



**Tarporley and District u3a**

## **January 2024 Newsletter**

A very Happy New Year to you all. I do hope that you have come through the festive season with some excellent memories but perhaps an slightly expanded waistline.

For those of you with an interest in political matters, 2024 should be a very interesting year with important elections throughout the world. Apparently about 2 billion people in more than 50 countries will go to the polls. Some elections will be easy to predict, while others will cause the world to hold it's collective breath.

Our world is changing but we can only hope that the national and international institutions that have kept us relatively secure over the last few decades prove resilient and keep us safe from the turbulent forces around us.

May 2024 bring peace and security to us all.



### **Parking Arrangements for the Monthly Meeting in Tarvin**

If you are planning on coming by car to the meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup>, can I ask you to offer lifts to friends if you can.

The address is **Meadow Close, off Crossfields, CH3 8LY**

The Community Centre car park is free but there will be other users as well that morning so it may get full quite quickly.

The Community Centre is at the end of a cul-de-sac. When the car park is full, a u3a Committee member will be at the junction of Meadow Close and Crossfields to advise you where to park to prevent congestion. If you park on a residential street, please do take care not to block drives.

The second car park in the Community Centre grounds is now used by the NHS Vaccination Service. If there is a clinic on, parking there will not be possible. More information about the possibility of parking here will be given to you nearer the time.

There is an excellent free car park at the Playing Field, from where a short tarmac path takes you directly to the Community Centre in a couple of minutes. You need to approach this car park from the main road, near the junction to the High Street and the A 54. (near the Wing Hing restaurant)

# **MONTHLY MEETING**

## **TARVIN COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Thursday Jan 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**.

**John Daines**

**Cakes to Computers**

**LEO the world's first office computer**

The world's very first business computer was designed and manufactured, not by one of the electronics giants such as IBM, but by J Lyons & Co, better known for its Teashops and Corner House Restaurants, its Swiss Rolls and Fruit Pies.

This is the story of that remarkable development.

### **History Matters Visit to Arley Hall**

The History Matters Group visited Arley Hall on 1<sup>st</sup> December when it was decorated with amazing floral arrangements. In the publicity the house was described as being decorated with foliage from the gardens, but the group was not expecting the level of artistry and colour which greeted them. A vast array of flowers in vibrant colours and with an innovative use of other materials had been used to create numerous arrangements in different rooms, the hallway and the chapel.

The weather was cold and frosty but sunny with a clear blue sky so they could walk around the garden. There was even a warm retreat in the vast greenhouse called the Vinery! They were able to enjoy a Rock Choir singing in the hall and the café was serving delicious hot food with a festive twist to the menu.

A very enjoyable visit to this lovely country house which has been owned by the same family for 550 years.



### **Book Club 1**

The book club enjoyed a lovely, relaxed lunch at the home of the Convenor, Maureen, following her very generous offer to act as host.

Such a relaxed occasion rather precluded a vigorous literary discussion, but members did talk about books they had enjoyed during the year. Among the titles recommended were *All the Light you Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, *Entangled Life* – about Fungi – by Melvin Sheldrake, *The Book of Longings* by Sue Monk Kitt and the poetry of the Scottish Poet Kathleen Jamie. However interesting the books read in the group are, the selection of titles shows the breadth of interests that members have.



## **Book Club 2**

Book Club 2 celebrated their first year as a group with a very enjoyable Christmas meal at "The Swan".

This was preceded a discussion of "A Life in Questions" by Jeremy Paxman. The book describes Paxman's early life and subsequent career. Whilst some of the anecdotes were interesting and amusing, several of us found the book quite hard going.

Book Club 2 rating 6/10



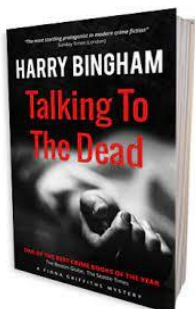
## **Book Club 3 - Murder Mystery**

The first meeting of the Murder, Mystery book club took place on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> December and the book they discussed was Holy Island by L J Ross.

The discussion looked at the three elements that make a good murder mystery novel, are the characters believable, is the plot convincing and is the writing of good quality. While the last element was felt to be very competently done, the main criticism was about the plot. While agreeing that having a murder committed on an island cut off by the tide – a 'closed room' murder – was ingenious, the group thought that to have a number of prominent citizens indulging in a satanic cult on an island with just 200 inhabitants was just an imaginative stretch too far. While the main character was, as is often the case, a troubled detective, the romantic element introduced into the plot seemed an unnecessary complication.



However, the group had to acknowledge that the book was the first of a series of 20 adventures featuring DCI Ryan, and these had proved extremely popular with the public and had sold over 7,000,000 copies worldwide!



The group meets on the first Tuesday of the month, so the meeting on January 2<sup>nd</sup> may not give you time to read Devil's Breath by Jill Johnson.

