



Chester Times

October 2023

u3a learn,
laugh,
live
Chester

Musings from the Chair

Chester u3a is 30 years old, as some of you will have discovered when we passed the cake around at the meeting on 5th September. We have been very successful, and I hope we will continue to stimulate and entertain you. So, the headline message this month is - please vote for your committee members and officers, so that we have a strong committee to serve you next year. Voting opens on 8th October and closes on 5th November, just before the AGM on 7th November. You will get an email telling you how to do this, and those of you without email will receive voting papers by post.

I have been an avid reader all my life. My first love is fiction, and I think that I have learned more about life and society from novelists than from any other group of people. As one small example, I understand more about the oxycontin scandal having read *Demon Copperhead* than from having consumed earnest articles in The Guardian. However, as I get older, I realise that there is some merit in reading about important issues in a more focussed way. I have therefore chosen for my **Wow!** items this month a few of the non-fiction books which have influenced me over the years. I have chosen two from early in my adult life, and four from this century. In order of publication date they are:

What's the use of lectures? Donald Bligh (1971) This seminal book has underpinned my whole career in education. The answer to Bligh's question, by the way, is "not much".

Small is Beautiful - a study of economics as if people mattered, Erwin Schumacher (1973). I was lucky enough to hear Schumacher speak a few years before his death in 1977 and because he is not now widely cited I offer you two pithy quotations "The existence of inordinately rich people in any society today is a very great evil." and "I should like to remind you that the Taj Mahal was built without electricity, cement and steel and that all the cathedrals of Europe were built without them." And this from the man who was the Chief Economist of the Coal Board!

Thinking Fast and Slow, Daniel Kahneman, 2011. Kahneman won the Nobel Prize for Economics but this book is about how people make judgements and decisions.

Prisoners of Geography, Tim Marshall, 2015. The effect of geography on world events. To give a taster, his first paragraphs address the question "what would be different if Ukraine had mountains?"

Doughnut Economics, Kate Raworth, 2017. Raworth addresses the same topic as Schumacher but from a 21st Century perspective.

Wilding, Isabella Tree (yes, really!), 2018. The definitive rationale for letting it all grow!

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I have surprised myself in that three of my books were written by economists. On the whole I have little time for economists - aren't they always wrong? But these three are genuinely different.

Very few people have written a "body of work". When a non-fiction author writes multiple books they are usually variations on a single theme (for example Richard Dawkins). Noam Chomsky is the notable exception to this rule, and there might be historians or biographers too, but I don't read these categories

(and anyway they are mostly fiction, aren't they?). Another perception I have is that all non-fiction books are too long: most non-fiction authors have a handful of points they want to make, which they pad out with too many examples or variants, such that by page 250 you desperately want it to stop. I prefer books of 200 pages or fewer, so I have a chance of assimilating the five main points.

Your Chair's musings are probably too long too, so I'll stop.

Tuesday Monthly Meetings

Festival Church, Queen Street, Chester, 2pm for 2.30pm start

5th October: 'The Sky's the Limit: Air Traffic Control at Manchester International Airport'

Nicky Patterson from Manchester Airport will share with us the challenges of keeping our skies safe and secure.



Thursday Monthly Meetings

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

19th October: 'Super Sniffers: An Introduction to Medical Detection Dogs, with Pauline Miller

This volunteer organisation trains dogs to support people who have life threatening health conditions such as diabetes, and hopefully keep them out of hospital. They also carry out research to improve the early diagnosis of cancer and other diseases.

Coffee at 10.00, speaker starts at 10.30am. Please remember to bring your cup!

Come along and enjoy!

Jenny and Lorna (Thursday team)



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Follow-up Information from the September u3a talk on Cyber Security

Andy Kevan has supplied more useful details in his email below:

Many thanks once again for giving me the privilege of speaking to your members, I hope they got something from the information.

Please find below the list of the sites I mentioned.

