



# Chester Times

August 2023

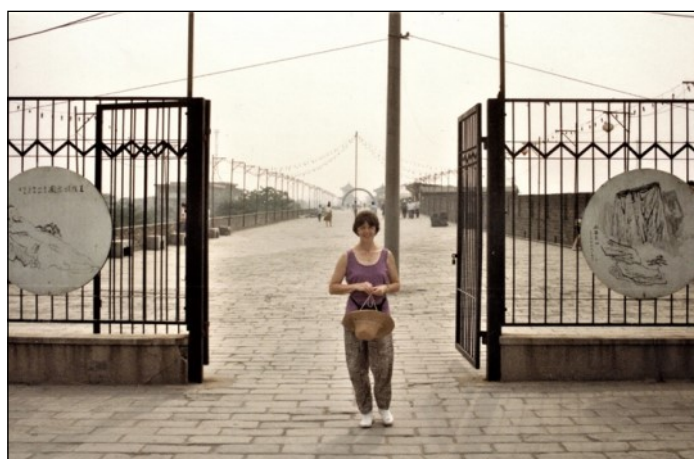
u3a learn,  
laugh,  
live  
Chester

## Musings from the Chair

I will start with my regular reminder that our Tuesday meetings will switch to 2pm in the afternoon, starting with the meeting on 5th September. **August's meeting is still at 10am.**

Our AGM will come around soon and I must ask you to consider helping us by standing for an officer post or just as an ordinary committee member. Of our current eleven committee members, our constitution means that only three are eligible to stand again, the other eight having served the maximum term allowed. We must have at least four officers and five trustees, so if no-one steps forward we cannot function as a u3a. Please speak or write to me (or any other committee member) to find out what would be involved and either to volunteer yourself or to suggest someone else. No committee would mean no talks, no groups and no Chester u3a, so please take my plea seriously.

August's **Wow!** was to have been castles. There are lots of castles around the world, allegedly including 4,000 in the UK, but when I tried to pick favourites I realised that I found them either boring (most ruins), or chocolate-box (many German and French), or fake (like Peckforton). I therefore moved quickly on to walled cities as being more spectacular and having local relevance. Cestrians will of course prefer Chester's walls to those of York, but for real **Wow!** you have to look further afield. You have probably seen more than me in your travels, but those which stick in my mind are Lucca (which has Puccini as well), Xi'an (the widest walls I have ever seen, and which also has the terracotta warriors), Dubrovnik (which has too many cruise ships and their passengers) and Kotor (in Montenegro, with walls three miles long). Hadrian's Wall and the Great Wall of China are also awe-inspiring but don't count as they do not enclose cities!



*One of your editors on top of the wall at Xi'an.*

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## Tuesday Monthly Meetings

**Festival Church, Queen Street, Chester, 10.00am for 10.30am start**

**NB From September meetings will start at 2.00pm**

### **1 August: Can Discrimination Be Justified?: The History, Impact and Legacy of Affirmative Action in the United States, by Dr Donna Jackson**

This talk will discuss the history of Affirmative Action programmes in the United States: why they were introduced, the ways they have been implemented, the results of that implementation and how the US Supreme Court has reconciled the legality of this 'positive discrimination' with the guarantees of equality for all that are enshrined in the American Constitution. It will consider the legacy of Affirmative Action programmes and discuss whether any kind of discrimination is justifiable, or indeed essential, in today's society in both the US and the UK.



*United States Supreme Court  
(pixabay royalty-free stock illustration)*

## Thursday Monthly Meetings

**St Columba's Church Hall, 10.00am for 10.30am start**

### **17 August: Ethiopia 2011, by Celia Webber**

'A memorable trip some years back, travelling through one of the world's poorest countries but, despite this, every step was amazing - both vibrant and vivid. One of my hobbies is travelling; however I'm not one for the beach. Landlocked Ethiopia has more sand (and dust) than any beach I've ever seen! I took dozens of photos and will make a selection which will hopefully take you there in my footsteps.'

Celia is a Chester u3a member who has kindly volunteered to talk about her trip to Ethiopia, which sounds very interesting - not a place many of us have visited.



*Farmers in a village in Ethiopia (pixnio.com/free-images)*

If you have an experience you would like to share with other u3a members, please contact either Lorna or Jenny at [thursdays@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:thursdays@chesteru3a.org.uk)

## Advance Notice of AGM

Our AGM will be held on 7 November in the Festival Church. Please nominate candidates for the offices of Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Business Secretary and also for general membership of the committee. Nominations should be sent by email to the Business Secretary, with a proposer and seconder, and the nominee should agree. You can propose yourself!



