

HALTON NEWSLETTER

April 2024

Butterfly House, Victoria Park



Message from the Chair - Chris Lewis

Hello all

I am very pleased to report our new groups appear to be thriving. We now have seventeen groups. The Day Trip Group had its first outing to York and our Aviation Group had its first trip too. I am writing this from Funchal in Madeira where yesterday it was 30 degrees (Centigrade!). Our flight, by co-incidence, was the first Jet2 flight from Liverpool to Madeira and at least one couple from Widnes, who we know, were on it because of this. I thought railway enthusiasts were eccentric but perhaps I have to admit we share some characteristics.

Regarding the number of Group Leaders, we should all be aware of the amount of time and effort they put in (my Pub Group is a labour of love of course!). The same applies to your Committee, both to Elected Members and those invited to attend. Without the time they put in, Halton u3a would not exist and I count myself lucky to have these people

supporting me. But please remember all are volunteers and are not paid. I am very grateful to them and I am sure that members are too.

We are back above 120 members again, in fact 126. I have always preferred to be a large fish in a small sea rather than a small fish in a large sea hence not applying to ICI when leaving University. (Jennifer and I were with some students of Imperial College recently and they had never heard of ICI, how the world quickly moves on.) I think our number gives us the opportunity to be a friendly group. If, as some u3as are over a 1,000 members, then this must be really difficult to achieve. The fact that nearly half our members attend our General Meetings and more our group meetings perhaps shows we are succeeding in this. We rarely get feedback from members on the running of your u3a or suggestions for improvements. Please feel free to comment and I promise you they will be read.

Some of you will have heard of the Beacon system that our national u3a supports. What is Beacon? Beacon is an on line management system designed for u3as. It provides a secure system for managing members, groups and finances. Beacon is available to all u3as in the UK that wish to take advantage of it. After consideration by your Committee we have decided to join. Since I had access to all members details I have entered these in a set format as a spreadsheet (which I love playing with) to gain registration for Beacon. Caroline Nesbitt has attended a training session and will be the administrator. Incidentally this enabled me to look at where members live: Widnes (80), Runcorn (29), surrounding area (16), other (1).

I have had to withdraw an article on the improvements to our train service to London from Runcorn with new trains and a doubling of frequency. However, latest information is we are continuing to have just one train an hour and the new trains will be used between London and Birmingham maintaining its service of over three trains an hour. Manchester has three. I would like to start a Railway Group but time prevents this. However, if several members request it I would be quite willing to have an occasional meeting to discuss railways throughout the world, not just the UK, and answer questions.

March General Meeting

Our speaker this month was Paula Parle, Development Officer for Sport and Physical Activity for Health in Halton. She reminded us of the importance and benefits of physical activity. We should be aiming for 150 minutes per week and she offered ideas for anyone needing help to achieve this target. We were all invited to join her unusual game of bingo, the difference being we had to take part in physical exercises when particular numbers were called.

Answers for Everything - George Mullen, Halton U3a member

It's time to check how many sayings you identified in last month's quiz. Unfortunately, we are not able to award prizes. We are out of stock of oranges due to a shortage of drivers.

1. Neville Chamberlain on his return from a meeting with Adolf Hitler and speaking of the Munich Agreement of 1938. He is frequently misquoted as saying Peace in Our Time but this is a phrase from The Book of Common Prayer as in Give Peace in Our Time, O Lord.
2. This became a popular saying after Prime Minister Harold Macmillan made a speech in 1957 in which he said 'Let us be frank about it, most of our people have never had it so good'.
3. On 28th February 2005 Norwich City let slip a 2-0 lead against Manchester City. Live on TV the club's major owner Delia Smith urged the fans to support their team with the rallying cry of 'Let's be havin' you'.
4. A phrase used by Margaret Thatcher in a speech to the Conservative Party conference in 1980.
5. 'Whispering' Ted Lowe, snooker's most famous TV commentator.
6. Meaning 'Even you Brutus' the last words spoken by Julius Caesar as he is stabbed to death in Shakespeare's play. Not to be confused with the translation spoken many years ago by my mate Sonny Kerkhov in my old school's annual production. 'And you, you brute'.
7. A familiar remark by Harold Wilson who was Prime Minister in 1964-1970 and also 1974-1976. During this second term he was MP for Huyton.
8. One of the most memorable comments in sport. It was spoken by BBC's Kenneth Wolstenholme when England beat West Germany 4-2 in the 1966 FIFA World Cup Final.
9. Mrs Dale in Mrs Dale's Diary which ran from 1948 to 1969. The lead was played by Ellis Powell and then Jessie Matthews. Husband Dr Jim Dale was played by Douglas Burbidge followed by James Dale!
10. Originally written as 'I'll come back' this was said by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the 1984 film 'The Terminator'.
11. Sydney Carton as he was about to be executed in A Tale of Two Cities. One of the most famous lines in literature.