- A great site to help you lock your social media setting is: www.internetmatters.org
There is a Social Media section on their page which provides a 'step by step' guide on how set the security setting for each site.
- If you receive a suspicious text message forward it to **7726**
- If you receive a suspicious email, forward them to report@phishing.gov.uk
- You can check to see if your data has been lost by checking your email address or phone number at: <https://haveibeenpwned.com>
- Protect your online world with good strong passwords. 'Three Random Words'
<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/top-tips-for-staying-secure-online/three-random-words>
- Use this free password checker to see if your current password is any good!
<https://www.security.org/how-secure-is-my-password>
- Always report any suspicious activity online particularly if you are concerned with content your child has seen or if someone has been speaking to your child you do not know.
- All Social Media Sites contain adult material, so negotiating Social Media can be difficult for a child.

Further information and support can be found on:

<https://www.iwf.org.uk/>

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>



Social Events

Wednesday 18th October: Peter Pan Goes Wrong.

A matinee performance of the West End smash hit disaster at Liverpool Empire Theatre.

This is not a pantomime! It is one of 'MISCHIEF's' unique brand of hilarious gut-busting comedies, so brace yourselves for a big adventure.

Tickets will be emailed to you nearer the time.

Liz Flanagan 01244 341097
 or social@chesteru3a.org.uk



El Pollock / The Empire Theatre, Lime Street, Liverpool / CC BY-SA 2.0

Notice of a talk that may be of interest to some of our u3a members

Thursday 5th October 2023, 6.00-7.15pm
at Wheeler Campus Lecture Theatre,
Castle Drive, Chester.


Professor Robin Dunbar of the University of Oxford, one of Britain's leading anthropologists, will be visiting Chester to discuss his thesis on friendships known as 'Dunbar's Number'.

In this talk, he will discuss the complexities of friendships and ask the crucial question **'How many friends can any person have?'**

Tickets are free and open to all.
 More information is available by emailing culturesociety@chester.ac.uk

RKEI

Culture and Society
 Research & Knowledge
 Exchange Institute



How many friends can one person have?

PROFESSOR ROBIN DUNBAR

is currently head of the Social and Evolutionary Neuroscience Research Group in the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Oxford.

Robin Dunbar, one of Britain's most influential anthropologists, will be visiting Chester to discuss his famous thesis on friendships known as "Dunbar's Number". His research explores the number of stable relationships people are able to maintain at once.

In this talk, Robin will discuss the complexities of friendships and ask the crucial question "How many friends can one person have?"

Tickets:
 Free and open to all to attend (university and public)

Date:
 Thursday 5th October 2023
 6.00-7.15pm

In Person Event:
 Wheeler Campus
 Lecture Theatre CRV139
 Castle Drive, CH1 1SL

All warmly welcome to attend: members of the public, students and staff

Chester u3a 30th Birthday

At our meeting on 5th September we celebrated the first meeting of Chester u3a on 7th September 1993 with a splendid cake. The Chair quoted from the first ever newsletter, dated January 1994, which recorded that in the first three months 168 members had joined – an excellent start which has continued until today, when we have almost a thousand members.



Science Group: Memories of the Last 30 Years, by Veronica Moroney

In 1993 the nascent Chester U3A had a meeting in the Grosvenor Museum to finalise the start-up groups.

Towards the end of the meeting we were asked if we all had found a group to join. My reply of "I'd like to join a science group" met a blank response, until at the end of the meeting three men amazed me with, "We'd like to join your science group".

So the Science Group of four started, initially meeting in different members' homes. In those pre-computer days, our talks were presented on wallpaper hanging on an easel. Some of the early members {now deceased} who contributed were John Barker, Don Bass, Jack Pearson, Howard Sherman.

As numbers began to grow it was time to move and the Garden Room in Mollington Village Hall was chosen where we started PowerPoint presentations, leaving the wallpaper behind. So began a period of very interesting talks as many able people joined.

Then after 16 years I felt it was time to hand on the baton. In 2009, to my delight and relief, Andrew and Yvonne Cross took over. Under their excellent leadership the group made great progress with numbers growing to over 40 in the next 13 years. Last year in 2022 Andrew handed over to the very capable hands of Jeff Howard and Sue Foy. The group now meets in St Mary's Church Hall in Handbridge, in a large spacious room with very large modern screen to match.

A MIGHTY OAK FROM A LITTLE ACORN GREW

Earth Sciences, by Tony Stevens

Chester's u3a Earth Sciences' group starts its new programme on Tuesday, September 26th meeting at St Mary's Handbridge Centre 10 am to 12 noon. The topics covered in Earth Sciences are shown on this bubble diagram.