## Social Events

### Friday 11 August: Shrewsbury Flower Show

We have a full coach. Pick up times are Hough Green 9.00 Delamere St 9.10 and Sainsbury's 9.20. Please be on time as the coach cannot wait on a main road. If you do not understand anything, please ring Liz on 01244 341097.



### Friday 8 September: Trip to Ludlow

This should be an enjoyable journey through lovely Cheshire countryside and the understated beauty of Shropshire.

Ludlow is a thriving market town with many half-timbered medieval buildings, including the renowned Feathers Hotel. Broad Street lives up to its name and in times past was the main thoroughfare for trade and passenger coaches. Bodenham's has been trading in this street since 1860 from a 600 year old timber building.



St Laurence church, built in the 11<sup>th</sup> C has a magnificent 41ft. tower which is prominent in the skyline. The museum in Castle Square is a place to while away an hour, learning about the history of the area before having a coffee or lunch in one of the many coffee shops or cafés in the town. The more adventurous may enjoy a 30 minute walk from the castle gardens downhill to the Millennium Green and the River Teme. The castle, museum and St Laurence Church are close to the Castle Square where our coach will be able to drop us off.

The day of our visit is the first day of the annual Food Festival, This festival is a showcase of local produce with over 180 stalls. There will be demonstrations and many tasty treats to sample.

The coach will cost between £15 and £20 and will be confirmed as soon as we have names. Pick up times will be the same as for Shrewsbury. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are interested in joining us, so that the exact cost can be assessed.

Sandra Moffat - [social@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:social@chesteru3a.org.uk).



## Industrial Heritage 1, by Margaret Hodgson

Bidston Hill is a very interesting visit, from the Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm to the Windmill, with the Observatory and Lighthouse on top.

The Bidston Hill Trail has 15 focus points but our main interest was the Observatory and Lighthouse.



An early windmill mentioned in 1665 was a peg mill but it was destroyed in a gale, so in 1880 a tower mill replaced it. 122 lb of flour could be produced every five minutes in a good wind.



The Observatory was built in 1866 and over the years has had a variety of functions. It started by telling the correct time by observing the movements of planetary bodies. Tides were predicted using an early type of computer. The building is surrounded by a moat to reduce vibrations so seismic movements can be detected from around the world.



If you are interested in seeing these sites and the views from them, they are open on Wirral Heritage weekends in September.

Bidston Lighthouse is remarkable for two reasons. It is the furthest inland and was the first to have a parabolic mirror, the largest of its kind at the time. This enabled the light to be seen 21 nautical miles away. An important function of the lighthouse was to spot ships en route to Liverpool and by means of flags to warn the port of their imminent arrival.





## Birdwatching 1, by Alan Millard

### Trip To The East Coast 1– 4 June 2023

Ian Blackhurst had arranged this trip to the East Coast as an addition to our usual monthly meeting. Our itinerary was to set off on the Thursday at 9.00 from Chester to Goole and meet at RSPB Blacktoft Sands, some 7 miles east of Goole on the south Bank of the River Ouse. Four of us – Ian, Liz, Jan and I – arrived more or less at the same time on the Thursday morning, as Richard was not joining us until the following day. Ian chose Goole as it is pretty central to where our birding was going to be over the next few days.

### Day 1 RSPB Blacktoft Sands – 26 species



*Blacktoft Sands*

The two guys in reception were very welcoming, offering us coffee and tea and explaining about the reserve, especially the number of Marsh Harriers around. As we were discussing this, a male Marsh Harrier resplendent in summer plumage flew in front of the reception hide. All the hides were in good condition, plus a brand new hide, offering good views over the wetlands. Bird(s) of the day – Marsh Harriers M+F.



*March Harrier*



In the late afternoon we headed for our accommodation for the next three nights (Premier Inn Goole). After a refreshing shower we all met up in the bar of the adjacent Brewers Fayre for pre-dinner drinks and to discuss the day's viewings. The food was the best we've ever had in one of these establishments, highly recommended if you are in the area; the chef was Manuel but thankfully not ex Fawlty Towers.

