



Tarporley and District u3a April 2024 Newsletter

“WHAN that Aprille with his shoures soote

The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote,

And bathed every veyne in swich licour,

Of which vertu engendred is the flour” from *The Canterbury Tales*

Whatever you think of Chaucer’s wonderful words, one thing may bring you up short – what drought of March? It appears to have been raining for months and the Cheshire countryside has gained many new, semi-permanent ponds. So as the days lengthen and you seek to venture further afield, - “[Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages](#)” – I do hope that the spring sun shines on you and that the rain finally ceases for a while.



Committee News

Our new Membership Secretary, Peter Schofield, was pleased to announce that there are now 532 members, with 17 names added in the last month. He was surprised by geographical spread of our new members, our fame is obviously spreading.

Peter has also agreed that, for the immediate future, he will also act as Booking Secretary and liaise with Tarporley Community Centre. While Peter will cover the role in the short term, the Committee does need to appoint someone to take over the role permanently in the future. The Committee is aware that the Community Centre has recently appointed a part-time Centre Manager and that several administrative changes may well be made to existing systems. However, the Centre will continue to be at the epicentre of Tarporley and District u3a activities.

The Committee discussed a paper from the u3a Trust Board seeking to make the organisation more responsive to the needs of groups and members. There are now over 1000 groups and 400,000+ members, so changes to how the organisation functions may well be overdue. The suggestion that the Board become smaller and concentrate on legal, financial and compliance issues while a new Council of regional and national representatives concentrate on organisational issues and future development. This was felt to be an excellent idea in principle, but it was agreed that our response should stress that we felt the current regional group should be expanded to become the new Council, rather than a new layer be introduced.



You are more than welcome to view Committee minutes. Please contact the Secretary on tarporleyu3a@outlook.com and she will be delighted to forward you a copy.

MONTHLY MEETING

TARPORLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE

Thursday April 25th 2024

Doors open at **9.45 am** for refreshments.

The meeting begins about **10.15 am** with announcements.

The talk starts at **10.30 am**.

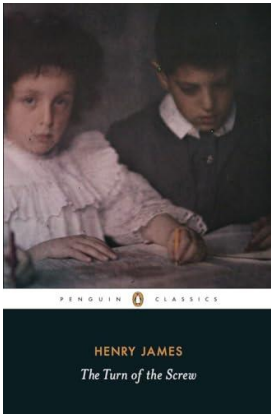
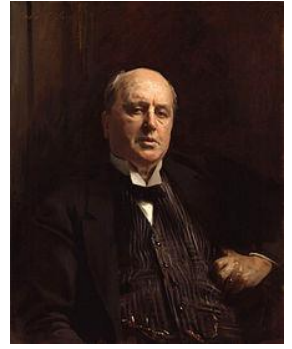
David Skillen

**“The Bentley Boys -
The Playboy Racers”**



Book Club 1

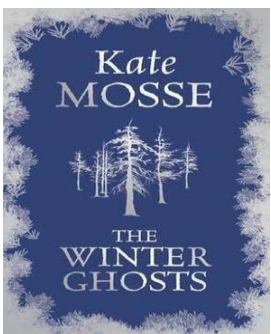
The book of the month was **“The Turn of the Screw” by Henry James**, and what a lively discussion followed! This novella was published in regular editions in 1898 in the American magazine, Collier’s Weekly. It tells the tale of a young, naïve and unnamed governess who is appointed to look after two young children by their enigmatic and charismatic uncle who insists that she never contact him about them. At first charmed by Flora and Miles, she becomes increasingly concerned by the appearance of two ghostly figures, identified from her description as the now deceased former employee Quint and former governess, Miss Jessell. At first none but the governess can see them, but she becomes increasingly concerned that the children can also see and communicate with them. They appear to be stalking the children and she feels that the apparitions are harmful and malign. In her efforts to save Miles from Quint, he dies in her arms.



