



# Chester Times

January 2024

u3a learn,  
laugh,  
live  
Chester

## Musings from the Chair

I hope you will have a very good year in 2024.

For the past year I have been trying to provoke you with my Wow! lists. I have covered a lot of categories: man-made structures, popular music, modern novels, opera, films, cathedrals, classic novels, cities, classical music ..... One topic I have steered clear of is STEM - science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It is time to ask myself why. I appear to be self-censoring my own main area of expertise and interest, even though these topics are crucial to the society we live in. Without STEM we would not have transport (apart from our feet) communications (apart from our voices) medicine (apart from herbalists) heating (apart from wood fires) in-home entertainment (apart from our voices again) or food from more than 5 miles away. All the topics I have covered in previous months enrich our society but STEM both enriches our society and sustains it in so many practical ways. Why then is it socially acceptable to shrug and say, "I don't understand any of this"?

I had been worrying about this long before I started writing my "musings" and I have concluded that by censoring myself, in deference to my perception of others' preferences, I am part of the problem. So, I will censor myself no longer. Science and engineering are very important to me and to society, so I will and must celebrate them.

If your chairman was an historian, would you expect her not to mention history? If he was a poet, should he never show an appreciation of poetry? If she were a lawyer, should we never hear about the law?

For the rest of my tenure as your chair I am going to have an "equation of the month" but before I start, my Wow! topic this month is *entropy*. It is a brilliant concept which emerged from the hugely important subject of thermodynamics. Yes, I know that is an awful word, disliked even by some scientists and certainly feared by many students, but it only means heat (thermo) and energy (dynamics). The famous first and second laws of thermodynamics were explained to me as "You can't win" (in other words you don't get energy for nothing) and "You can't even break even" (in other words whatever you do, you will lose a bit of energy on the way). Entropy explains how and why you lose that bit of energy and again it can be simply stated without jargon: "Everything tends to get more disordered, and you have to put energy in to make it more ordered again". Think of a teenager's bedroom and you will immediately see what I mean. That's really all there is to it but if you want a splendid literary exposition of entropy, read - or go and see - Tom Stoppard's play *Arcadia*, which explores the whole concept without once mentioning the actual word. Enjoy.



*Once you have swirled sauce into ice-cream, it is almost impossible to get it back to its original state. That's entropy.*

More swirling by [B.D.'s world](#)

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## Tuesday Monthly Meetings

Festival Church, Queen Street, Chester, 2.00pm for 2.30pm start



**There will be no meeting on Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024**



## Thursday Monthly Meetings

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

### 18<sup>th</sup> January: Strange Meetings - The Words of Wilfred Owen by Shaun Michael Higgins

This dramatic piece tells the story of the famous war poet, Wilfred Owen, his love of language and the mental health battles he faced during his time in the army. There is a focus on his admission to Craiglockhart Hospital, and his inspiring meeting there with fellow war poet, Siegfried Sasson. Poetry wasn't something Owen chose, it was a calling, and in answering that call he was able to overcome not only his own inadequacies, but the debilitating effects of shellshock. In the telling of this story, I have worked hard to use Owen's own words, reaping the rewards of his letters and his poetry, as well as taking descriptions from those who knew him best. This is the story at the heart of Wilfred Owen's life told - importantly - in his own words.



*Wilfred Owen - Public Domain*

## Members' Feedback

Thank you very much for providing these excellent YouTube links re the u3a talks held on a Tuesday. Unfortunately, I have been unable to attend a few lately therefore this video link is a joy to be able to use.

The committee's hard work and thoughtfulness are very much appreciated.

Kind regards

Lynette



## Greetings from Our New Speaker Secretary

Appropriately for a New Year, I'm taking the opportunity to introduce myself, Sue Houghton, as the new Speaker Secretary for the Chester u3a. My background is in higher education, having spent most of my career as a lecturer in the School of Biological Sciences at Bangor University and latterly at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. Leaving all that behind in 2019 allowed me to focus on other passions - my three children and three grandchildren, my love of crafting in many forms, crown green bowling, reading, and singing in a choir. Joining the u3a in 2022 gave me the opportunity to pursue many of these passions with new friends but I did ask my husband Dave to hold me back if I showed any signs of indulging my natural tendency (some would call it bossiness!) to get involved in organising things. As you can see, he failed dismally in this mission and then compounded the offence by getting himself elected as u3a Treasurer.

Seriously though, I am delighted to be taking on the role of Speaker Secretary. It's the norm on these occasions to set out my stall as to what I hope to achieve but I am a scientist and thus driven by evidence. This is why the first thing I plan to do is to ask you what you would like me to achieve, so I'll be launching a survey in the next few weeks and would be hugely grateful if you took a few minutes to tick some boxes. One of the topics that I want to look at is the venues that we are using for the members' meetings and how this affects attendance. Both venues have their pros and cons. St. Columba's Church Hall has good parking, which helps some of our less mobile members to attend but requires a willing army of volunteers to set out and put away chairs (and none of us is the first flush of youth!). Festival Church allows live streaming and video recording of talks for less mobile members but has no parking. The ideal venue that meets the needs of all our members probably does not exist so

some compromise is always going to be needed, but understanding what is important to members will help the Committee to make informed decisions.

