



# West Cheshire Rural u3a Newsletter 1/1/2024



## January Monthly Meetings

Meetings resume in January with a talk by Simon Michael. If you'd like to know what it's like to share a bacon sandwich with a convicted murderer in the Old Bailey cells, to wear a 200-year-old horsehair wig, to do battle with corrupt members of the Sweeney and much more, come to hear Simon Michael, a former barrister and writer, tell tales from the Bar and talk about writing crime novels and his family history.



**West Cheshire Rural u3a**  
**January 18<sup>th</sup> at 2pm**  
**Barbour Institute, Tattenhall**  
**Speaker: Simon Michael**  
**"My Life in Crime"**

**Christmas Lunch** – We held the u3a Christmas lunch at Cheshire View on the 19<sup>th</sup> December. Thanks to Isabel Wakefield for organising it again this year, it's not an easy task. We ended the meal with some festive singing accompanied by Ken on his ukulele. We hope you enjoyed the meal, please provide feedback to enable us to plan next year's when the time comes round!!!

## Vote of Thanks – Monthly Meeting, can you help?

At the end of the monthly meeting, we give a vote of thanks to the speaker. This is a short "thank you" on behalf of the members and has been given largely by Committee Members. We would like to extend this role to any member who would like to be involved. There could be a monthly topic that is of particular interest to you

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or it may be something you feel inspired by. Please will you speak to Marian if you would like to help with this.

## Speaker Schedule

Month	Speaker
February	David Mitchell – Chester Town Crier For Crying Out Loud
March	Chrisine Stockton – The Story of Flamenco

## Charity Commission Registration – Gift Aid

Following West Cheshire Rural u3a's Charity Commission registration, we have now registered with HMRC to enable us to claim gift aid on our membership fees.

Gift Aid is a UK government initiative that allows charities to reclaim 25p on every £1 of your membership fee at no extra cost to you. This means that by simply confirming that you are a taxpayer on your membership form and signing up for Gift Aid, you can significantly boost the value of your membership. It is optional but if you are a UK tax payer, we hope that you will participate.

The additional funds enable us to meet increasing costs, helps us to maintain relatively low membership fees and continue to book interesting and professional speakers for the meetings.

## Quiz update

The answers to the **Cryptic Festive** quiz plus the new quiz **Dingbats 24** are on the website.

## Potential new groups

The current Sunday lunch group is primarily for those who are on their own. We have had a suggestion for a Sunday lunch group which would also include couples. The group would meet mid-month.

We have also had interest for two potential new groups: **Beginners Calligraphy**, and **Quilting**, and enough members to start the **Canasta** Group.

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Another possible new group is **Learning about Artificial intelligence (AI)**. The u3a have recently appointed a subject adviser for AI. This would be a small group to investigate AI and try to understand what it's all about – where is it being used now?

It would be an interactive group with an objective to learn from each other so will require people to engage and be willing to help with research and shared learning. The goal is not to become AI experts but to get a better understanding of the subject as a result.

If you are interested in any of these groups, please contact Marian Hagan or Mike Woollard

## Reading Groups

Reading Groups are popular in West Cheshire Rural u3a. We have two groups - Chapter Chats and Pageturners which are now full. If you would like to join a Reading group, don't despair, we can look at starting a new group.

## Sunday Lunch Group

In December the group went to the Alvanley Arms at Cotebrook for our Christmas Lunch. We have been there before and ten of us really enjoyed our lunch.

## Poetry Group

The group meets on the first Monday in the month in the Community Room at St. Alban's Church, Tattenhall, at 2pm. Members read their favourite poems which are based on a chosen theme.

Our theme in December was Snow, which was very timely given the snowy weather over the previous weekend. We welcomed Myr Whaley for the session.

We also planned our meetings for next year. There are a lot of Monday Bank Holidays. Rather than move to a different day which can prove difficult both in terms of people being free on a different day and the room being free, we will have fewer meetings for the first half of the year:

<b>January</b>	<b>No meeting, Bank holiday</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> February</b>	<b>The topic will be Relationships</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> March</b>	<b>The topic will be Occasions/Celebrations</b>
<b>April</b>	<b>No meeting, Bank holiday</b>
<b>May</b>	<b>No meeting, Bank holiday</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> June</b>	<b>The topic will be Moods</b>
<b>July</b>	<b>The topic will be Humour/Comedy</b>

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The poems we read in December were:

