

# HALTON NEWSLETTER

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April 2023

**Heron in flight - Leeds  
Liverpool Canal**



Photo courtesy of Patricia James

## Message from the Chair - Jennifer Lewis

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Our recent visit to London coincided with cherry blossom time. I was delighted to see that Battersea Park was near the top of the list of London parks to see this brief display of blossom. While Chris went off to Hornby at Margate I opted to take a short bus ride to Battersea Park. I have never been to the park and I really enjoyed my visit.

I know that many countries have cherry blossom festivals. Japan is probably the most famous but I was surprised to learn that many English cities now promote cherry blossom. As a consequence of lockdown the National Trust is planning to plant four million blossom trees by 2030. Birmingham city has planted six hundred trees so far this year.

As it was the school holidays the park was being well used by groups of young people either as part of an organised activity or in family groups. There were also many people of oriental origin enjoying the blossom although sadly none were wearing national costume. I also discovered that Battersea Park gardens were part of the Festival of Britain in 1951 and there are some features remaining, in particular the fountains and the Peace Pagoda. I know that my parents visited from Derbyshire because I have a souvenir programme and my parents talked about their visit. What I don't know is how they travelled there and who looked after my brother and I, given that I was only two and my brother was less than a year old and was very ill as a baby. I realise that now I will never know because in the 1950s there was no social media, even cameras and photography were rare and expensive.



It prompted me to wonder if it is a good or a bad idea that these days that every part of our lives is recorded and shared not only with family and friends but often on the web for anyone to see. I know how easy it is to download images from the net and change them with a simple programme. Even the Pope has not escaped this phenomenon. It seems the days of the camera never lies are well and truly over.



## On the Grapevine - George Mullen, Halton u3a Member

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You will have noticed, as I have, that the French are very keen on words that end in 'age'. They have amassed a total of 2,556. As France is so closely identified with wine it was inevitable that winemakers generally would embrace this Gallic obsession. There are a number of such words which have significant meanings in the wine world. We could call them 'The Severn Ages of Wine'.

**PINOTAGE** - The name of a wine grape in South Africa. It is a crossbreed of Pinot Noir and Cinsault.

**HERMITAGE** - The name used for Cinsault in South Africa. Hence the name Pinotage.

**DOSAGE** - This is the amount of sugar added to Champagne to balance the natural high acidity. When described as Brut the wine will contain 6 to 15 grams per litre of residual sugar.

**PIGEAGE** - This is the process of submerging grape solids like skins into the fermenting juice to extract colour, tannins and flavour. It's done using a device like a plunger. Otherwise known as Punching Down.

**REMONTAGE** - An alternative way of doing the same thing and more common today. Liquid from the bottom of the fermentation vessel is pumped by hose into the top. Known as Pumping Over. These two processes are referred to as Cap Management. Fermentation produces carbon dioxide which forces the solids to float on the top of the liquid minimising contact.

**BATONNAGE** - This involves stirring the lees (dead yeast cells) which rest at the bottom of the fermentation vessel to increase contact with the wine. It was originally carried out using a baton. It is known as ageing on the lees and is designed to add additional flavours and aromas to the wine. It is often indicated on the wine label with the words 'sur lies'. It is a little controversial as some winemakers believe that contact with the lees affects the natural flavours of the grape.

**REMUAGE** - Champagne involves a second fermentation in the bottle. When completed the dead yeast cells are collected in the bottle neck by gradually rotating the bottle until it is upside down. This is also known as riddling and can take months. The bottle neck is frozen and when the crown cap is removed pressure in the bottle will result in the ice plug containing the lees being ejected. Dosage is then added and the bottle corked.