However, the February meeting is on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> when the book being discussed is Talking to the Dead by Harry Bingham. If you would like to join us, please email Kim Harding on [khald364@aol.com](mailto:khald364@aol.com)



## NATURE CLUB EXPEDITION – TREES IN WINTER

Seven hardy souls braved the rain, mud, and more mud on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December in the pursuit of spotting and identifying trees in winter. We first observed Alan Brighton's magnificent almond tree. Then moved on to Scots pines, oaks, ash, alders, crack willows, limes, hornbeams, beech, sweet chestnuts, sycamore, grey willows, goat willows, elders, hazel, hawthorn, Lombardy poplars, holly, and a few we couldn't identify.

Nick Oates pointed out the various ways in which trees can be identified. Oak has bent boughs – see the picture of an oak taken from Nick's back garden. Ash twigs curl up at the end, like someone pleading for cash, "cash for ash". Limes have multiple shoots from the base of the trunk, sometimes



with shoots halfway up the trunk. Limes also look messy in winter, but fantastic in spring, summer, and autumn. Sweet chestnuts often have deep, spiral patterns on their bark – see the picture taken on the golf course. Crack willows – well, they crack – as we saw from many fallen boughs and branches. Alders have seed pods, making their upper branches look dense and wonderfully dark purple. Scots pines have orange trunks high up. Hornbeams are like scruffy beech and usually retain a few leaves for identification. Beech have slender, almost aerodynamic twigs and smooth grey trunks.

After negotiation of multiple slippery stiles and a stalwart walk, we had late, very enjoyable elevenses at The Drays café in Eaton.

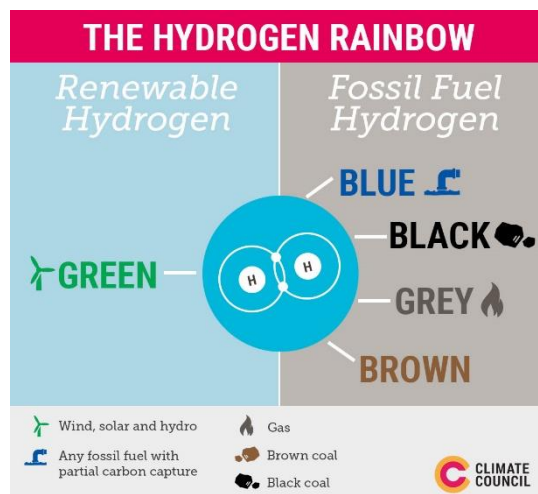


## Science Group

Continuing their look at alternative fuel sources, group member Nick Oates presented a talk, The True Colours of Hydrogen - Perceptions versus Reality.

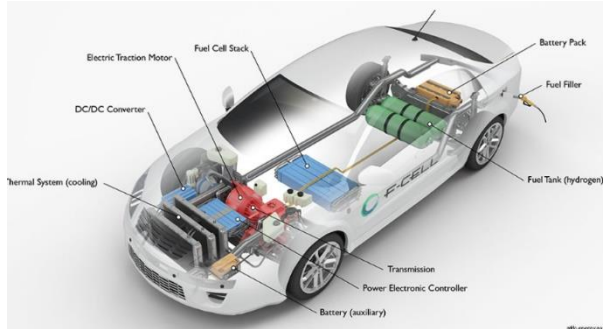
Hydrogen is the most abundant element on the Universe, with many of the planets and stars being composed mainly of hydrogen in a plasma state. Its attraction as an alternative to fossil fuels is that, when burned, it produces mainly water vapour. Hydrogen is light and can be easily stored under pressure as a gas, or as liquid at very, very low temperature (-253°C or less). Hydrogen could be transported via existing gas pipe networks, most likely as an addition to natural gas.

At the present time hydrogen is mainly obtained by processing natural gas, coal, or lignite or by electrolysis. When electrolysis is performed using electricity generated by solar or wind, this 'Green' Hydrogen can significantly reduce the fossil fuel usage in other industries who use it to power their processes. However, if the hydrogen is produced using conventional fossil fuels without any carbon (i.e. CO<sub>2</sub>) capture or storage – 'Grey' Hydrogen - then the benefit to the environment is



considerably smaller. Despite improvements to the traditional Steam Reforming process, the balance between fossil fuels 'in' versus clean hydrogen 'out' remains variable and commercially uncertain. However, this is an area of sustained research by commercial companies, universities and governments as the search for cleaner fuels continues at pace.

Some heavy industries that produce hydrogen as a by-product from other processes, use it to supplement their fuel needs. There are instances where hydrogen is currently being used in transport where fleets of lorries or buses use the fuel to reduce particulate emissions e.g. Liverpool. In Japan, which has fewer sustainable fuel sources, Toyota has been leading research into hydrogen fuel cells for transport and



California has made a noticeable start on creating the infrastructure where cars with this type of propulsion can operate. But there are many problems to be solved before this fuel, either for industrial or domestic use, becomes commonplace. For instance, Toyota has recently announced that it is concentrating on hydrogen powered trucks rather than on cars.

However, the pressure of the climate emergency plus the ingenuity of scientists and engineers should mean that hydrogen will have a significant role to play in the future – though a future unlikely to be experienced by the current members of the Science Group!

## Table Tennis

Throughout the u3a organisation, table tennis has become a very popular activity. Tarporley and District u3a is no exception with two groups offering members a chance to let their competitive spirit have a good workout.