This was developed from the Oxford University, Earth Science (Geology) course and from research programs.

The program starts with a talk on "Searching for Old Rocks and Lazy Beds in the Outer Hebrides". Life can be hard living on these 3 billion-year-old rocks, the oldest in Britain. We start to find out how they do it in September 2023!

Our October talk investigates "Cycles" which is an exploration of Earth's natural systems. We also hope to do a local field trip to explore land forms, rocks and soils on a separate day.

In November we cover the "Geology of Tenerife" and life on that Island.

The facilities at St. Mary's centre are excellent, enabling us to enhance our talks with film and quality documentaries. We hope in 2024 to review some of the great documentaries now available, such as the BBC Earth programme (new in 2023), more on "Men of Rocks", the pioneers in this science and to explore the final frontier of oceanography through a number of recorded lectures.

Yet our programme is not complete. It is the members who decide!

If you would like to attend an Earth Science meeting, then please come along on the fourth Tuesday of the month for 10am to 12 noon at St. Mary's Centre, Handbridge, Chester, CH4 7HL.

Cycling Group, by Terry Garner

Due to adverse weather conditions, our recent bike ride that had been scheduled for a Tuesday was postponed to the Wednesday. Recognising that this rescheduled timing posed challenges for some participants, an additional ride was organised for the Friday.

The Wednesday ride started from Limewood Fields in Newton, adhering to its customary route along the Greenway to Guilden Sutton. From there, it continued along the A51, veering left at Stamford Bridge to reach Barrow. We then crossed the A51 again to Oscroft and onwards to Willington. The return journey followed Ryecroft Lane, culminating in a lunch stop at Walk Mill, before progressing through Waverton and finishing at Limewood Fields. This excursion covered a total distance of 23 miles.

The Friday ride was to Flint Castle. The chosen route commenced along the Greenway, extending to Blacon Station and traversing the A494 to Hawarden Bridge. Crossing the river via the railway bridge, the path followed the river to Connahs Quay, where a well-deserved rest was taken by the historic quay-side. Beyond this point, a dedicated cycle path guided riders past the college and beneath the A548,



though for a brief stretch it was necessary to share the road with traffic. The ultimate destination, Flint Castle, offered a captivating historical backdrop, being the site where Richard II was captured by Henry Bolingbroke during his usurpation.

After visiting the castle, the group ventured into town to lunch at the Old Court House café. This establishment held historical significance, having hosted both Great and Quarter Sessions for nearly two centuries. In subsequent years, it served as a malt house, evidenced by the nearby Malt Kiln Lane, and later transformed into a storage facility, where the stairs are said to have come from the SS Great Eastern, which was broken up in New Ferry in 1889.

Following a satisfying lunch of Welsh rarebit, the return journey retraced the route back to the starting point, completing a 28-mile round trip.

Groups with spare spaces

Many groups have room for new members. We are trying to draw up a full list, with the aim of publicising it in a future Chester Times. In the meantime, the **Racketball Group** has asked us to notify u3a members that they have plenty of spare capacity and can take up to 20 people. Email racketball@chesteru3a.org.uk



Industrial Heritage 3

The group had a very interesting visit to the Llangollen Railway machine shop and engine shed on 6th September, led by Peter Robson. Peter will be writing a full report for a later Chester Times



Potential New Groups

We have had some interest in the proposed new groups but we're not yet at a stage where we can facilitate a set up meeting for any of them. Please get in touch via groups@chesteru3a.org.uk if you would like me to add you to one or more of the lists.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. An eating-out sociable group | 3. Gardening 2 |
| 2. Knitting and Crochet | 4. Wine Appreciation 2 |

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 so that all members of the committee are aware of the need to provide additional cover.

	Festival Church	St Columba's
October	Tuesday Industrial Heritage 1	Thursday Industrial Heritage 3
November	Tuesday Italian Beginners 2 Italian Improvers Jazz Appreciation	Thursday Jazz Appreciation 2, Jigsaw Knitting Latin

The cut-off date for the next Chester Times is Friday 20 October 2023.

Please send contributions to: chestertimes@chesteru3a.org.uk or: PO Box 167 Chester CH1 9FB.

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

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