Pam Wilson & Judith Hogg attended this meeting on behalf of Warrington U3A. There was a choice of talks & presentations to attend. The day began with coffee and general mingling, providing a welcome opportunity to become acquainted with and talk to colleagues from neighbouring U3As.

For her first session, Pam went to listen to Jenny Carley – North West Regional Trustee – talk about the variations between different U3A’s around the world.

Judith started the day by going to hear Salford University’s Professor Nigel Linge talk on ‘How Manchester Cotton wired the world,’ having no idea what the subject was likely to cover. Professor Linge explained that, even now, 95% of all global internet connections and telephone calls go via undersea cables and not by satellite, and went on to explain how this was achieved, the obstacles which needed to be overcome and what motivated its development from the 1850’s onwards. This was an excellent and entertaining presentation, very smoothly delivered, with lots of visual content.

After a break for lunch, Pam went to a presentation on Communications, Judith attended the session entitled ‘Understanding Tomorrow’s World’, and they then came together to attend the ‘Shared Learning Projects’ session and the AGM.

‘Understanding tomorrow’s world’ was presented by two members of Aughton & Ormskirk and Upholland U3As who are members of a Project Team within the Southwest Lancs U3A Network, which has produced a booklet with the same title as the session. They explained all the ways in which technology might impinge on our lives in the future and could be harnessed to enable people to remain in their own homes for longer (eg by alerting relatives if an elderly person hasn’t turned their kettle on that morning, or by the fridge making its own order to a supermarket and having the shopping delivered). They also want to encourage the establishment of U3A groups to look at the implications of these developments and highlighted some of the ethical issues which Philosophy groups might like to consider.

In the ‘Shared Learning Project’ (SLP) session, Sue Watkinson, the North-West SLP Coordinator, began by outlining how such projects, shared between several U3As or between a U3A and a local institution, absolutely met the main guiding principles of the U3A movement and yet were not widely recognized. Following that, three projects from the area were described, including the current one between Warrington U3A’s Family History Group and the Local History section of Warrington Library (Red Cross parcels being funded and packed in Warrington and sent to prisoners-of-war from the S Lancashire Regiment being held in Germany).

In the AGM, the usual business was conducted and vacancies on the Executive Committee filled (two coming from the floor on the day, due to lack of nominations). Jenny Carley
addressed the meeting, summarizing her time as North West Regional Trustee, a post from which she will be standing down on August.

Altogether a very informative and enjoyable day. While two delegates only can attend the AGM, the rest of the Conference is open to any U3A member and it would be good to see more Warrington members attending in the future.

Judith A Hogg
3rd July 2016