### Day 2 RSPB Bempton Cliffs – 16 species

We set off after a hearty breakfast for Bempton Cliffs, some 49 miles away (1 hour's drive), where we were joined by Richard to make up our full complement. Although there weren't as many species today, the views were incredible, as were the acrobatic displays of the Gannets. For those who have not been to Bempton, it is part of the recording area covered by the Flamborough Bird Observatory (FBO) and is a really good reserve with full café services and plenty of guides available at the visitors centre. A really difficult place to leave at the end of an exciting day's birding.



*Gannets*

### Day 3 RSPB Dearne Valley – Old Moore Nature Reserve – 35 species

Dearne Valley is between Doncaster and Barnsley some 45 minutes drive away from Goole. Old Moore is a family-friendly reserve that is well maintained. The water levels are monitored to keep them at the





right levels at different times of year. In spring they gradually lower the level to create exposed mud for wader chicks. During the winter months the water levels are raised again to create shallow flooded areas for winter wildfowl. The café is on an upper floor of the visitors centre, affording good views of the reserve. Unfortunately the Reedbed Hide and the pathway to it were closed on the day of our visit but it did not spoil a superb day's birding. For me the highlights were at Wath Ings hide, where a Little Ringed Plover was bobbing up and down on the foreshore of a scrape and a Sedge Warbler which was 5 feet away, singing its head off and showing its beautiful cardinal red mouth and throat (see pics).

#### Day 4 RSPB Blacktoft Sands – 31 species

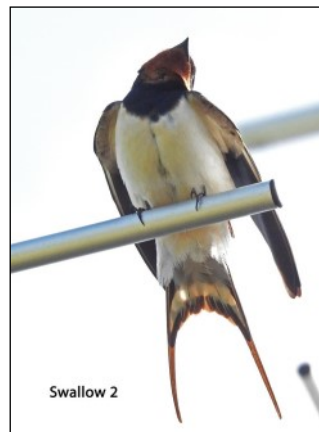
Our last day started with fully loaded breakfast to keep us going through the day, although some of us still managed to sneak a sandwich or two at lunch – just in case?? Our final port of call was to return to where we started as it was close by and offered a good day's birding, plus Richard had missed out on the first day. It was an easy site to get around with good facilities, although there is currently no café, although this may change in the near future. A good all-round day finishing with a rare sighting of a Cetti's Warbler in a nearby bush, with its sound still ringing in my ears!



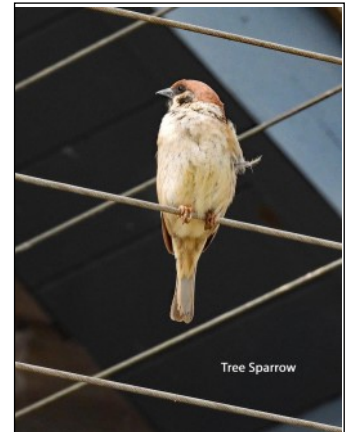
Little Ringed Plover

*Little Ringed Plover*

Sedge Warbler

*Sedge Warbler*

Swallow 2

*Swallow*

Tree Sparrow

*Tree Sparrow**Razorbill*

Puffin

*Puffin*

Great White Egret

*Great White Egret*

Avocet

*Avocet*

Little Grebe

*Little Grebe*



## Amblers, by Sandra Boyne

In June, thirteen members of our group, plus Bruno the dog, had a wonderful walk along the Whitegate Way. It is the site of a former railway track used to transport salt to the Chester/Manchester line via Cuddington. Now it offers very pleasant walking through woodland (very welcome shade on a hot day) with views across the Cheshire countryside: a popular site for walkers, cyclists and horse riders alike.

We are a thriving group, walking once a month. Five new members have joined recently and we all enjoy a sociable lunch together after our exertions.

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## Ukulele 2, by Harold Taylor

I took over as coordinator just over two years ago with both a regular group in Abbots Wood Apartments library and a beginners' group in the Wesley Church in St John Street. Last Christmas I decided to finish with the beginners' group because many had progressed to the regulars and I was left with only a handful coming to Wesley. It's quite amazing to see how much the group has progressed and what the current playlist is. It includes some quite complicated pieces.



Storeyhouse Elders have asked us to play for an hour or so in Grosvenor Park on the 23 August at 11am (a follow-up to a performance on 26 July). It will be an eclectic mix of popular songs from the '60s onwards with a few solos included.