All agreed that the language was dense and formal and for some that totally impeded their access to the plot. Others pushed through the verbiage to find a tightly plotted and intriguing story about the complexities of Victorian social status and the effects of repressed desire on the imagination. The story has been subject to endless interpretations and is regarded as one of the foremost and earliest examples of the Gothic style. Henry James is regarded as one of the greatest novelists in the English language though few of the group would be so generous in their praise. Perhaps his novels are more accessible!

Book Club 2

Our book this month was **“The Winter Ghosts” by Kate Mosse**. At its heart this is a story of love, loss, remembrance and eventual redemption. Freddie Watson, unable to let go of his grief at the death of his much-loved brother in WWI, travels to France 10 years later to seek peace and resolution. He finds solace in the companionship of a woman, who is also grieving. What he and the reader come to realise is that Fabrisa is the 'echo' of the last Cathars in the area after their destruction by the Catholic church 700 years previously. So, this is a ghost story as well (a familiar 'time-slip' trope used by Mosse) and it becomes Freddie's task to rediscover the entombed souls so they can finally rest in peace, and in doing so find his own peace too.



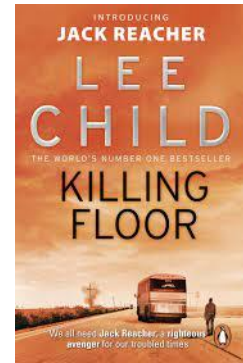
There was a mixed reaction to the novel, mostly positive, 2 members particularly so. However, one member did not enjoy it at all mainly due to their dislike of ghost stories. Several members stated that the book was slow to get going, but enjoyable once it did! Several members read it through twice and liked it considerably more after a second reading!! There was much praise for Mosse's description of the scenery, and several members were motivated to read more on the history of the Cathar as a result!

The score for the novel was 7/10.

Book Club 3 – Murder/Mystery

The book chosen was “**The Killing Floor**” by **Lee Child**, the first novel in the Reacher series where he introduces readers to the enigmatic and formidable character of Jack Reacher. Set in the fictional town of Margrave, Georgia the story follows Reacher as he finds himself unexpectedly embroiled in a web of murder, conspiracy and corruption.

Child’s writing style is crisp and engaging with a knack for building suspense and keeping readers on the edge of their seats. The narrative unfolds at a brisk pace, propelled by Reacher’s relentless pursuit of the truth behind the crimes he encounters. The plot is intricately woven, with twists and turns that keep the reader guessing until the very end.



All members thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, with one saying, “I just couldn’t put it down”.

Next month’s book is *Naked in Death* by J.D. Robbs

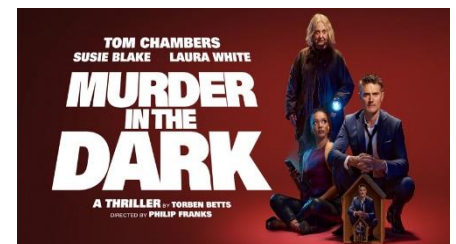
Theatre Studies

Booking independently, several members went to see the NT Live film of **Vanya**, an adaptation of the Chekhov play *Uncle Vanya* with Andrew Scott playing all the roles. It was agreed that this was a personal acting triumph by an incredibly talented actor. With a subtle change of tone and of deportment and with the clever use of small props, he was able to identify to the audience all the characters. The plot unfolded, if not quite as Chekhov would have imagined, with sufficient clarity for the complex story to unfold.

There were a few criticisms, particularly what was gained ,or indeed lost, by using one actor, however talented, to portray all the characters. The observation was also made that the finer changes in characterisation were easier to appreciate given the close-ups that the film version allowed. Would a live audience have been able to see that so well?



Murder in the Dark at New Brighton was rather a disappointment. Billed as being thrilling and spine-tingling – many felt that the tension was lost, for some quite near the beginning! That the whole play was to become a reoccurring nightmare for the main character became obvious to members at different times during the performance, but the ‘reveal’ was felt to have modest impact.