On the Grapevine - George Mullen, Halton u3a Member

Jancis Robinson (wine's answer to Delia Smith) once said that wine is geography in a bottle. She was right, of course, but it also involves chemistry, botany, geology and lots more. It has a very interesting history which dates back to 6000BC.

Georgia is known as the cradle of wine with evidence strongly suggesting it is where wine was first produced. It is a small country about the same size as Scotland. When it was part of the Soviet Union it was wine supplier to Russia and all the wineries were state owned. Wine was produced on an industrial scale with the emphasis on volume. Since the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991 Georgian wine has been revitalised and become noted for its individual character. Georgia has over 500 indigenous grape varieties but only a small number are used commercially for wine. Saperavi for red wine and Rkatsiteli for white are the most well known. Armenia can also make a case for being one of the first sources of wine.

Complete wine jars that are still intact containing 'well preserved remains' of 5,000 year old wine have recently been discovered in Egypt. Wine making in Mexico began with the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors in the 16th century. In the 17th century Protestant Huguenots fled Catholic France after being persecuted by Louis XIV. Some of them went

to South Africa. They settled in Western Province in a place now called Franschoek which is Afrikaans for French Corner. Today it is famous for its wineries.

In 1725 Irishman Tomas Barton from Fermanagh emigrated to France. He settled in Bordeaux and in 1747 he bought a vineyard and made claret for exporting back to Ireland. Chateau Leoville Barton is still owned by his descendants. They produce high quality wine in the village of St Julien which with Ste Estephe, Pauillac and Margaux are the four most well known appellations in Medoc.

In the 18th century Spanish missionaries introduced wine to California. Today, if California was a separate country, it would be the 4th largest producer of wine in the world. Tannat is a red wine grape associated with Uruguay. It was introduced into the country by Basque immigrants who started to settle there in 1824. In 1839 over 500 Lutherans left Germany after harassment from Frederick William III of Prussia. They settled in Barossa Valley in South Australia which is now a major wine region.

Benedictine monks of Admont in Slovenia have been making wine in their Dveri Pax winery for more than 800 years. The Romans, through their Empire, spread wine all over Europe. But when the Moors took charge of the Iberian peninsula wine fell out of favour. Eventually Christianity returned and communion wine was needed. Sancerre in the Loire valley is famous for Sauvignon Blanc wine. During World War II it was a regional command centre for the French Resistance.

As well as being a historian it helps to be a chemist if you want to understand the mysteries of malolactic fermentation and carbonic maceration. I'm simply happy to accept that these things happen. It takes an agronomist to explain Kimmeridgian soil. I just understand that it's one of the reasons why Chablis is such a good Chardonnay. The soil actually takes its name from the English village of Kimmeridge in Dorset. Why does Cabernet Sauvignon like gravel while Merlot prefers clay? Legend has it that water was turned into wine at a famous celebrity wedding many years ago and there are rumours that Merlot was served at the Last Supper. Possibly but I'm not sure about that. Perhaps it was something made with grapes from the Garden of Eden.

Life with an Air Fryer - George Mullen, Halton u3a Member

For a long time I've been on a mission to understand the difference between a cook and a chef. Schools have a cook but pubs always have a chef. Is this a euphemism for microwave operator? Every pub food menu includes chicken ding. In the days when TV cookery programmes were about food instead of being travelogues Philip Harben and Fanny Craddock used pots and pans. My friend Ryan and his wife Sarah are keen foodies. They each have a pilot's licence and they used to entertain us in the pub telling of their trips such as flying over to France for Sunday lunch.