Another date we have is a concert to raise money for Nightingale House Hospice which will be held in the Upton by Chester British Legion on 15 September, starting at 8pm.

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## Aviation Group, by Paul Consterdine

The Aviation Group, joined by members of the Science group and guests from Flintshire u3a, enjoyed a visit to the Airbus wings factory at Broughton where the complexities of manufacturing wings for the A350 were explained. Repetitive tasks are completed there by man and machine to astonishing degrees of accuracy.

Managing to book one such visit is difficult because of regulation and high demand, so we are particularly grateful to Philip Johnson for finalising the arrangements.





## Friday Writers Group

This month's contribution is a poem written in response to our trigger of the month which was 'Ice'. We use a trigger/subject device each month to spark off the creative process, which always results in a wide variety of forms and themes. I think the last few contributions we have made to Chester Times have been in the form of poems, but it's important to state that we produce a lot of short stories, some of which would probably be too long for the Chester Times. But maybe next time.....?



Su Sisung, Coordinator

### Down to Zero

The glacier of their relationship  
First built in the peaks of passion  
Grew deep and many layered.  
But, weighed down by the inexorable gravity  
Of time and pressure  
It went slowly downhill

They tried to navigate their way  
Took the path of least resistance  
Going with the flow.  
Obstacles were negotiated  
Smoothed over.

But the world pressed in on them  
Scraping away at the margins of their love,  
Eroding their certainties  
Darkening their surfaces  
Leaving scars hidden deep beneath.

A lubricant undercurrent bubbled below  
Undermining their foundations  
Weakening and speeding their demise.  
Cracks formed. Running deep  
They were there to be seen but,  
Thinly covered  
They escaped detection by most.

As the planet warmed to them  
Their ardour cooled  
The ice in her eyes  
Grew ice in his soul.

Nearing the end,  
Huge shockwaves swamped those close by  
As the chunks of their love fell away.  
Echoing anguish shattered lives  
Leaving floating islands  
Of deep regret below a surface calm.

They retreated the way they had come.  
The fallout lay all about  
A terminal reminder of what had been.

**Mike Mitchell**



## Members' Feedback

Last month's 'Musings from the Chair' has prompted some responses – see below. These may in turn be of interest and generate further discussion. Please send in your contributions to [chestertimes@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:chestertimes@chesteru3a.org.uk)

Here is one suggestion by Louise Henly of a poem that echoes Peter's comments: John Ormond - 'Cathedral Builders. The full text of the poem can be found at <https://serenbooks.wordpress.com/2020/02/07/friday-poem-cathedral-builders-by-john-ormond/>

David Savage has sent in this article on cathedrals:

The Chairman's comments in his recent musings about cathedrals and architects set me thinking. A risky process, but here are the results.

The earliest English cathedrals were simple Saxon structures built by local masons or monks long before the term 'architect' had been invented. Many other church buildings would be monastic establishments with no thought of being a cathedral.

After the Norman Conquest, the victors set about a mass reconstruction of these buildings in the Romanesque style. Construction would again be under the direction of the bishop or abbot with the assistance of a master mason.

Development of increasingly grand cathedrals and monasteries continued for a couple of centuries through Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular styles. All this construction came to a shuddering halt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries and the establishment of the Church of England. Many of the monasteries were destroyed while others became the new cathedrals.

The emergence of architects in this field might be considered to begin with the rebuilding of St Paul's after the Great Fire of London. This building took place between 1675 and 1710, with the main architects being Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke.

The Royal Institute of British Architects was not founded until 1834.

Peter commented that it was unlikely that an architect ever went on to complete a second cathedral. A possible contestant, I suggest, would be A W N Pugin, termed 'God's Architect' by Rosemary Hill in her monumental biography. He designed a number of Roman Catholic churches which were later to be promoted to cathedrals. These include St. Mary in Newcastle upon Tyne and St. Barnabas in Nottingham.

My comments are no more than a 'Brain Dump' which I hope might generate a discussion.

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I wonder if we might start a discussion about our favourite cathedrals. I'll happily start the ball rolling with my own suggestions.

English cathedrals: 1. Lincoln, 2. Durham, 3 Salisbury.

Being totally biased because I was born near there, I feel that Lincoln has to be the winner because of its position on top of its hill (it can be seen from up to 20 miles away) and the wonderful architecture itself.