The Floral Pavilion is a pleasant venue, easy to reach and with excellent parking. But the wide stage and shallow auditorium does not make it easy to hear the character’s conversations and thus vital plot clues can be lost.

After a very lively meeting to discuss the plays seen, it was agreed that the next tranche of plays would be NT Live, **The Motive and the Cue** starring Mark Gattis and Johnny Flynn and **Nye** starring Michael Sheen. The CRTA sponsored performance of **Havisham** is on at both Tarvin and Kelsall Community Centres and **Kill Thy Neighbour** and **Constellations** will see the group return to Theatre Clwyd after quite a break.

There is no limit to how many people can join the Theatre Studies group given that not everyone can attend performances at the same time. Please do get in touch with the Convenor via the website if you would like to have your name added to the list.

Dog Walking

A report from Convenor Rosalind Crow

“The dog walking group had to cancel their February walk due to the bad weather but we were back in action in March with a walk from the Leigh Arms pub at Acton Bridge. We followed the river Weaver, eventually leaving it to walk through some meadows before returning along the Trent and Mersey canal and finishing with a drink in the Leigh Arms Pub. It was a great walk, enjoyed by both owners and dogs!



The dog walking group meets every 2nd Thursday of each month. We are a friendly group and the humans always have a great time as well as the dogs. Dogs of any size and shape are welcome, though they should be comfortable in the company of other dogs. Walks are designed to enable the dogs to be let off the lead, though it is fine if owners prefer to keep them closer. Our walks are between 4 and 6 miles and always have a coffee stop either half way or at the end of the walk which is a bonus!

For various reasons we are low on numbers now and would really welcome some new members. All you need is one or more dogs! Please contact me if you are interested in joining us, our next walk is on Thursday April 11th.”

Contact with Rosalind can be made through the website.

U3a Nature Group

A report from the Convenor.

“Our Nature group was formed almost 4 years ago when Covid was at its worst, and we couldn’t go exploring. Since then, we have developed a very active group whose approach is to discover many aspects of Nature, to share those findings within the group, and to identify and to learn about the wildlife we’ve seen.

We meet once a month, usually in the Community Centre, and we occasionally go on field trips. However, an important aspect of the group is our use of WhatsApp on our mobile phones. This App allows us to share photos, almost instantly and from anywhere in the world, and it is key in keeping us in touch between meetings.

Discovery usually starts in the garden or on a local walk. With Spring now under way, we’re enjoying a wide variety of wildlife, such as snowdrops beside Tarporley roundabout, toads crossing the road in Kelsall, ducks on Christleton pond, and, not to mention, the camellias and bulbs planted in our gardens.

Some of our members have been taking overseas holidays. With WhatsApp, we are all enjoying, among many other photos, Cockroaches and Myna birds from Thailand, Kia birds from New Zealand, Geckos from Saudia Arabia, and a Black-crowned Night Heron (see right) and a Pin-



tailed Whydah from South Africa (see below). It should make for some good discussions when we next meet up in March.

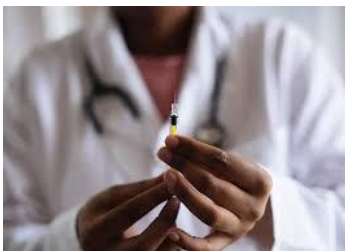


Another fascinating part our hobby is trying to identify what we've seen. Once again WhatsApp is very useful as we can get feedback from our more knowledgeable members. We've also been looking at Apps to help with identification and we're surprised both by the amount of information on the internet, and by the Artificial Intelligence based tools. We are starting to put together an index, that would include specialised online websites and weblogs e.g. Cheshire Wildlife Trust, or tools such as Google Lens, which can identify species just from an uploaded photo, and Merlin, which can even identify a bird from its song.

Science Group

At the last meeting the group discussed what topics they might study in future months and how they could best use the research tools available to convey meaningful information about complex subjects.