- The Snow Fairy – Claude McKay
- The Silence of the Snow – Ruth.D.Velenski
- The Snowman -Roger McGough
- It's Only Snow – Allan Ahlberg
- The Darkling Thrush – Thomas Hardy
- Up in the Morning Early – Robert Burns
- The Journey of the Magi - T.S. Elliot
- Little Grey Rabbits Christmas – Alison Uttley
- London Snow – Robert Bridges
- A Greenland Winter - Lucy Diamond
- Frozen Canal – John Cassidy
- The Snow Leopard – Dennis Martindale
- In the Moonlight – Eric Finney
- Master of Cold Mountain – Han-Shan
- This Time of Year – Maggie Ingall
- The Snow Storm – Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Jack Frost in the Garden – John P Smeaton
- Winter – Walter De La Mere
- Snow in the Suburbs – Thomas Hardy
- Jack Frost Playing Cards at the Roadside – Brian Patten
- Dust of Snow - Robert Frost
- February Twilight - Sara Teasdale
- Snow – Louis MacNiece
- Snow Flakes - H. W Longfellow
- Snowball – Shel Silverstein

The Poem by William McGonagall was “A tale of Christmas Eve.”

Anne read a poem that had been created using ChatGPT. ChatGPT is a form of generative AI that creates text based on information you provide it.

The poem prompted a short discussion around AI and how it might affect creative activity. This is the poem that ChatGPT created. It lacks the emotion that poetry can deliver but as Jim said it could act as a base to develop further.

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## A Snowy Night in the Woods

Beneath the silver shroud of winter's cloak,  
A snowy night in the woods, silence bespoke.  
Moonlight cascades through branches bare,  
A lullaby of flakes, suspended in air.  
The pines, adorned in a crystalline gown,  
Whisper tales as the snowflakes gently crown.  
Footsteps muffled by the quilted snow,  
In the enchanted woods, a quiet tableau.  
A fox, a shadow in the ghostly glow,  
Leaves tracks in the powder, soft and slow.  
Owls in their perches, vigilant and wise,  
Under the starlit canopy, nature lies.  
The woods, a cathedral in cold serenity,  
A hymn of hushed branches, a wintry symphony.  
Frost-kissed ferns and sleeping boughs,  
Nature at rest in a tranquil drowse.  
A rabbit dashes, a fleeting sprite,  
In the snowy realm, a creature of the night.  
As snowflakes weave tales in the silent woods,  
A timeless enchantment, where mystery broods.

## Music Appreciation Group - David Thomson

The Group meets on the first Thursday morning of the month for a couple of hours and has just passed its second birthday since reforming after the Covid interruption. There are currently 13 members in all and usually about 9 attend. We meet in the Church Room at St Alban's Church in Tattenhall, which has a super sound system for us to use during the sessions.

Members bring along their contributions relating to the chosen subject of the month. These can be on CDs, downloaded music, anecdotal musical recollections or information about what we are listening to. Our variety of topics can range from music for the relevant season of the year, to extracts from musicals, or maybe our personal Desert Island Discs choices. It gives Members the opportunity to share their musical tastes without requiring detailed knowledge and that suits our relaxed approach.

We are always happy to hear from anyone interested in joining us.

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## Ukulele

We finished off the year on December 6th with 12 songs including Five foot two, Islands in the stream, Jambalaya, Jennifer Juniper. Our new warm up song for 2024 is "Travelin' Light" by Cliff Richard.

We played a couple of carols "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" and "Joy to the World," both 'Ken' style, and "White Christmas" and "Jingle Bells" songs which were already in our music book from last year.

We ended the session with one of our favourites "Dirty Old Town" by the Pogues. It's been a great year, we have introduced 8 new songs, 4 new members and started a beginner's class. We restart on 3rd Jan 2024 and 10th Jan for beginners.

## Historic Places – Jill O'Callaghan

On December 1st we visited Little Moreton Hall, where each room was decked out to show the Christmas traditions of different periods from Tudor to the present day. Knowledgeable guides gave us some interesting insights into the different customs, decorations and food associated with each era. It was a beautiful frosty day, which added more atmosphere, but made us appreciate the comfort of modern central heating!



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## Short Walk November - Jill Hughes

As always, our last walk of the year concludes with our group Christmas lunch. Sheila organised both the walk and the meal arrangements, which is no small job. Thank you Sheila.



Meeting at the Cheshire Cat we enjoyed a flat walk of about 2.5 miles on the mud free towpath, country lanes and footpaths including through the pretty Christleton village. No animals or stiles, and preceded by the biggest, brightest rainbow that I have ever seen.

Our meals were lovely, the pub did us proud. Hope that everyone enjoyed it as much as I did. Thank you all for your support and

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friendship over the years, and for the very generous vouchers and beautiful flowers. Look forward to a successful 2024 with our new arrangements, thanks to Anne.

