notes of a tune that he had made up. He was always making up tunes in his head, but never sang them out loud for anyone else to hear. It kept his mind occupied. Otherwise, he would think of the monsters in his bedroom closet, or the goblins in the garden, or 'No,' he thought 'keep humming. La la la la'. He came to his friend's gate and shouted "Keelan! You there?" Keelan knocked on his bedroom window and waved, gesturing that he would be down any minute. Hayden waited at the gate, drumming his fingers on the wood, tapping out the tune he was humming.

He had woken up this morning agitated after another bad dream, courtesy of his older brother constantly scaring him. Of course, he wouldn't tell anyone about his fears. His friends would laugh their heads off! They were always ribbing each other about something.

"Boo!" Hayden nearly jumped out of his skin. Keelan had crept up on him while he was daydreaming.

"Ha ha! Scaredy cat!" cried Keelan. He was doubled over, laughing.

"S'not funny!" Hayden playfully punched Keelan's arm, smiling himself now.

"Come on," he said. "Let's go to the park. Connor will be there with the gang. Did you bring some lunch? I've got mine in my backpack." "Yeah. Here it is." Keelan held up his own pack. They slung their bags over their shoulders and set off running towards the park.

The boys soon caught up with their friends in the park. They were having the best summer ever. They had their boys' club, no girls allowed and no wimps! Keelan shouted "Hey, Connor! What's up?"

Connor waved them over. "Come on, it's jungle warfare today. We're goin' in!" They raced off towards the woods.

"Look out for the Gargoyle tree. Don't let it catch you!"

Connor shouted. They all laughed, but Hayden looked fearfully towards the trees. The comment was, of course, directed mainly towards Hayden. They all knew he was scared of everything, even though he tried to hide it. Hayden pouted, slowing to a walk. He looked around as they entered the woods, searching for the tree they called the Gargoyle.

It was a bit dark in the woods. He shivered and ran after the others. Keelan had stopped to wait for him.

"Come on! They won't wait for us. We have to get to Command HQ."

Keelan ran off, with Hayden hard on his heels.

All day the boys crept about the woods, surrounding the enemy, signing to each other from their hidey holes and generally having a great time. They forgot about their lunch until later in the day. Then a couple of the boys started whining that they were starved.

"Okay Commandos!" shouted Connor. "Break for chow."

They all made their way into a clearing, sitting on logs or the ground. The woods were noisy with their banter, their 'mission' forgotten. Not silent Commandos anymore!

As they finished their late lunch, fat raindrops fell, soaking the boys' bare arms and heads. They all jumped up, yelling and diving for the cover of the trees.

Keelan shouted, "Hey, you lot! Who's left their rubbish here?"

He and Hayden started picking up the discarded sandwich wrappers. When they looked up the other boys had gone.

"Some friends they are," muttered Hayden. "Come on, let's get out of here."

He looked around the clearing, not liking the eerie shadows in the trees. But, he knew that Keelan would not leave him alone. Keelan stuffed the litter in his backpack then led the way into the woods. He could hear the other boys laughing and shouting in the distance. So much for stealth! They would never make real Commandos. And real soldiers never left litter behind!

They started running when a bolt of lightning forked through the trees, thunder not far behind. Hayden desperately tried to keep up with Keelan. The wind had picked up and was whipping the bushes around his body, reaching for him, trying to pull him in! He cursed himself for his vivid imagination, but he couldn't help envisioning the woods as living beings. They had done a project at school about the ancient Celts, who believed that their Gods lived through trees and plants.



"Keelan! Wait up!"

His friend was running too fast. He had longer legs than Hayden, being taller. Keelan stopped and turned towards Hayden at the same moment that a bolt of lightning struck the tree beside him. Hayden shouted a warning to Keelan as he saw the tree fall towards his friend. Too late, Keelan looked up, only to be hit by a branch of the falling tree, which struck him on the temple. He fell to the ground, the tree covering his body. Hayden screamed his friend's name over and over. He ran to Keelan's motionless body, looking for a way to free him from the tree. Once there, he noticed that, luckily, it was only the branches on top of Keelan, but he wasn't moving.

