



Musings from the Chair

I am glad to see that some of you have begun to react to my musings. There is another challenge at the end of this column.

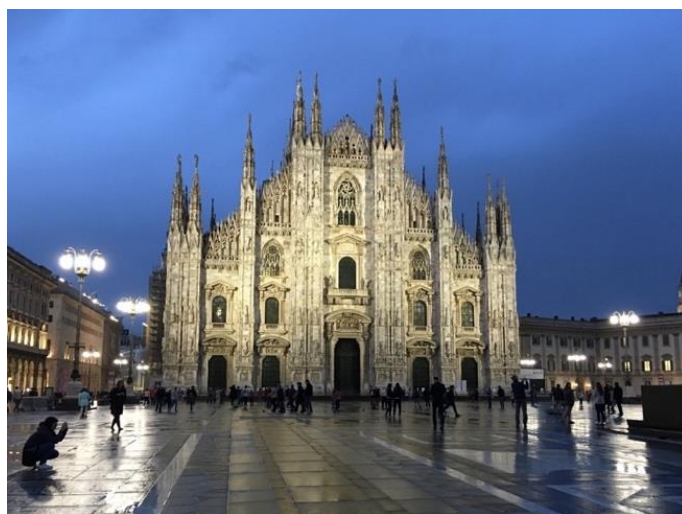
This month's Wow! features cathedrals. Surely these are the original wow! structures, designed for us to feel awe. I have often wondered at the dedication, effort and money which went into the construction of these highly advanced engineering structures, often serving quite small communities. The skills and enterprise of the architects, stone-masons and builders were often not well rewarded in financial terms, but the pride they would have felt at having been part of the huge teams, which produced such long-lasting monuments, must have been immense.

As with many of my wow! categories the choice available to me is vast. I am easily awed, and my selection is probably heavily influenced by recent trips in Europe. Top of my list - by a long way - is the *Mezquita-Catedral* in Cordoba. I had read about this complex edifice but had not seen it until earlier this year. It completely blew me away and I still cannot quite believe that one can stumble across a huge Roman Catholic cathedral inside - and dwarfed by - a mosque.

In the traditional gothic style, it is hard not to be impressed by *Milan's Duomo*, especially if you go up onto the roof, and by the- soon- to- be-splendid- again, Notre Dame in Paris. But there

are so many gothic cathedrals that my attention is easily diverted to the quirkier designs. Obviously, the *Sagrada Familia* in Barcelona earns a place but so, of course, does our own *Metropolitan Cathedral* in Liverpool.

I usually nominate someone for their body of work, but, as far as I can discover, no architect has designed more than one cathedral. This is not surprising, when such a project is so lengthy and could be expected to be more than a life's work. If anyone knows of an exception, I'm sure you will write in and tell me.



The Duomo, Madrid

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Tuesday Monthly Meetings

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

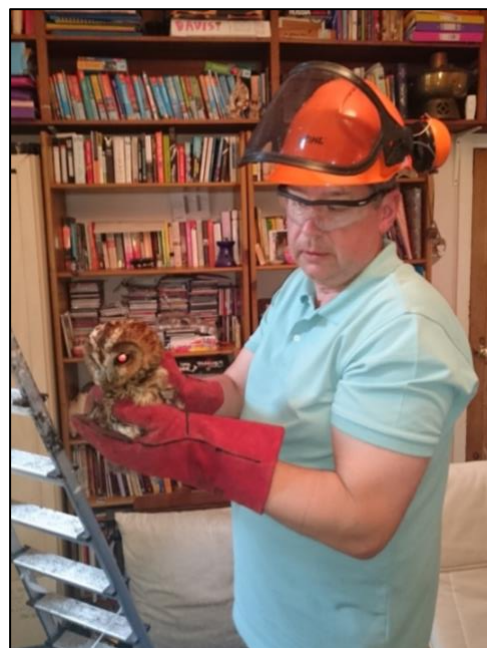
4th July: The Birds in our Gardens by Chris Tynan, RSPB Liverpool

Do you sit in your garden, listening to birdsong and wishing you could identify the singer? Or does the same thought cross your mind when you see a flash of colour in a tree or an unusual flight pattern?