After a lively discussion, the following topics were agreed to be of interest:



Medical issues – Vaccines, Medicines and healthy aging, the Covid pandemic (public information and the social/medical aftermath)

Biodiversity – the balance between food production, human development (especially housing) and wildlife.

Relativity – with an emphasis on special relativity.

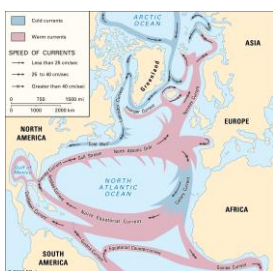
Climate issues – including small nuclear reactors, the new advances being made in fusion technology and energy production and distribution, with special reference to challenges to the National Grid.

The Internet, development and future challenges.

Mapping – the use of system like LIDAR for capturing high definition and 3-D images.



The Science Group has many members with a wealth of scientific knowledge, both from academia and lifetime careers. However, there are members who have joined because they have an interest in the scientific and technological advances going on around them. How can they contribute to discussions?



An example of a non-specialist talk was given by Sue Hardacre who looked at the Gulf Stream, its function and the concerns that many scientists have that it is weakening. There would then be potentially catastrophic effects on the climate and weather in the northern hemisphere. The talk had been created from a simple internet search using Google. However, there are now AI sites like Perplexity www.perplexity.ai that will craft a presentation quickly from wider resources. Other information can be gained from looking at more specialist scientific journals. One suggestion was that some discussions could take the form of a debate where a for/against format might help the development of a more balanced view.

The Science Group is committed to being welcoming to all. If you have a lively curiosity about the world about you and are prepared to take a closer look at some of the challenges of the day – do come along. Go to the website for details of times, dates and topics.

In Case of Emergency (ICE)

No matter how fit and healthy we deem ourselves to be, statistically speaking, our age makes us more prone to accidents and incidents of ill-health. The Committee has been working on defining new guidelines for keeping members safe at meetings and group activities and one of their recommendations is that all members carry information on them that would be vital in case of an emergency.

Do you carry such information on you as a matter of course? It is worth seriously thinking about if you do not do so.

There are two types of information systems you might consider.

Card/Paper information

Something tucked away in a wallet or purse is the simplest form you can carry. It should contain your name, age and address and brief, relevant medical information, e.g. G.P., Blood thinning drugs, Pacemaker.

The name and contact details of one, or perhaps two, people that you would like to be informed if you experienced any problem. This is usually a family member but might well be a friend if they live closer.

The Committee is looking into purchasing such cards and making them available to members.



Mobile Phone

Most of us carry a mobile with us all – well at least most – of the time and it is extremely easy to add your medical information to your device. If you Google “Putting medical information on a mobile phone” you will find lots of sites that will give you the clear and simple instructions for both Android and iPhones. The word **Emergency** will be displayed on your lock screen and pressing this will give anyone who needs to access to your medical information **ONLY**. They will not be able to access anything else on your phone as long as your phone is password protected.

Please do consider carrying one or other - or preferably both – types of information on you. It could reduce the stress to you, your loved ones and the emergency services should anything unexpected happen to you.



Unexpected Callers

Ed: We received this information recently which I pass on. While being harassed by cold callers is unpleasant and potentially risky, I thought the phrase 'unexpected caller' seemed a bit harsh on any friend who might be passing!

Keep an Older Person Safer in 2024

Cold calling is not illegal. However, any trader that ignores a sticker or notice on a door stating that the occupier does not wish to receive cold calls may be committing a criminal offence.

The door sticker may be of interest to someone you know. These are free of charge and if you reply to this email, info@ablecommunitycare.com, we will be happy to send some for you to pass on, or individuals may contact us directly, (since 2019 we have given out over 180,000).

We do not keep any individual details on a database, and we do not give information to other organisations.

www.ablecommunitycare.com



Trips.

The job of organising trips is not straightforward as Edward Baskerville has found out recently to his cost. The performance times of the very popular **Cirque** show at Llandudno in October has challenged him somewhat. Getting customers has been easy, there is a waiting list, but the theatre has changed the timing of the performance a couple of times, leaving much organisational work to be completed. All seems now settled and details will be sent out confirming times very soon.