'Please, God, let him be alive.' Hayden pleaded. He put a hand in front of Keelan's mouth to feel for his breath. He had seen that in a film. Keelan's warm breath washed over his hand and Hayden sank down beside him, relieved that Keelan was alive. He felt guilty for asking Keelan to stop. If he hadn't asked, Keelan wouldn't have been in the way of the falling tree. He sat in abject misery as the storm raged around them, the wet ground beneath him seeping through his shorts. After a while, Hayden shook away his morbid thoughts and stood up. He examined the branches on top of Keelan again and tried to pull them off. Of course, being attached to the tree, they wouldn't budge. He would need a chainsaw to get Keelan free!

He wanted to run for help, but didn't want to leave Keelan. What if something worse happened to him while he was gone? But, he must get help somehow. He resolved to go and tried not to think of what was lurking in the dark woods. He told himself to stop being a coward and set off through the menacing trees. A few paces in he became paralysed with fear as a wail like a banshee pierced the night and his legs were slapped by vine tendrils driven by the wind. He thought he saw a shadowy figure weaving through the misty rain towards him. 'The Gargoyle tree!' he thought. Shaking with terror, he turned and ran the way he had come. Breaking through the trees, where the fallen tree covered Keelan, Hayden stumbled, twisting his ankle. He cried out in pain and fell towards the fallen tree, landing with quite a bit of force. He scrambled to his feet, hopping on his good foot. He thought, for a minute, that he had landed on top of the end covering Keelan, but realised he had landed on the other end. Thank God, he hadn't injured Keelan more. He dragged himself over to the other end, where Keelan still lay unconscious. He bent to check Keelan's breath again.

"Thank you, God," he said, aloud. "I'm sorry, Keelan, I can't walk out of here now. My ankle is swollen." Still terrified and shivering with shock and cold, Hayden laid his body over the branches atop his friend, carefully spreading his weight so that the branches didn't crush Keelan. All he could do was shield his friend from the relentless rain. His ankle throbbed, but he was only worried about Keelan. He could cope with a sprained ankle. Maybe, if the storm let up, he could get through the woods better to get help. He laid his head on his arms and closed his eyes against whatever was out there waiting to get them.

Hayden woke with a start. It was pitch black in the woods but, thankfully, the rain had eased a bit. Everything around them was rustling in the wind. He heard a moan and frantically looked around, before realising it came from Keelan.

Hayden bent towards him saying, "It's okay Keelan. I'm here. I can go for help now. Don't move." He wondered if he could really do it. Surely, someone would be looking for them by now. But their parents would have to call round to all their friends first to find who had been with them and where they had gone. As he was deciding what to do, the darkness around them seemed to grow and he became aware of a presence in front of him. He pressed himself closer to Keelan, the branches beneath him creaking with the extra pressure.

His whole body was shaking as well as his voice when he said, "Who are you? Don't hurt Keelan, please! Go away!" He must shield Keelan at all costs because he couldn't defend himself.

The figure spoke. "Do not fear, brave one." The voice was surprisingly gentle and soothing. "I will not harm you. I am here to help."

Hayden had been hiding his face in fear but looked up at this. However, he nearly fainted when he saw none other than the Gargoyle tree! He stuttered out some garbled questions.

"Wh..who are you? How can you sp..speak? How can you even move? Please, my friend needs help. And I'm not brave! I couldn't even go for help without g..g..getting scared."

He thought he must be dreaming. He was talking to a tree! But, the cold and wet were all too real. He was shaking badly now.

He said, " Are you even real?"

The Gargoyle tree laughed and said, "Yes, I am real, little one. And, you are brave because you defend your friend even though you fear me. I am Eran, a Watcher from Heaven."

He bowed to Hayden, who swore he could see wings on Eran's back. In fact, he thought the wings were surrounding them and acting as an umbrella against the rain, because he couldn't feel it anymore, only hear it pattering on the trees.

"Haay...Hayden," Keelan moaned, his breathing heavy and seeming laboured.