Chris Tynan from Liverpool RSPB will give an informative and humorous introduction to the birds in our garden - how to identify them, when we might see them and what they get up to when we're not watching.

Chris has been the leader of RSPB Liverpool group for 25 years.

Chris collecting a tawny owl from a house.



Thursday Monthly Meetings

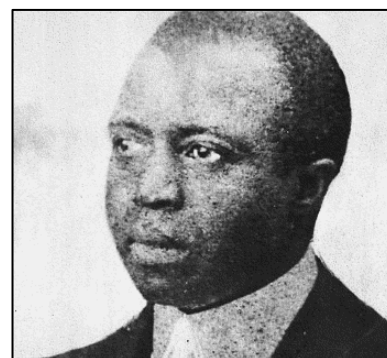
St Columba's Church Hall, 10.00am for 10.30 am start

20th July: Scott Joplin by Roger Browne

'Why this brilliant, but tragic, ragtime composer died penniless, and why one of his operatic masterpieces was never performed in his lifetime'.

Roger's presentations are full of amusing anecdotes and live piano playing. He has presented music-related talks to u3as, along the length and breadth of the country, over the last 8 years. He will be travelling to Bramhall u3a immediately after his presentation to Chester u3a. We are fortunate to get a slot in his schedule.

Scott Joplin played ragtime music. He composed more than 40 ragtime pieces, one ragtime ballet, and two operas. *The Entertainer* (1902) and *Maple Leaf Rag* (1899) are some that you may remember.



Scott Joplin (Public Domain)

Social Events

Friday August 11th: Shrewsbury Flower Show

Only **£29.00**, inclusive of coach fare and admission!

Apart from the beautiful and exotic flowers, there are many extras at the show ground:

- “Liberty X” who entered the charts at the time of the millennium with the hit song, Thinking It Over.
- Circus skills in the arena.
- Clodagh McKenna, celebrity TV chef.
- “Watch That Scene” - an Abba tribute band.
- Lectures in the marquee.
- Penny farthing biplane. It looks like a plane, sounds like a plane and flies like aWell, like a bicycle.

- Marvellous giant sloths, whose mission is to wander around the world, as slowly as possible on their tricycle.
- A food hall, and various stalls dotted around.

If you don't want to go to the Flower show, there is another option. You could come on the coach for £12.00 and spend the day doing what you wish in or round Shrewsbury.

Coach pick-up will be as usual - Hough Green 9.00 am, Delamere Street 9.10 am and Sainsbury's 9.20 am.

This should be a great day out BUT, to get this cheap rate, we need to pay as soon as possible. Please contact me, Liz Flanagan, on **01244 341097**.

Visit to Ludlow

A coach trip is planned for Friday, September 8th to Ludlow. Price will be £15 to £20, depending on numbers. Extras like the Castle or the Food Hall will be payable on the day if you wish to visit. Please book your seat at the next meeting or phone me, Liz, on **01244 341097**.

Liverpool Museums Trip

This trip is for anybody who wishes to visit any of the museums in the Waterfront Area of Liverpool on Monday 24/07/2023. There are several world class museums (Maritime Museum, Liverpool Museum...) on our doorstep and other attractions (British Music Experience, Beatles Story...) to visit. This will be a very informal visit in that what you choose to go and see is entirely up to you on the day. A group of us will be leaving Chester (or Bache) station in the morning and returning by around five in the evening. There is an option of meeting up for lunch and for a drink when we return to Chester. If you are interested, then just reply below. This does not commit you in any way, but it will ensure that I will send further details only to those interested.

Jeff Howard

members@chesteru3a.org.uk

Social Committee



Group News

The Opera Group

On the first Thursday of every month, we meet at Vicars Cross Golf Club and share a screening of a full opera or extracts from several operas with a common theme.

The choice is decided by whoever leads a session. Our experience over the years has been wide-ranging, encompassing everything from the Italian greats (Verdi, Puccini, Rossini and Donizetti) to the heavies such as Wagner, and to lesser-known composers of opera such as Korngold, Humperdinck, Ravel and John Adams.