Hope that you all had a very happy Christmas, See you in January - Jill

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The group presented Jill with a token of appreciation for all the work she has done over the last 10 years as walking group leader.

## **The Walking Group in 2024**

For 2024 the walking group will work slightly different way. Volunteers will still lead each walk – the leader for each walk will do a similar role to what they do now, but with a little added co-ordination activity.

### **Walk Leaders Responsibilities**

If you choose to lead a walk you would be responsible for

- doing the walk recce in advance
- providing the description of the walk to Anne Bayliss (Is it hilly? Are there stiles on the route etc)
- Your email will be included on the invitation which will ask members who want to walk will email you direct stating:
  - Where they will meet, at Alisons or at the start of the walk
  - Do they need a lift from Tattenhall
  - Will they stay for lunch (if that is offered)
- organising a coffee or lunch stop at the end of the walk (optional)
- make sure that there are car shares so that everyone can get to the start of the walk. This has been easy as there are usually more than enough people willing to meet at Alisons and drive.

### **Cancelling a walk**

- If the walk leader cannot do their walk at short notice, we would cancel the walk by email or perhaps a WhatsApp message if it is on the day. (Only one walk was cancelled this year due to adverse weather).
- If the walk leader wants to change their planned walk date, they should try to find someone else to swap with. There will be a list of dates and walk leaders on the website so you can see who is doing which walk each month. If no one can swap with you, then the walk may need to be cancelled.

We can make this work if we work together. We can keep it under review and tweak things if it can be improved.



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## Newsletter Contributions

The newsletter is now published monthly on the first of the month. Our email address for contributions is [WCRu3a@hotmail.com](mailto:WCRu3a@hotmail.com) or for membership enquiries contact Dorothy Turpy, our Membership Secretary, at [membershipwcru3a@gmail.com](mailto:membershipwcru3a@gmail.com)

If you have items that we could include in the newsletter, email them to [WCRu3a@hotmail.com](mailto:WCRu3a@hotmail.com)

## Booking a holiday with Riviera Travel could benefit WCRu3a

Riviera Travel operate an "Affinity" Charity Scheme with the Third Age Trust that can benefit all u3as. Riviera Travel will donate 10% of the total basic cost of holidays booked by members as a charitable donation back to the u3a. Any holiday booked by a member with Riviera Travel is eligible.

How it works:

- Make a booking by contacting Riviera Travel directly, simply mention you are a member of u3a and want to claim Affinity Commission for your u3a.
- At the end of your holiday, Riviera Travel make a payment to the Third Age Trust. After deducting a handling fee (10% of the commission sum donated) the Third Age Trust will pass the remaining 90% of the donation on to the relevant u3a.

If booking online, use [www.u3ariviera.co.uk](http://www.u3ariviera.co.uk). It 'tags' u3a in general to the booking and then the Third Age Trust will check which local u3a is to benefit.

## West Cheshire Rural u3a Interest Groups

*All Group Leaders can be contacted using the mail icon on the relevant group page on the website*

Group	Current Meeting Times	Group leader
Map Reading for Walkers	As advertised	Marjorie Watson
Sunday Lunch Group	First Sunday in the month	Anne Bayliss
Solving Cryptic Crosswords	Alternate Mondays at 2pm in the Barbour	Hilary Scarratt
Poetry	First Monday in the month in St Albans Community Room Tattenhall	Gill Foster

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Group	Current Meeting Times	Group leader
Chapter Chats	Last Tuesday in the month at 8pm	Barbara Garner
Pageturners	The third Friday in the month 11.00am in St Albans Community Roo3m Tattenhall	Linda Davenport
Ukulele	Alternate Wednesdays at 10.30 am in Farndon	Ken Wakefield
Walking	Walking groups schedule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short walk on 2nd Thursday</li> <li>• Long walk on 4th Thursday</li> <li>• Other groups on ad-hoc basis</li> </ul>	Jill Hughes
Drawing Group	Fortnightly meeting in Hargrave Village Hall	Carolyn Vickers
Dining	Dining Group1 fourth Friday of the Month Dining Group2 second Wednesday of the month	Hazel George Marian Hagan
Mah-jong for Beginners	2nd & 4th Fridays at 10.30am community room St Albans	Linda Davenport & Pauline Bell
Music Appreciation	First Thursday of the month in the community room at St Albans	David Thomson
Historic Places & Gardens	Monthly last Tuesday of the month.	Marian Hagan Jill O'Callaghan
Discussion	Alternate Tuesdays in The Barbour	Steven Prince
Art Appreciation	Various visits during the year	Jean Mumford Vanessa Newman