Joyce Carrington





## Membership Renewal

It is that time of year again. The renewal for this year is still £12.00, which we hope you will think is good value as it has remained the same for a few years.

You should have all received an email concerning renewal – those without an email will have received a letter. The information in this email is copied below, together with the links. If you have questions concerning your membership, then contact the membership secretary. However, **if you have difficulty logging-on or access to the portal, or other IT difficulties, then contact the Beacon administrator.**

Membership Enquiries – [members@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:members@chesteru3a.org.uk)

Portal/Access/IT problems – [beaconadmin@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:beaconadmin@chesteru3a.org.uk)

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Dear Member,

We are approaching the end of our membership year (31 August) so are inviting members to renew their subscriptions over the next few weeks. Our membership subscription remains the same, £12 per member. We hope you feel this is value for money for the wide range of activities we can offer through the membership of our various groups and our monthly talks. We are asking members to renew online or to send us your subscription by bank transfer as this is the most effective way for us to process your renewal. You can find information on how to do this on our website at [Chester u3a membership renewal](#).

Online renewal can be made very simply by using the Member's Portal at [Chester u3a Member's Portal](#). Access to the portal has changed this year. You now need to register for a member account, which will be your email address, and a password. This must be completed before you can access the portal.

To register for an account, please click on "**Register for a membership account**". You can then enter the requested personal data, including your membership number, postcode, and email address. You will receive an email with a personal link to validate your account. You can then access the portal using your email address and password to renew your membership and pay using your debit or credit card. There is a (silent) video to show you how to do this on our website and YouTube channel at [Online membership renewal - YouTube](#).

Your membership card will then be emailed to you. We are not printing cards this year as this causes a great deal of work in sorting and posting them out. You can print them locally if you wish to have a printed card, but you may find it useful just to keep a copy of the image on your mobile device. We have produced a short video illustrating how you can do this at [How to store your membership card](#).

You can also pay by bank transfer. Payments can be made electronically to Chester u3a by one of several methods:-

1. Internet Banking
2. Telephone Banking
3. At your bank branch using your debit card

Please ensure the following payment instructions are provided:-

Sort Code	<b>30 91 92</b>	Account number	<b>59864768</b>	Payment Reference	<b>####</b> (your membership number)
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You will need to instruct your bank to set up Chester u3a as a beneficiary before you can make the payment using the above details. If you are renewing the membership of two members, please quote **both** membership numbers in the payment reference. This will help us ensure that your membership is renewed effectively. We will then email your membership card to you.

Kind regards,

*Jeff Howard*, Membership Secretary





## U3A: Open and accessible to and for all

At Chester u3a we want to welcome everybody who wants to join us. Our Diversity and Inclusion policies are on our website and point to both how we deal with our legal responsibilities, and, arguably more importantly, how we plan to make sure everyone can participate in our u3a in a free and friendly way, irrespective of their personal characteristics.

In u3a we tend to be of an age where our earliest formative experiences were from a different era: homo-sexuality was illegal in UK until 1967; Equal Pay for Women did not become law in UK until 1970; and Racial Discrimination was not outlawed until 1976. So for some of us our experience base can sometimes make it hard to navigate the sensitivities of the modern world.

So what should we do if someone says something that seems inappropriate in a u3a group? Here are some top tips on dealing with this tricky situation:

1. **Ask open-ended questions that help people become aware of how what they said might be hurtful to others**
2. **Challenge the language, not the person, by eg saying 'how might someone feel on hearing that viewpoint?'**
3. **Describe how it makes YOU feel, as sometimes that personal connection helps people see beyond 'labels'**

## Schedule of groups to help at Monthly Meetings

We would hope that groups will cooperate in providing help to the volunteers who are already working hard to facilitate our two monthly meetings. However, in an emergency situation, please email [committee@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:committee@chesteru3a.org.uk) so that all members of the committee are aware of the need to provide additional cover.

	<b>Festival Church</b>	<b>St Columba's</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>Tuesday</b> Friday Writers and Further French	<b>Thursday</b> Gardening and German Conversation
<b>September</b>	<b>Tuesday</b> Golf	<b>Thursday</b> History

**The cut-off date for the next Chester Times is Thursday 20 August 2023.**

Please send contributions to: [chestertimes@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:chestertimes@chesteru3a.org.uk) or: PO Box 167 Chester CH1 9FB.

This month's editor: Joyce Carrington    Next month's editor: Gwen Goodhew

## Contacts

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