We could include **VINTAGE** but this is also widely used in reference to non-wine products e.g. cars. And then, of course, there is **FROMAGE** which is often paired with wine in France

## Bin End - George Mullen, Halton u3a Member

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We are all familiar with the saying 'these things are sent to try us', and no doubt we have all used it in moments of frustration when we feel that life is being a little difficult. We may even feel that we are being tested by a higher power. This idea is possibly rooted in the Bible. As you well know St Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 10, Verse 18, warned them that they were being tested. Although I wasn't around at the time I got the message. But, in my case, it isn't a higher power trying my patience but, more importantly, the issue of single socks. Every time I turn on my washing machine for a

regular wash I end up with more additions to my collection of single socks. Despite receiving excellent advice from a very experienced source I did manage to achieve, on one occasion, a top score of sixteen single socks. I was told to put them in the washing machine in a net. This worked well until the inevitable happened and I lost the net. One theory being considered is that I am failing to recognise the various shades of sock colours of which there are a lot with as many as fifty in the case of grey socks. As a result some socks spend most of their life with the wrong partner. But the situation has improved thanks to the generosity of Halton u3a member Hazel Landon who kindly presented me with a box of Happy Socks. Since then my stock has increased thanks to further donations from local sponsors. The variety of patterns and bright colours makes it difficult to mismatch even if you deliberately try. I'm sure you will agree.



## The Society in Runcorn - Chris Lewis, Halton u3a Secretary

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The Society in Runcorn, under the railway arches, was previously a Co-operative shop. The current owner opened it as a bar some five years ago and Jennifer and I go there, both to drink and sometimes to eat. The owner is currently refurbishing it and has found some of the original shop hidden behind later decorations and he is restoring these. Has anyone any pictures taken inside or out when it was a Co-op?

The picture was taken last Saturday and shows the annual special Pullman train taking people to Aintree on Grand National day passing over the Society. This runs every year from London. After dropping the passengers at Liverpool Parkway to go by coach to Aintree, this is the only time a train of coaches passes through the centre of Widnes and by Fiddlers Ferry as it is serviced in Warrington. Will this route become the route of the east-west high speed railway as recently planned? Not in my lifetime.



## Promoting Halton u3a

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Halton u3a is liaising with various bodies in Halton that are helping to promote the wellbeing of the retired or semi-retired within our community. There must be many who would appreciate what u3a has to offer. We would like to recruit more members, for example notices explaining the purpose of u3a are going up in Halton Libraries and other places. Halton Libraries publish a monthly Newsletter and it can be found at: [Halton Libraries | Runcorn and Widnes Libraries \(haltonbc.info\)](http://Halton Libraries | Runcorn and Widnes Libraries (haltonbc.info)). This includes local events. If you are not on the Internet I am sure any library will give you the information.

We are also liaising with Halton Borough Council to promote u3a. You may not be aware that it has a comprehensive website: [Halton Borough Council Website: HBC Services Online](http://Halton Borough Council Website: HBC Services Online)

## Group report - Paula Fox, Halton u3a Groups and Venues Co-ordinator

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- **iPad Group (Group Leader, Paula Fox)** - The group has outgrown its usual premises at St Paul's Church Hall, so from Thursday, 20th April 2023 meetings will be at 10.00am in Ditton Community Centre, Dundalk Road, Widnes, WA8 8DF. Plenty of off road parking. The last session at the Apple shop was a continuation of learning how to get the best out of the Pages app. It was extremely interesting, informative and great fun. The iPad Group members meet on the first Thursday each month at the Apple shop, Liverpool One at 11.30am. On the third Thursday each month, meetings are at Ditton Community Centre, Widnes. Apple iPad users of any level are always welcome.



- **Bowls Group (Group Leader, Paula Fox)** - The green has been scarified, treated with moss killer, fertilised and the bald patches re-seeded, so it should soon be in tip top condition again. The sunshine finally appeared and, although a little chilly, we enjoyed a few good ends last week and were pleased that our joints hadn't seized up completely over the winter break. If you think you would like to try crown green bowling, come along and borrow a set of bowls. Bowlers of all levels are very welcome. The group meets at 10.00am every Tuesday during the season at Hough Green Bowling Club, Royal Avenue, Widnes WA8 8HL.
- **Bridge Group (Group Leader, David Burrows)** - The group meets every Thursday at 10.00am in Ditton Community Centre, Dundalk Road, Widnes WA8 8DF. The group is running well, back in our original room at Dundalk Road with usually between 3 and 4 tables playing. We are a friendly group with all levels of bridge skills and welcome members new to bridge but familiar with whist. We have a library of tuition books free to borrow to get new players familiar with bidding and techniques. Meetings usually start with an analysis of a hand played elsewhere and a discussion of how the hand was bid and played which is both informative and appreciated. Sessions vary between free play and themed instruction with a short talk followed by play based on the theme of the week which is stay-man and transfers. Several of our members also belong to local Bridge Clubs, details of which widens the possibility to play more than once a week. Bridge is a great way to meet people and have fun exercising the grey cells.
- **Reading Group (Group Leader, Barry Cotterill)** - The book up for discussion at the April meeting of the Reading Group was 'How Green Was My Valley' by Richard Llewellyn, published in 1939. This novel is set in Wales during the latter part of the reign of Queen Victoria. Its central character, Huw Morgan, relates his memories of growing up in a Welsh coal mining community. Huw, the youngest son in a large family, shows considerable academic potential. It looks as if his life could follow a different path to that of his father and older brothers who are all miners. The book follows Huw and his family through challenging times, which see the end of an era as industrial conflict divides families and changes the landscape of the once beautiful valley.