Over the year that I have been attending the members' meetings, I have been treated to a diverse range of topics, from chutney-making to air traffic control. I hope to deliver an equally diverse programme and have already lined up beekeeping, the BBC, a preview of a one-man show about the life of Wilfred Owen and the story behind English Breakfast tea. I'm hoping that the survey will also be a chance for me to tap the membership as a resource of interesting talks. I am sure that amongst the 900+ members in Chester u3a there are many fascinating stories and experiences, and I would love to give members the chance to share these. If you can help, or want to suggest a topic or speaker, please feel free to email me at

[speakersec@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:speakersec@chesteru3a.org.uk)



*Susan Houghton - courtesy of Susan Houghton*



## Social Events

### Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024: The Girl Behind the Drifters

Tickets have been booked for the musical, "**The Girl behind the Drifters**" at **Liverpool Empire** on **Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024** at **2.30 pm**.

This is the story of The Drifters and their difficult rise to fame. The show features many well-known songs such as **Saturday Night at the Movies**, **There Goes My First Love**, **Hello Happiness** and, of course, **Stand By Me**.

Seats are likely to sell quickly, so let Liz Flanagan know a.s.a.p if you are interested. Group tickets, centre stage are £36.50. Other tickets slightly to the side are also available at £25.00.

Please note this price covers the ticket only, not transport. Members will be able to travel as a group from Chester Station.

Please contact Liz on 01244 341097.

*Sandra Moffatt – Social Secretary*

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### Visit to Little Moreton Hall and Silk Museum, Macclesfield, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023

This was a most enjoyable and informative trip, especially as Little Moreton Hall had a festive air with its Christmas decorations. The Christmas banquet laid out on the table looked very appetising. Fortunately, it was plastic, so no one was tempted to eat it!



*Inside Little Moreton Hall – Photos by Sandra Moffat*



## Group News

### Walking Group



*Walkers resting on The Old Pale Trail in Delamere-  
Photo by Marina Carter*

Ours was the first walking group established by Chester u3a. We walk for around 5 miles on the first Friday and third Monday of the month, usually within a half hour drive from Chester. Walks are organised in turn by members, and we finish with lunch in a café or pub.



*Gathering to start a walk in Delamere Forest- photo by  
Marina Carter*

2023 was a good year for the Group. We were pleased to welcome some new members and numbers of people walking have thankfully returned to normal. Of 21 possible walks we only had to cancel 4, for bad weather or other reasons. No-one got lost and no-one was injured!

The second half of the year has seen walks in Wirral, Delamere, Daresbury and North Wales – despite the erratic weather this year we have been fortunate to (mostly) avoid bad walking conditions.



*Taking a break – photo by Janet Money*

We completed our year with the usual Christmas lunch at the Ring O' Bells in Christleton, attended by current and former members and their partners.

Our New Year walk on 6<sup>th</sup> January will follow the usual pattern, a gentle stroll along the canal from Christleton into Chester (coffee stop) and back to the Ring O' Bells for lunch. Former members are welcome and if you would like to join us, please email us via the website.

*Janet Money*



## Industrial Heritage 3

### Visit to Queensway Mersey Tunnel

Our October visit was to the above, which proved to be very interesting, both historically and technically. In 1922, a committee of representatives from Liverpool City Council and Birkenhead, Wallasey and Bootle boroughs, headed by Sir Archibald Salvidge, leader of Liverpool, considered the building of a bridge or tunnel across the Mersey to improve traffic links across the Mersey River. The bridge plan was soon discounted, so a tunnel was decided upon at an estimated cost of £6 million. It was opened with much fanfare by King George V on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1934 and instantly became a tourist attraction with crowds watching the traffic entering and leaving the tunnel.



*The Group in the Control Room – Photo by Sheila Young*

The interest continues today as visitors, including our group, choose to pay a modest £10.00 per person for a tour of the tunnel system. The tour commenced from the ground floor reception area by going upstairs to see the original 1934 control room on the fifth floor of Georges Dock Building. In this room the water pumps, ventilation pumps and power supplies were managed initially for the Queensway Tunnel and from 1990, the Kingsway Tunnel. This facility was replaced in 2010 by a combined control centre, which includes the police.

We then went down to the exhaust fan chamber where two fans, each 28ft in diameter and weighing 25 tons, remove the noxious fumes from the tunnel. This is an upgrade on the original plans, as in 1930 users of the Liberty Tunnel in Pittsburgh, USA were seriously affected by carbon monoxide poisoning. The necessary additional ventilation added £2 million to the construction costs. Fresh air is drawn into the tunnel by 25ft diameter fans and forced down 120ft to the roadway.