"I'm here Keelan." Hayden stroked Keelan's arm. "Stay still. Eran is here to help us." Eran bent to look at Keelan and said to Hayden, "He is just panicking, being under the tree. His head wound is not severe. Do not worry too much Hayden. I will put him to sleep while we go for help." He passed his hand over Keelan's eyes and whispered, "Sleep, child." Keelan's ragged breathing immediately calmed and he seemed in a deep, restful sleep. Eran reached for Hayden, but Hayden flinched away from him. Eran said, "Please let me help you. There is no need to be afraid. I will get you home so that you can get help. I cannot be seen by others. Only the ones I help. I will come back to guard Keelan until help comes." He reached to take Hayden by the underarms and this time Hayden let him. Eran hugged him to his craggy chest. "Hold on tight Hayden and don't look down." Hayden turned his face into Eran's chest, expecting the coldness of stone or bark, but it was soft skin he encountered. Granted, he couldn't see Eran too clearly in the hazy darkness, but had assumed he was a Gargoyle. He felt them rising up and peeped from beneath his arm, only to press his face back even harder than before as he saw the tops of the trees rapidly dropping below them. "Here we are Hayden." Eran gently lowered Hayden to the ground and he found himself at the very back of his garden, out of sight of the back door to his house. Only moments had passed. "How did you know where I live?" "I am a Watcher, remember," said Eran. "Yes, but why do you look like a Gargoyle if you're from Heaven?" "Well, firstly, Gargoyles are sent from Heaven to avert evil. Especially from churches. But, I am not a Gargoyle. I am a Watcher Angel. We take many forms and not all are so pretty!" He laughed at this. "Besides, if you were to see my true form, you would be blinded, for my light from God would be too luminous for your eyes. Now, I must return to Keelan to watch over him until help arrives. He will be very wet and cold by now. Farewell, Hayden, for you will not see me again." With that he gave a mighty flap of his magnificent wings and disappeared into the sky. Hayden shouted out belatedly, "Thank you, Eran." He thought he heard "My pleasure" whispered on the wind. He stood there for a minute wondering if he should mention Eran to his parents, but decided against it because Eran had said he must not be seen by others. Also, everyone would think he was crazy! He hobbled towards the back door and went inside, shouting his mum. She ran to him from the living room and nearly crushed him in a hug. "Mum, I can't breathe!" She let him go and said, "We've been looking for you for hours. Your dad's out there now and so is Keelan's dad." Hayden told her everything that had happened, leaving out Eran. His mum called the emergency services and then called Hayden's dad, who relayed the news to Keelan's dad. "I'll take you to the hospital for your ankle. Let's go." Later, as Hayden was having his ankle strapped up, he heard Keelan's dad's voice. "Mum, can you see how Keelan is doing? I just heard his dad." His mum went out of the cubicle and soon returned with some good news. "Keelan is fine. It's a mild concussion and he's a bit cold. They'll warm him up and monitor his concussion until tomorrow. You can see him then."

The following Sunday Hayden was sitting next to Keelan in church. Their families always sat together. The boys whispered about their adventure that week. Keelan vaguely remembered a hazy figure talking to them and telling him to sleep, so he believed everything Hayden told him, because he also thought he remembered wings protecting them from the wind and rain. His mum had said he was lucky he didn't suffer hypothermia and the medical staff were amazed he hadn't. Now he knew why and that he hadn't dreamed it. He also knew that Hayden had not walked through the woods due to him being scared of his own shadow, but, at least he had tried. Everyone else thought Hayden had hobbled home on his bad foot and they called him their little hero. That was so funny! Well, he was Keelan's hero, anyway. Hayden must have been scared out of his wits when the Angel had appeared, but he stood his ground and protected him. He was so proud of his friend. The minister was talking about people being cut down to size or something and drawing the service to a close. He started to read from the book of Daniel. He said it was chapter 4, verse 3.

"And whereas the King saw a Watcher, a Holy One, coming down from Heaven and saying, "Hew down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth."

Hayden and Keelan looked at each other with a secret smile, both thinking of the Gargoyle tree that they would forever now think of as the Angel tree.



**We don't need all of you,
not even most of you,
but we do need at least some of you.**

I quote again John Ellison, the U3A North West Region Trustee who was guiding us when we first set up our Cheadle and Gatley Group.

He emphasised in a very firm voice:

'A U3A will succeed only if members volunteer to lead Interest Groups.'

This applies not only to Convenors of Interest Groups, but also to the committee members responsible for the overall running of the Group.

It was his very words which persuaded me, who had never been a committee sort of person, to join the Steering Committee. How our Group developed from then onwards is recorded in earlier articles. This article is about my involvement as a committee member and group convenor. With a one year break after the first 6 years, I have been a committee member since 2011, and have coordinated the Long Walks from the start.