**Tarporley Group** - meets on Mondays, 11.15 to 1.15, at the Tarporley Community Centre & generally have between 10 & 20 players each session. They use 3 or 4 tables and mostly play doubles. New recruits have joined from time to time and the numbers are creeping back up post-Covid. If you would like to join, then please do contact the Convenor via the website



**Kelsall Group** – meets on a Tuesday from 9.30 until 12.30 and offers a mixture of singles and doubles play. This group has about 30 members and is currently unable to accept any more.

The picture shows the competitors for the Christmas Mixed Pairs competition.





ED: It is possible that there may be members reading this that would love to get involved with Table Tennis but are not able to play on a Monday. There is space for a potential new group at Kelsall on Thursday mornings and Tarvin Community Centre also has 3 excellent tables and will have daytime slots available for hire. Any new group would need a convenor which does involve some organisation, but the convenors of the existing groups would be delighted to help getting a new group established. Please do contact the Groups Advisor via the website - <https://u3asites.org.uk/tarporley> if you would like to find out more about establishing a new group.

## **Digital Photography**

These images have been sent in with the understanding that they are 'straight from the camera' and 'unedited'. I still think they are wonderful and capture the essence of the season.



## **Trips Report –** from Edward Baskerville

The Beatles Christmas Show Party at the Queen Hotel Chester on Tuesday 12 December was a huge success with over two hundred folk attending in the large ballroom. Our party of 48 occupied five large tables and I am embarrassed to report that the writer and Mrs B came away with the prize for the “best dressed couple” but many others joined in the spirit of the occasion.



Next December the theme at the Queen will be “Motown” and I came under much pressure to ensure we are booked in once again with Greatdays to open the festive season 2024.

### **FRIDAY 15TH MARCH**

I can inform you that the trip to Venue Cymru Llandudno has been a sell out and the forty tickets I have on hold have all been taken up. I am always happy to put names on a wait list as experience tells me there will inevitably be late cancellations.

This is an evening performance by Welsh National Opera of favourites to the concert stage; Verdi, Bizet, Mozart, Mascagni, Puccini etc...We will be leaving Tarporey at 4:15PM in good time for the performance due to start at 7:30PM.

### **EARLY AUGUST**

I am still planning a return to Buxton in 2024. It might need to be a Sunday to manage a matinee and to get the National Gilbert & Sullivan Company performing. Feedback as to whether members might find a Sunday an unwelcome day to do a trip would be helpful. If possible, I should certainly consider a post-show supper at the Palace Hotel where we were well looked after following the 2023 performance of “Yeomen”. This is a full day’s outing from mid-morning to late evening.

### **OCTOBER**

Cirque de Soleil are coming to Llandudno in the autumn and I am thinking about that although two trips to Venue Cymru in one year might be overdoing it!

### **LATE AUTUMN**

For sure there will be a concert to attend at the Hallé or more likely, to ring the changes so to speak, at the Liverpool Philharmonic.



## Forthcoming Attractions

### Tarporley Community Centre

Film Night Friday Jan 19<sup>th</sup> at 7'30pm

**ALLELUJAH** – starring Jennifer Saunders, this is a heart-warming tale of the efforts to save a much-loved geriatric hospital from closure. Expect to see a host of well-known actors!



### Tarvin Community Centre

Film Night Friday Jan 26<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm

**NAPOLEON** – starring Joaquin Phoenix. This is a spectacular, action-filled epic directed by Ridley Scott



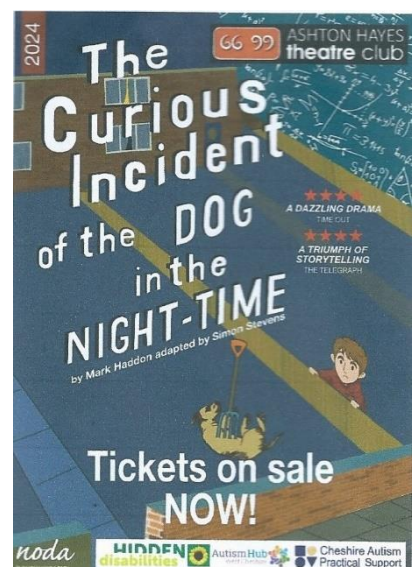
February 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>

Ashton Hayes Theatre Club

### **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.**

A stage adaptation of the novel by Mark Haddon by this excellent amateur group whose productions never fail to impress.

For tickets go to [www.ahtc.org.uk](http://www.ahtc.org.uk)



. ..and finally

I saw this poem in the Guardian and it made me smile. I hope you enjoy it as well.

### **Christmas by Wendy Cope**

**A lot of men love Christmas: the gathering of the clan,  
Buy still it's mostly women who have to think and plan.  
So much to organise, to shop for and remember –  
Hard work that occupies the best part of December.  
I don't enjoy it, but I do the best I can.  
How to have a happy Christmas? Be a man.**

With apologies to all those men who slaved non-stop to prepare for Christmas – you know who you are!

**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](mailto:Tarporleyu3a@outlook.com)**

**For contributions about your group's activities, please get in touch with the editor at [bandshardacre@btinternet.com](mailto: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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