*Road Deck – Photo by Sheila Young*

The tour then continued to the road deck via an access tube where we were able to watch the traffic from a secure area. Each of the four lanes is only 9ft wide so not suitable for some modern vehicles which are directed to the Kingsway Tunnel. Users may notice that whilst the road is straight under the River Mersey, it is not the case where the tunnel runs under land on either side. This is not, as is commonly believed, for geological reasons but simply because the mayors on either side requested that the tunnel did not go under their civic buildings.

Then it was downstairs again to see the lower tunnel which is under the roadway. This was intended for the running of trams, but the Mersey Ferries objected so the plan was scrapped. This area now holds seven emergency refuges.



This proved to be a very interesting visit with Phil and Dan as excellent guides but please be aware that it involves going up and down 800 steps, fortunately, not all at once.

If you found this report interesting and would like to go on similar visits, please contact Sheila Young, IH3 Group coordinator.

## Creative Art Group

Do you want to get creative? The leader of this Creative Art Group can introduce you to a range of media including:

Charcoal, Chalks, Pen & ink

Spraying / stencils

Collage

Drawing in pencil

Studying still life / abstract

In fact, all and every way of putting yourself and your creativity on paper.

Contact [groups@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@chesteru3a.org.uk) if you are interested.



*The leader can introduce you to a range of media such as charcoal*

## Bridge Group

The Bridge Group had a very enjoyable Christmas lunch at Vicars Cross Golf Club. A big thank you to Martin and the catering team.



*The Bridge Club Christmas Lunch – Photos by Liz Flanagan*

## Spanish Intermediate

This group would welcome new members. We meet every Wednesday at members' houses, so there is a maximum of about 10.

We are currently using the course book, Pasos 2, which gives plenty of speaking practice and authentic listening tasks.

If you would like to know more, please contact the group leader through

the website. [chesteru3a.org.uk/groups](https://chesteru3a.org.uk/groups)

**Feliz año nuevo!**

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## New Groups

### Dog Walking Group Chester

I am keen to start a dog walking group and would like to hear from any members who might like to join me for some off lead fun with our four-legged friends.

Once the group is set up, we can make decisions as to locations, distance and travel time to the start of the walk as well as whether to take refreshments or visit a café en route.

I am not a dog trainer by any means so the aim would be to socialise our dogs, enjoy the company of other dog lovers, exchange training experiences and feel safer walking in company.

Please contact [groups@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@chesteru3a.org.uk) if you are interested.



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### Chester Strummers

This is a new group of three guitarists looking for more instrumentalists and singers to join us to play popular music with a view to improving and performing for fun in care homes and the like. Beginners are welcome so long as they can play a few chords. Meetings will be twice a month on Monday afternoons in Chester.

Please contact the group leader, Juliet Leadbetter, from January via [groups@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@chesteru3a.org.uk)







## New Year, New You 3a!!

Looking to take up a new interest in 2024? Why not join us at our members meeting on Thursday, 15th February 2024 at St Columba's to find out more? We are gathering together as many of the group coordinators as we can, so they can share information about their groups and encourage everyone to take up a new activity in 2024. It promises to be an interesting event with refreshments, a quiz and entertainment. Whether you've just joined u3a or you are an old hand, you'll find something of interest. Make it a date in your diary and start something new!

## Saturday Activities

.....And, as a number of members have said that weekends can be rather empty, the committee has agreed that groups can now arrange their meetings on Saturdays.

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## Cheshire Archives

For those u3a members with an interest in local history, Cheshire Archives are an important resource. So, the building of two new centres to house these treasures is important. It's hoped that construction will start on both the Chester and the Crewe sites in March 2024. In the meantime, onsite access to archives at the Record Office will need to be put on hold until the new centres open in Spring/Summer 2025, but there will be many ways that services can still be accessed.

Go to <https://www.cheshirearchives.org.uk> to find out more about these exciting developments, ways in which you could be involved and how you can sign up for a newsletter keeping you up to date with the developments.

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## Upton / Arradon Twinning

13th to 17th May 2024

Are you interested joining a group of Chester residents going on a short visit to the Golfe du Morbihan, Southern Brittany?

Travel would be by coach and overnight ferry (with cabin).

Accommodation in Arradon is with a host family.

The trip includes various activities in the Arradon area.

Expected cost £400.

For more information contact [ailsaclegg@aol.com](mailto:ailsaclegg@aol.com)



Arradon - Courtesy of Ailsa Clegg



## Schedule for 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, 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.

You are very welcome to use these sessions as an opportunity to seek new members or promote your activities by bringing along flyers or photographs, setting up a stand or even asking if you can take a few minutes to talk to the whole group.

	<b>Festival Church at 2.00pm</b>	<b>St Columba's at 10.00am</b>
<b>January</b>	<b>Tuesday 2nd</b>  No meeting	<b>Thursday 18th</b>  Mindfulness Meditation Music 2 Music 3
<b>February</b>	<b>Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup></b>  Music Performance Opera Appreciation	<b>Thursday 15th</b>  Painting 2 Philosophy Poetry Appreciation

**The cut-off date for the next Chester Times is Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024.**

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

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Next month's editor: Joyce Carrington

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# HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL CHESTER U3A MEMBERS!