Through this group, we have been introduced to operatic performances and operas that were unknown to many of us: "Die Tote Stadt" (The Dead City) by Erich Korngold and "The Death of Klinghoffer" by John Adams are two that come to mind.

As far as performers are concerned, Pavarotti, with his rich soaring tenor voice, will remain a favourite with many, but modern operatic productions demand not only phenomenal voices, but also good acting and language skills, and more agility. The mezzo soprano, Joyce DiDonato, and the tenor, Jonas Kaufmann, exemplify this.

Opera cannot be done quietly, so finding a venue where we can close the door and turn up the volume is necessary. We are delighted that we have attracted new members to our group in the last twelve months, particularly after the pandemic, and can now just about fit all members into our excellent venue at Vicars Cross Golf Club. We are very grateful to the Golf Club, and to Martin and his team, who have been so welcoming and accommodating.

Group members are also grateful to Lesley who leads us and keeps us abreast of local operatic productions and live-streamings at cinemas, to Peter who keeps the subscriptions up to date, and to Jon who brings and assembles the equipment (and even persuades it to work).

Gwen Goodhew



[Opera-singer-clipart #3173696](#)

Behavioural Psychology

Given that there is no longer a Psychology A, it seemed timely to rename ourselves as **Behavioural Psychology**, as that is what we are interested in.

If you are fascinated by the behaviour of our species, and the reasons why we behave as we do, why not join our group as we search for the answers? We are seeking new members.

We may not come to any conclusions, but we will find the search interesting and enlightening – and sometimes quite entertaining.

If you are interested, why not come for a taster session at the Hoole Community Centre on the

third Thursday of the month, from 10.30 to 11.30, and bring your curiosity with you.

Carol McAlea, Acting Coordinator



Public Domain



Bird Watching 3

In common with many people, my first interest in birdwatching came from looking at what was in my immediate surroundings. Growing up in a big council estate in Liverpool, the range of birds we got to see was limited, although, to be honest, I probably didn't take that much notice of them then. My recollection might well be faulty, but it seemed to consist almost entirely of sparrows, pigeons, gulls, blackbirds and starlings. I knew of other species (being a bookish kid) but don't remember getting to see many of them.

Despite their familiarity, I retain great fondness for the common house sparrow. It's just as well, because our house and garden has been taken over by them over the past few summers and we appear to be acting as a nursery and playground for several dozen families. They nest in the roof above the patio doors - at least four nests I think - as well as in a creeper and a tall privet hedge. The garden is full of them - on the feeders, on the ground, on the bird bath & table, in the trees, on the furniture, in the pots - with parents feeding their youngsters and showing them the ropes.

This year we have had an unusual sight too of a very pale baby sparrow. We thought at first that it was an albino, but it turned out to be (thanks to research from fellow birdwatchers in BW3) a leucistic sparrow. They lack pigment too, but not to the same extent and don't have the pink eyes of the true albino. Apparently, they can be deaf as well. Too many disadvantages for one small creature I fear, and I suppose that's why we don't see them that often.



A leucistic sparrow

One of my favourite behaviours is when large numbers gather in the hedge and sit with their little heads poking out, engaging in shouting matches or gossip whilst furious squabbles erupt from within the hedge. It reminds me of scenes in American films where people shout abuse at each other from urban tenements. Cut to a few feet away and watch them splashing around in the bird bath and you can imagine the fire hydrant spraying over the kids in those same movies. The hedges need cutting as the garden is shrinking inwards, but we mustn't disturb the other residents.

We're lucky enough to have many more exotic visitors to our garden, of course. The local sparrowhawk turns up regularly to what she feels is an all-you-can-eat buffet. Last year we had a song thrush for the first time ever, as well as a couple of nuthatches and, glory of glories, a gold crest. The sparrows, blackbirds & starlings rule the roost and allow them their moment of fame before resuming their position centre stage.