But all that has changed. For airplane now read Air Fryer. Ryan is hi tech. He has told me about his job but I couldn't understand a word. So I get a little confused as he explains how it is possible to boil an egg in an Air Fryer. I resisted for a long time but, eventually and inevitably, succumbed and bought one. I was less than encouraged when I noticed the slogan on the packaging. Come fry with me. They have spawned some dreadful jokes. What do you get if you put your iPhone in an Air fryer? An Apple fritter! After a few

false starts I succeeded in producing chicken and sweet potato fries thanks to the expert tuition of Maureen Cleary. I'm not into baked Alaska yet but can Jamie Oliver boil an egg?

On your behalf I'll propose to Chris, our Chair, that we start an Air Fryer Group. I understand that, as a new group, Halton u3a group development sub committee would possibly fund our first fry.

Your Feedback Is Needed - Anna Higgins, Halton u3a Website Administrator

Some of you will already be aware that the Halton u3a website will be moving publishing platforms over the next few months, along with many other u3a websites across the country. When it's up and running we will have a new look website which should be easier to navigate. Visitors who access the site with tablets and phones should also find it more reader friendly.

Now is a chance to take your opinions into account. It would be useful to know how often do you use the website and what for? Also is there anything additional that you would like to see included on the website? Finally if you do not use the website is there anything that we could do to encourage/make it easier for you to use it? At the end of the day it's your website so your opinions are valuable. Please send any feedback and suggestions to me by email via the contact page on the website which can be found at: <https://u3asites.org.uk/halton/contact>

If you read this newsletter on the website the above link should take you straight through to the contact page.

Group Reports

- **iPad Group (Group Leader, Paula Fox)** - On the first Thursday each month members attend a free workshop at the Apple Shop, Liverpool One at 11.00am to 12noon. On the third Thursday each month we meet at 11.00am at Cronton Methodist Chapel Hall, Chapel Lane, Cronton, WA8 4NT. Beginners always welcome, all you need is an Apple iPad, a notebook and £2 contribution to room hire at Cronton Chapel..
- **Bowls Group (Group Leader, Paula Fox)** - Meetings are at 10.00am to 12.00 noon every Tuesday from April to September at Hough Green Park Bowling Club, Royal Avenue, Widnes, WA8 8HL. No experience necessary and spare bowls are available to borrow. Professional coaching is available and complete beginners are very welcome. An annual contribution to the club is necessary.
- **Bridge Group (Group Leader, David Burrows)** - The group meets every Thursday at 10.00am in Ditton Community Centre, Dundalk Road, Widnes WA8 8DF. 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.

- **Reading Group (Group Leader, Barry Cotterill)** - Our latest read met with a definite thumbs up for some - one member proceeded to read another two of the author's books, but sadly a thumbs down from most. Still it provoked a most enjoyable discussion. Visitors and new members are always welcome on the third Wednesday morning of the month at 10.30am at Widnes Library.
- **Photography Group (Group Leader, Barry Cotterill)** - On Monday, 15th April 2024 we are planning to meet at 7.00pm at the Pump House, Albert Dock, Liverpool to take pictures of the sunset/lights on the river front. A tripod or stand for your camera or phone would be useful if you have one. Weather permitting of course. Our May meeting is at 10.30am on Monday, 13th May 2024 at Rivendell Garden Centre, Widnes, when we will share images from the Liverpool trip and plan future outings. New members very welcome. If you would like to join us please come along to Rivendell Garden Centre or make contact at the next General Meeting.
- **Science is for Everyone** - The first meeting of the newly reformed Science Group was held on Monday, 25th March 2024 and Paul Burgess gave an extremely interesting presentation, talk and discussion on **Why do we do Science?** Paul emphasised that the 'Scientific Method' is difficult to define precisely but this powerful methodology underlies the majority of our intellectual progress, from 2000BC to now, with an emphasis on 'today'. Early science suffered from frequent errors but also benefitted from the contributions of some brilliant figures throughout history, who continue to move forward 'thinking about the thinking' with continuously improving rigour. The next meeting will be held at 1.30pm on Monday, 29th April 2024 at St. Paul's Church Hall, Widnes.
- **History (Group Leader, Bob Roach)** - The group meets at St Paul's Church Hall, Widnes at 1.00pm on the first and third Tuesdays in the month. The group is aimed at people who may not know a great deal of history but are interested in building up their knowledge. Having worked our way forward from the Civil War era to the end of World War II, we have nearly caught up with the present! As a result we need to decide what period or feature of history to look at next. That could be a focus on earlier British history before the Civil Wars, e.g. Anglo Saxons and / or the Norman Conquest, or we could break away from our focus on British history. That is for the group to decide.
- **Family History Group (Group Leader, Alec Hough)** - The group meets monthly on the third Monday of each month from 2.00pm to 3.30pm in Room 11 at Widnes Library, Victoria Square, WA8 7QT. Our next meeting will be on Monday, 15th April 2024. All members are welcome whether or not they have started researching their family's history. For those who want some help in getting started, we offer one-to-one sessions at dates to suit you in your local library to show you the basics. You may be surprised at what you find out about your family.
- **Gardening Group - (Group Leaders, Chris and Colin McConnell)** - We meet at Rivendell Garden Centre, Widnes at 10.30am on the third Monday of the month. At the last meeting NGS garden visits were discussed. Rob James gave a very good and informative talk on lawns and answered questions from members. There was discussion about a change of venue but it was decided that a decision would be made at the next meeting. The next meeting will be at 10.30am on Monday, 15th April 2024.