This book met with mixed opinions from the group members but provoked a most lively discussion. It is described as a classic and we wondered how a book earns this label and whether some contemporary novels would come under this umbrella in the future.

The Reading Group usually meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 10.30am on the ground floor of Widnes Library. New members are welcome. Our next book is 'The Last Runaway' by Tracy Chevalier which landed in the bookshops in 2013.

- **Photography Group (Group Leader, Barry Cotterill)** - The group continues to meet monthly at Rivendell Garden Centre, Widnes at 10.30am on the second Wednesday in the month. New members are welcome, you don't need a fancy camera, phone images are fine. The group met on Wednesday, 12th April 2023. We had agreed not to go too far because of the poor weather forecasts. This was definitely a good choice; we arrived at Spike Island in the hope of grabbing some nature/landscape shots, (there are often

some quite exotic birds using the area as a stopover), however the wind over the Mersey had obviously arrived there via Siberia making things pretty miserable. We managed to grab a few shots before the sideways rain started putting an end to proceedings. So we retired to the little log cabin cafe and enjoyed some excellent sausage sandwiches. From then on the only photography indulged in was the talking kind, although we had a good time and future plans were hatched for when the weather is better.

- **Science is for Everyone (Group Leader, Bob Roach)** - The group meets at St Paul's Church Hall at 1.00pm on the second and fourth Mondays in the month.

In recent sessions we have been looking at how Homo Sapiens split off from chimpanzees, our nearest 'relative', e.g.

- very gradually changed to be what we are now,
- the evidence there is for when and where key developments occurred.

By 1990 the consensus was that all humans originated from Africa, having moved away about 60,000 years ago, eventually spreading across the globe. Job done - time for fossil hunters to find new careers. But then things moved on, such as with:

- the use of DNA in the last 15 years (e.g. showing that we all have a little bit of Neanderthal DNA in us!),
- fossils being found in locations that didn't fit that model.

We are now up to when we ceased being 'hunter-gathers', living off the nearby wildlife and vegetation and settled in farming communities. This has sometimes been called, 'the worst decision Homo Sapiens has ever made'!

We are also looking at evidence for when humans lived in Britain – when that depended on whether or not there was an Ice Age at the time!

- **History (Group Leader, Bob Roach)** - The group meets at St Paul's Church Hall at 1.00pm on the first and third Tuesdays in the month. In a good example of the u3a principle of shared learning, we read up about an identified period of history so we can discuss what we have found out. Particularly in view of none of us claiming to have known a great deal about history in the past, this approach is working well, e.g. members of the group have usually focused on different topics of the set era, so giving us plenty to talk about.

In recent months we have been learning about British History. Starting from the Civil Wars in King Charles I's time, each era we have looked at so far has been so different from what has gone before! That certainly applies to the lengthy era of Queen Victoria that we are currently looking at.

As the attendance at a meeting the day after a Bank Holiday tends to be low, **we will not be meeting on Monday, 2nd May 2023, the day after the May Day Bank Holiday.**

- **Rather Leisurely Walkers Group** - Bob Roach has recently retired from leading the Rather Leisurely Walkers Group. If anyone would like to take over this group please contact our Secretary, Chris Lewis. Bob is happy to provide support and encouragement.

- **Family History Group (Group Leader, Alec Hough)**- With effect from May, the Family History Group will meet only once per month - on the third Monday of each month - so the next meeting will be on Monday, 15th May 2023.