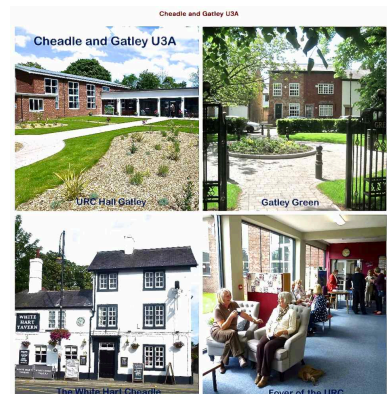
After retiring I was thinking of doing some charity or community work. Some friends volunteer at National Trust properties, and I considered joining the scheme advertised at Gatley Medical centre where volunteer drivers take 'old people' to their routine hospital appointments.

Then along came Cheadle and Gatley U3A, and my involvement in the running of it has been **hugely** more interesting and rewarding than weeding flower beds at Dunham Massey or driving old people around. And there have been social benefits too, interacting with others involved in the running of our U3A has been a pleasure. I now regard my involvement with running our U3A as my 'charity work'.

Everything I have been involved in has brought something of a challenge but has become very satisfying as I have developed the roles.

Newsletter Editor I have been doing this from the very start and brought to the job some reasonably good DTP skills. Through successive issues I have learned new skills and processes, particularly about editing low resolution images, and it is the job which gives me most satisfaction. *Lifelong learning!*

Website Editor Initially I was shown just how to upload our Newsletters to our website, but as I had collected all the up-to-date information for each Newsletter every 6 months I then started updating the website information twice a year. The editing site comes with an integrated, comprehensive set of instructions which makes the editing process straightforward for anyone with reasonable computer skills. I have learned so much that I have subsequently published my own trekking website. *Lifelong learning!*



Beacon Administrator A whole team of us were involved in setting up our Beacon online membership system and most of the committee can use various parts, but I have become the principal administrator, and have been able to solve most of the few problems that have occurred. *Lifelong learning!*

Treasurer I originally agreed to take on this role so that the then Treasurer, Batsheva, could become Chair in 2018. I love spreadsheets, and so the hour or so it takes each month to bring our accounts spreadsheet up-to-date with the printed statement is no problem. My fluency with spreadsheets has improved during the process. *Lifelong learning!*

My current favourite spreadsheet is the one which I use to analyse the output of my recently installed solar panels. From June to September we have reduced our total imported energy by 90%! The figure won't be so good when we switch on the gas central heating in the next few weeks.

Gift Aid Again it was a team effort finding out how to make a claim (and I must acknowledge the work done by Batsheva here) and gathering all the relevant data for the last 4 years, resulting in a payment to our U3A of £1,169. The claim this year will be made by the Treasurer.

Six of our Groups (Archaeology, Indoor Bowling, Dining, Local History, Poetry and MOOCs) are about to fold as nobody in those Groups is prepared to take on the Convenor's role. Many of our Convenors have been performing their role splendidly for quite a few years, and if there is no succession, more Groups may cease.

The Long Walks Group is in a good position regarding succession. Several of our members are prepared to lead walks and have the skill to use Beacon to circulate details of forthcoming walks. Perhaps organising a Group could be done by a 'committee' of a few members if no one wants to take on the 'lead' role.

There are many very valid reasons why some people may not be able to or may not want to take on the commitment of a Group Convenor or Committee member, such as health issues, lack of computer skills, caring commitments for parents, children or grandchildren. Lesley and I still have commitments to her 94 year old father, who is now in a care home. We look after his house and garden and all his financial affairs, though our grandparent duties are now over with one of them almost 18 years old and the other two in Bangkok!

Finding people to serve on U3A committees is not unique to Cheadle and Gatley; it's a national problem. I think most of us would agree the C&G U3A serves a very important function in the local community, but it cannot be successful without those prepared to take on some of the organisation. Three of our current committee members, Lesley Witton, Batsheva Samely and Mary Sharples, had served their full six years last June but agreed to stay on for an extra year to give us time to find new committee members.

Out of our almost 200 members there must be at least 20 or so at the younger end of our age spectrum with some skills and some get-up-and-go and who would be ideally suited to help run our organisation. Are you one of them? Please don't assume that others will come forward – we need you!

The procedure we have adopted for new committee members is to co-opt them onto the committee without a specific job, so they can see how we work and what a friendly and cooperative team we are. Then when they feel comfortable they may wish to take on a specific job after 'shadowing' whoever is doing it currently.