- **The Cinema Group (Group Leaders, Hazel Landon and Judith Byrne)** - The Cinema Group meets 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 What's App Group.

- **Ten Pin Bowling Group (Group Leader, David Bissenden)** - The Ten Pin Bowling Group meets at 10.00am each Wednesday at Widnes Super Bowl, apart from during school holidays. Two games of bowling, including coffee and bacon roll, cost £7.99 under the 'Nifty Fifty' option which is only available to over 50's Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 11.00am (two games take a little over an hour - one game option is also available at £6.99). Participants are of course responsible for their own fitness and ability to take part and should supply emergency contact details. Members interested can contact me through the website or just turn up.

- **Visits to Interesting Pubs (Group Leader, Chris Lewis)** - This is a sociable group usually meeting on the third Thursday of the month in three local pubs in rotation at teatime. We try and have a short walk beforehand for those that want to. We are going to have extra afternoon meetings to suitable bars in an area accessible by train.

- **Walking Group (Group Leader, Rob James)** - The walk at Dutton on Monday, 25th March 2024 was well received and despite the forecast it was dry. Our next walks are Monday, 22nd April 2024, Cronton and Thursday, 16th May 2024, Moore to Walton Park. Further details are on the Walking Whats App and email groups.



- **Lunch Group (Group Leader, Patricia Quarton)** - Four members went for a Sunday carvery at The Cookhouse on Sunday, 24th March 2024. This seems to be popular so I'm arranging another one for Sunday, 21st April 2024. Cost is £7.50. I hope to make this a monthly event.
- **Day Trip Group (Group Leader, Patricia Quarton)** - Seven members went on the Ashcroft trip to York on Thursday, 4th April, 2024. The rain held off and we all had a lovely day. The next Ashcroft trip will be in June. I've already posted on Whats App that I'm arranging a trip to the Brindley for the ballet Swan Lake. This is at 7.30pm on Wednesday, 23rd October, 2024. Price is £25.50 which includes a £2 concession for Seniors.

- **Aviation Group (Group Leader, Colin Stanton)** - Members of the Aviation Group paid a visit to the Avro Museum in Woodford on Friday, 22nd March 2024. I think we all agreed it was a great day with lots of interesting exhibits. The next group event is at 3.15pm on Wednesday, 17th April 2024 at Ditton Community Centre, Widnes for a presentation on the TSR2 Britain's lost bomber. Future events include visit to Cosford RAF museum on Thursday, 23rd May 2024, talk on Bristol Aircraft Company, date to be advised and Southport Air Show, 13th / 14th July 2024.



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, Caroline Nesbitt.

Next General Meeting and Coffee Catch-up

The April coffee catch up will be at 2.00pm on Thursday, 25th April 2024 at Rivendell Garden Centre, Widnes.

The May General Meeting will take place at 1.30pm on Thursday, 9th May 2024 at the Masonic Hall, Widnes. The meeting is entitled 'Birds and Bees' and describes how we can nurture nature by George Pilkington.

The May coffee catch up will be at 2.00pm on Thursday, 23rd May 2024 at Rivendell Garden Centre, Widnes.

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 Chair, 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 10th of each month.

Further information and contact details can be found on the Halton u3a website