So, we are afflicted with difficult, noisy neighbours. We've had to move the car away from the house because of the mess from the starlings' nests in the soffits and they almost killed the poor lad fixing the new internet connection by flying out when he was up the ladder. They start early at this time of the year too, not even waiting for dawn. Woe betides you if you wake up because you're not getting back to sleep. Nevertheless - you know what? I wouldn't have it any other way.

Mike Mitchell



Sparrowhawk

Walking Group

A Nature Ramble round Upton



Looking for exotic creatures

Friday 2nd June was a beautiful day – just the ticket for a 5 mile walk around Upton led by Liz Squires. And she had a few surprises for us.

Starting from The Oak Tree pub in Upton Grange we made our way across Liverpool Road, right along Upton Drive and left along Mill Lane past the golf course to Flag Lane South. Then across the A41 to Flag Lane North, at the end of which we picked up the path that divides the zoo. Here there were some unavoidable stops to peer at deer, rhinos and other exotic non-human beings through the foliage. Eventually we descended to

the canal and turned left towards the Countess of Chester Hospital. This is a lovely stretch of the canal, with banks of wildflowers, a heron, and several families of female mandarin ducks with ducklings (no males in sight!).

We exited the canal at the bridge (131) that leads to the Countess of Chester Country Park and then took the path that leads back to the Upton Grange estate and The Oak Tree pub, where a good lunch was enjoyed. Our thanks go to Liz for organising the event.

Janet Money



A lovely stretch of canal

Safeguarding

Chester u3a have adopted the safeguarding policy used by the Third Age Trust which can be found on their website. If you have concerns about yourself or anybody else, please contact the Safeguarding Officer by email -

safeguarding@chesteru3a.org.uk. The Safeguarding Officer is Margaret Whaley.

Treasure Trail (TT6) - Mediaeval Chester

Sue Foy and her team of treasure trailers and technicians have been at work again.

TT6 Mediaeval Chester is now up on our website and will also go onto the Heritage Festival website. A wonderful activity for families and anyone wanting to wander round the city finding things they may never have noticed before.

[Treasure Trail Page](#)

[TT6 Mediaeval Chester](#)

Two Chester mediaeval “treasures” that were not used in TT6 can be seen below.



Courtesy of Sue Foy

Can you identify them?



Courtesy of Sue Foy

Universal Chronicles in the Middle Ages

And for those of you who like all things mediaeval and if you are quick off the mark.....

On Saturday 1st July, the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literatures and the University of Chester will be holding a **free** conference at the Grosvenor Museum on *Universal Chronicles in the Middle Ages*, inspired by our own Ranulf Higden: for programme, see attached, and to reserve a place, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/universal-chronicles-in-the-middle-ages-ssmll-day-conference-2023-tickets-638025680987>

Some Good News!

Food and energy prices keep rising, but the annual membership fee for Chester U3A does not! After several years, it is still **£16.00** for new members and **£12.00** for renewals. Anyone joining now will not pay again until September 2024. Excellent value!

Festival Church Meetings

From September 2023, our monthly Tuesday meetings will be held in the afternoon from 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm on the first Tuesday of every month.



Members' Feedback

More responses to the Chair's 'Wow!' selections, this time to his choice of memorable last lines in films. Do join in and send your contributions to chestertimes@chesteru3a.org.uk

For your consideration:

Our Chair lists some favourite lines from movies. What makes a quote from a film memorable? 'I'll be back' is hardly poetry but has become iconic. It must be the way Schwarzenegger delivered it.

Regards D

Gone with the Wind is remarkable in that it has two memorable endings. In the novel, it is Scarlett O'Hara's, 'After all, tomorrow is another day.' But in the 1939 film, the closing words spoken by Rhett Butler are, 'Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.'

GG

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 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
July	Tuesday	Thursday
	French Film Group	French Intermediate and Friday Walking
August	Tuesday	Thursday
	Friday Writers and Further French	Gardening and German Conversation

The cut-off date for the next Chester Times is Sunday 20th July 2023.

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

This month's editor: Gwen Goodhew

Next month's editor: Joyce Carrington

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