We meet from 2.00pm to 3.30pm in Room 11 at Widnes Library, Victoria Square, WA8 7QT. There are car parking places and bus stops nearby. Those attending pay £2 per session to cover the cost of hiring the room. All members and prospective members are welcome, it doesn't matter if you haven't started researching your family tree or even if you have no intention of doing so. At our recent Monday afternoon sessions we have been tracing interesting stories which our members have discovered during their researches and looking into related social history of education, workhouses, population growth and health services.

For those who do want to research their family history but aren't sure how to start, we offer one-to-one sessions at dates to suit you in your local library to show you the basics and get you started. You may be surprised at what you find out about your family.

- **Living History Group - (Group Leader, Geoff Dutton)** - The group's study of Chester's walls was postponed due to the fact that Tuesday was a bad day for some members and the weather is mixed in March, so it has been rescheduled. Geoff Dutton to contact members with new date.
- **Gardening Group - (Group Leaders, Chris and Colin McConnell)** - The Green Shoots Garden Club meeting was held at Rivendell Garden Centre at 10:30am on Monday, 17th April 2023 which was well attended by members. We discussed our first visit to a National Garden Scheme garden called Parm Place on Sunday, 2nd April 2023 in the lovely village of Great Budworth. There were plenty of positives, the weather kept dry, sun was shining and a stunning garden to see. We finished off the day by visiting the Great Budworth Real Dairy Ice Cream and Tea Room which was really enjoyed by all. We are looking forward to another National Garden Scheme visit on Sunday, 14th May 2023.

The main topic at the meeting on Monday was Vine Weevil in pots and gardens, which is a problem for all gardeners if not controlled. We had a general question and answer session on plants and shrubs and also discussed other ideas / topics for future meetings.

The next meeting will be at 10:30am on Monday, 15th May 2023 at Rivendell Garden Centre, Widnes, WA8 3UL.



Visit to Parm Place, Great Budworth

**Southport Flower Show** - Last year Southport u3a created a winning show garden, gaining a Large Gold Medal and a Silver Trophy. After TV appearances and more the u3a certainly made its mark – Southport Flower Show want us all back!

Southport Flower Show are offering all u3a members a discount off their advanced ticket price - members get tickets for just £19.00 each instead of the £28 .00 'at the gate' price.

Simply add **SFSU3A** in the Promo code section when you book online at <https://www.southportflowershow.co.uk> .

- **The Cinema Group ((Group Leaders, Hazel Landon and Judith Byrne) -**  
The Cinema Group will meet on a Tuesday afternoon (usually around 2.00pm) when a 'good' film is showing. This will not be every week; it is a come when you like group.
  - Sometimes it will be short notice, information will be published on the Cinema What's App group as films for the week are only released on a Sunday.
  - Tickets are usually about £5.95. You can get a Combo ticket for an extra £1 which includes a drink.
  - We meet in the Foyer so that we can get a row of seats together.
  - Car share is encouraged, as is bring a friend.
  - If you are interested, please let Chris Lewis know along with your contact details, so that Judith can put you on the Cinema Whats App Group. We have had 19 members sign up already.
  - A film we may see that has been recommended is 'Empire of Light'.

The next Cinema Group outing is on Tuesday, 2nd May 2023 to see 'The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry' at the Reel Cinema in Widnes. We can't yet confirm the time but will post on the Cinema Group WhatsApp as soon as we know more details.

***If you are interested in any of our groups and would like further information, Group Leaders can be contacted through the contact page on the Halton u3a website, or you can contact our Secretary, Chis Lewis.***

## **Next General Meeting and Coffee Catch up**

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The next General Meeting is on Thursday, 11th May 2023, the speaker will be John Wilson who will be talking about the work of the Seaman's Mission in Liverpool.

The May coffee catch-up is at 2.00pm on Thursday, 25th May 2023, venue to be confirmed.

**If any members would like to give a presentation at a future event, or would like to contribute a short article to the newsletter, please contact our Secretary, Chris Lewis, or send articles to the newsletter editor through the contact page on the Halton u3a website. **Please note the last date for contributions to the newsletter is the 20th of the month.****

***Further information and contact details can be found on the Halton u3a website at [www.u3asites.org.uk/halton](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/halton)***