In the 14 years since my retirement, the two long-term activities that have given me the greatest pleasure and satisfaction have been:

1. organising an alpine trek each summer for a group of family and friends. Anyone interested can google <https://wittontreks.wordpress.com> if they want to take a peep at where we've been;
2. playing my part in making Cheadle and Gatley U3A the successful organisation it has become.

**Do consider joining us,
you'll probably find you enjoy it!**



giftaid it



Lesley and me on the top of Kreuzspitz in 2013, at 11,340 ft the highest of our 30 summits

Your Committee

Chair	Lesley Witton	428 1522
Vice Chair	Batsheva Samely	428 6030 07722 026278
Business Secretary	Sue Somerville	07305 311716
Treasurer	Allan Witton	428 1522
Membership Secretary	Brian Green	428 8535
Speaker Secretary	Mary Sharples	428 4901
NE Cheshire Network	Mary Sharples	428 4901
Trustee	Heather Wilkinson	428 9278



Batsheva Samely Brian Green Lesley Witton Sue Somerville Heather Wilkinson Allan Witton Mary Sharples

Parking near Elm Road Church

Please remember to be considerate to local residents and not cause an obstruction when parking in Elm Road or nearby streets.

North-East Cheshire Network

The North East Cheshire Network of U3As (NECN) comprises Cheadle and Gatley, Bramhall, Cheadle Hulme, Poynton, Macclesfield, and Wilmslow..

Some Interest Groups within the Network have been designated as 'Open Groups'. These can be attended by members of other U3As in the Network provided they are current members of their own U3A and pay for attendance at the meeting. Members who attend a meeting of an Open Group should show their current Membership Card for their own U3A. C&G Open Groups are: Bridge; Environment; and German. There are 27 Open Groups across the whole Network. The following list includes just those for which C&G does not currently have a Group. I have been notified of no changes at September 2021, so the list remains as before.

Bramhall	Embroidery	Scottish Country Dancing	Line Dancing	Video & Film Making
Cheadle Hulme	Art Appreciation	Photography		
Poynton	Film Discussion	Geology	Hallé Concerts	Needlecraft
Wilmslow	Cycling	English Country Dancing		

Further information about all 27 Groups is given in a link from the Welcome page of our website, and you should use the contact details provided there if you are interested in joining an Open Group.

Liaison with members

Please give any notices about your group's activities or anything else of interest to members to Sue Somerville so that these can be displayed on the noticeboard at Wednesday monthly meetings and emailed to members afterwards.

We will continue to send cards on behalf of the committee to anyone having a special birthday or undergoing an operation or illness or suffering a bereavement, so please let a member of the committee know of anyone appropriate, preferably by email so that we can act promptly.

Cheadle and Gatley U3A emails

Sending emails is an important method by which we communicate with our members. An expanded edition of each Newsletter (the same as on the website, with additional images all in colour) is sent to all members for whom we have an email address. An email containing all the notices announced at the Monthly Meeting is sent shortly after the meeting, and other notices of interest to the membership as a whole are also circulated. If you acquire a new email, or change your email address, please let one of the committee know so that we can update our records.

Online Management System: Beacon

The Cheadle and Gatley version of this U3A National system is now being used to enable many aspects of our membership to be managed centrally online. Emails to all members are now sent via Beacon, and Group Coordinators who wish to can now use the system to maintain their group's membership list and to communicate with members of their group.

Cheadle and Gatley U3A Website

Our website is fully updated twice a year, in January and July on the publication of the Newsletter, with minor updates at other times, and we encourage those of you who are online to look at it periodically. The simplest way is to do a web search for 'Cheadle and Gatley U3A', and then save the site in 'favourites' or on your desktop for easy access.

In addition to summaries of all our active groups you will find, amongst other things, links to:

- the two latest editions of the Newsletter, with additional images all in colour;
- membership application and renewal forms to print;
- a New Members' Leaflet with an overview of our U3A;
- the North-West region and the National U3A websites with details of courses etc;
- various other items of information and interest to our U3A members.