The Trips Committee work hard to find a variety of venues and attractions to tempt you. Some will be quite precisely organised with a booking for lunch or tea included. Others may be more informal, allowing you to discover the destination at your leisure.

The best place to hear about trips first is at the monthly meeting where the details will be given, and you will have a chance to put your name down. If there are still spaces available, a general email will be sent out and there is usually a mention in the relevant Newsletter. Trips of all kinds are very popular, so do be prepared to move quickly when they are announced.



Current destinations being investigated are Jodrell Bank, Aber Falls Whiskey Distillery North Wales, and Petal Fields in Shropshire. In November there is likely to be a trip arranged to see the ballet, Swan Lake by that unique choreographer and director, Matthew Bourne.



Is there somewhere that you would like to go to? Please do contact Raye Hurst who will be delighted to investigate your suggestion. Contact rayewirral@aol.com

Digital Photography

I am very lucky to be sent a wealth of wonderful photos each month by the group and it is always hard to choose the best. This month's theme was Colours, so I do hope that you like my selection.



The Big Sing

If you enjoy singing with others then you will enjoy **The Big Sing**, an event organised by the u3a North West Region.

Date – Saturday June 15th 10.15 am until 3.30 pm.

Venue – Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool

Leader – Fredrick Holm

Register by June 7th at <https://forms.gle/EY0hUmvagdTJQzqQ7> or by post to

G Russell, 71 Barn Hey Crescent, Meols, Wirral CH47 9RW

Cost - £15 including refreshments but not lunch.



Forthcoming Events

Tarporley Community Centre –

Film Night – Friday April 19th at 7.30 pm

One Life

The remarkable story of Sir Nicholas Winton and the efforts he took to save 669 Jewish children from Prague before the Second World War.

Starring Anthony Hopkins and Johnny Flynn



Tarvin Community Centre

Film Night – Friday April 26th at 8.00pm

Wicked Little Letters with Olivia Colman, Jessie Buckley and Timothy Spall

Based on a true story of an anonymous letter scandal in Littlehampton in the 1920s.



Theatre Night – Friday May 3rd at 7.30 pm

Sponsored by Cheshire Rural Touring Arts

Havisham with Heather Alexander

The story behind the enigmatic Dickens character at the cobweb – strewn wedding breakfast.

Also at

Kelsall Community Centre on Saturday May 4th at 7.30pm

Tickets available from www.ticketsource.co.uk or from local outlets



.....and finally, from our source of never ending jokes! Not sure what our book club members would make of this!

<u>BOOK BLURBS - GLOSSARY OF TERMS</u>	
<i>Enchanting</i>	there's a dog in it
<i>Heart-warming</i>	a dog and a child
<i>Moving</i>	child dies
<i>Heart-rending</i>	dog dies
<i>Thoughtful</i>	mind-numbingly tedious
<i>Haunting</i>	set in the past
<i>Exotic</i>	set abroad
<i>Audacious</i>	set in the future
<i>Award-winning</i>	set in India
<i>Perceptive</i>	set in north London
<i>Provocative</i>	infuriating
<i>Epic</i>	editor cowed by author's reputation
<i>From the pen of a master</i>	same old same old
<i>In the tradition of</i>	shamelessly derivative
<i>Spare and taut</i>	under researched
<i>Richly detailed</i>	over-researched

Just a brief word about any images of members in the Newsletter. They are sent with the participants agreement but are intended for inclusion in the Newsletter only. Please do not send images of u3a individuals in the Newsletter to other public, digital spaces.

To respond, or contact any Committee member, please get in touch with the Secretary, Kim Harding by email at Tarporleyu3a@outlook.com

For contributions about your group's activities, please get in touch with the editor at bandshardacre@btinternet.com

For wider information on the activities of Tarporley and District u3a go to <https://u3asites.org.uk/tarporley>

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