Membership

**We would be delighted to welcome any new members to join our U3A.
Please pass this Newsletter on to anyone you think might be interested.
People are welcome to attend one Monthly Open Meeting or one Interest Group meeting
before being required to join the Cheadle and Gatley U3A.**

The fee to join Cheadle and Gatley U3A is £12 per year pro-rata, April to March; e.g. someone joining in September would pay £7 (for September to March). In addition there is a charge of £2 for each Monthly Open Meeting and a similar charge for most group meetings in a hired venue to cover room hire and refreshments where appropriate. Renewals are due each April,

Editor's Notes

Plea for help: Thanks very much to those who have submitted photographs for this Newsletter, I have had a good selection for this edition. Photographs break up the text, add considerable interest and, by the facility of re-sizing them, give flexibility to page layouts. Please bear this in mind for the next Newsletter, **especially those groups that go out-and-about. It doesn't have to be the Group Convenor who takes and submits the photos!**

The simplest way to send them is to reply to any U3A Beacon email you receive and attach the photo.

Technical note. I produced this Newsletter on an Apple iMac desktop computer using Word. If anyone is interested in learning or improving their image editing and DTP skills I would be happy to help.

Allan Witton

DETAILS OF INTEREST GROUPS

Open Groups are in **bold blue**

This is the first time since January 2020 that this list has been include in the Newsletter.

Not all Convenors have submitted details of the plans for their Group in the Group News section.

If in doubt, contact the Convenor as below.

The Groups shaded in grey currently have no Convenor. If no-one comes forward to assume those roles the groups will lapse.

GROUP	CONVENOR	CONTACT	DATES	TIME	VENUE
<i>Archaeology</i>					
Book Group 1	Lesley Witton	428 1522	1st Monday	7:30	House
Book Group 2	Tina Kelly	376 7909	1st Tuesday	1:30-3:00	Cheadle Library
<i>Bowling</i>					
Bridge	Linda Ewing	312 5072	1st & 3rd Wednesdays	1:30	St James' Hall
Computers	Peter Bayley	282 3468	As arranged	Various	House
Craft	Josephine Haynes	491 2382	3rd Tuesday	10:30-12:00	St James' Hall
Creative Writing	Nigel Bann	491 6835	2nd Monday	2:00-4:00	St James' Hall
<i>Dining</i>					
Early Christianity	Tom Fanning	428 8666	3rd Monday	10:30	URC
Environment	Peter Briggs	485 6871	Periodically as arranged	Various	Various
Explorers	Janet Farrall	428 7883	3rd Thursday	10:30-12:00	Picollos
Family History	Linda Corry	428 4094	1st Tuesday	9:30	House
Gardening	Heather Wilkinson	428 9278	4th Thursday	2:00	Various
German	Marianne Owen	491 3323	3rd Tuesday	10:00-12:00	House
History	John Houghton	428 2892	2nd and 4th Fridays	1:30	URC
History of Art	Mary Sharples	428 4901	Last Wednesday	1:30	URC
<i>Local History</i>					
Lunchtime Concerts	Barbara Wingard	428 5922	Periodically as arranged	Various	Various
<i>MOOCs</i>					
Painting and Drawing	Pat Marsden	428 7820	1st and 3rd Friday	10:30-12:30	URC
<i>Poetry</i>					
Scrabble	Ann Gane	428 0204	Fridays Fortnightly	2:00	House
Singing for Pleasure	Barbara Wingard	428 5922	2nd and 4th Tuesdays	1:00-3:00	URC
Spanish	Elaine Bowker	437 8480	1st Thursday	10:00-12:00	House
Theatre Visits	Chris Bester	376 7909	Monthly as arranged	Various	Various
Ukulele	Ian Ewing	312 5072	2nd and 4th Tuesday	3:15	URC
Walking (Long) (Up to ~8 miles)	Allan Witton	428 1522	3rd Friday	9:15	Meet at Gatley Hill car park
Walking (Short) (~ 4 miles)	Stuart Forsyth	491 3592	3rd Thursday	10:00	Meet at URC
Walking (Strollers) Easy local walks	Marianne Owen	491 3323	1st and 3rd Mondays	10:30	Meet at URC
Wine Appreciation	Peter Bayley	282 3468	Monthly as arranged	7:00	House

Please note that occasionally dates or times do change between updates of the Interest Group List.

Anyone interested in joining a Group should in the first instance telephone the Convenor, or speak to them at the Monthly Open Meeting. Details of forthcoming events for Groups which meet 'periodically as arranged' can be obtained by contacting the Convenor.

If you are interested in setting up a new Group, please contact any member of the committee.