



WIRRAL U3A



U3A STROLLERS ENJOYING POST WALK REFRESHMENTS IN WETHERSPOONS NEW BRIGHTON

An afternoon out.

By the time you read this newsletter Christmas will be just a distant memory, and that is what I want to mention here.

On Tuesday 29th November a group of our U3A members went off to the Floral Pavilion to listen to a show entitled "Christmas Memories"

We did not know exactly what to expect and I told Wilf I was a bit tired with all the preparation for Christmas

and was happy to sit back and be entertained. He replied that he thought we might be the entertainment, and he was right.

The afternoon was spent listening to the performers, two ladies and a gentleman accompanied by two musicians singing a variety of Christmas songs and hymns.

We were called upon to join in which most of the audience did. The afternoon

passed quickly by and concluded with "White Christmas", a favourite of many people.

A most pleasant way to spend a cold afternoon in winter and very good value indeed .



Cold weather tip

If you grit your teeth your mouth won't freeze!

Why did the doughnut tycoon sell off all his factories and outlets?

He was fed up with the whole business!

THE BEST OF THE CRACKER JOKES

Why does Santa have three gardens?

So he can hoe, hoe, hoe!

Message from Groups Co-ordinator
Dorothy Higginbottom

Several groups have vacancies.
Please contact me on 625 4837 if
there is a subject interests you which
is not represented or for details of
existing groups.

Group	Leader	Meeting time	Location
Astronomy	David Moore	1 st Thursday 2 pm	Hoylake
Book group	Val Thorns	1 st Tuesday 7 pm	Meols
Craft	Diane Adams	2 nd & 4 th Wednesdays	Upton
Creative writing	Monica Price		
French	Janet Belton	Alternate Fridays 10 am	Moreton
Local History	Betty Nesbitt	3 rd Thursday 1pm	Oxton
Maths for Fun	Derek Adams	3 rd Thursday 10 am	Upton
Music Appreciation	Janet Belton	1 st Thursday 10 am	Moreton
Philosophy	Brian Gill	1 st Wednesday	Oxton
Science	Mary Green	2 nd Friday 2 pm	Birkenhead
Scrabble	Beryl Keggan	3 rd Monday 2 pm	West Kirby
Sunday Lunch	June Kerr	Sunday 1pm Varies monthly	Grove House Hotel Wallasey
Strollers	Margaret Elston	4 th Monday 11am	Meet at start of walk
Topical Discussion	Shirley Taylor	2 nd Wednesday 10 am	West Kirby
Walking	Margaret Elston	2 nd Monday 10 am	Meet at start of walk
Wine Appreciation	Sue Shaw	3 rd Wednesday 2 pm	Newton Village Hall £6 per session
N.B. Monday groups like the walking groups can be affected by Bank Holidays and a 5 Monday month. Walking and Strollers move to 1 st and 3 rd Mondays.			

Group News

Astronomy

This group is looking for new members. At the moment they are focussing on the planets in our own solar system. No previous knowledge necessary.

Music Appreciation:- Leader Janet Belton

At the end of November the group dined out at Andres in West Kirby with Denise Igglesden. Her husband Chris was the previous group leader and she had generously given our members first pick of his extensive music library.

For our January meeting we decided to hold our own Viennese concert. Musing on how at one time everybody learned these ballroom dances Group member Ian recalls attending the famous Peggy Spencer's dance studio at Penge. Partnering Peggy in a tango his foot slipped and he nearly dropped her!

For the final part of the session we watched an extract of the New Year's Day concert in Vienna. Sad to say there were but 7 female players in the orchestra.

For our February meeting we plan to play music connected with St. Valentine's Day. Perhaps we will unearth clips from ballet, film, musicals or opera with a Romantic theme.

New members welcome.

Local History:- Leader Betty Nesbitt

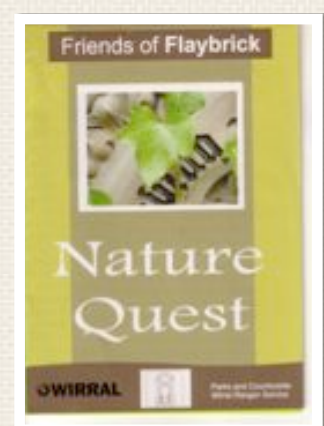
12th May 2016 was the first time this group met. There are now 11 enthusiastic members keen on all aspects of History particularly Wirral and Cheshire history. In 2016 along with the monthly meetings the group had several days out. At Flaybrick Cemetery Brian Sinton informed them of the amazing history of some of the



JANUARY MUSIC THEME



Those polkas were exhausting!



folk buried there. Birkenhead Priory was another fascinating site with a remarkable history. After a tour some of the members climbed the priory church tower for stunning views across the Mersey and Wirral. West Kirby's St Bridget's church with its tiny museum held artifacts from Viking hogback to Victorian school reports. The Birkenhead School for Girls underground tunnels tour came as a surprise to some group members who hadn't known of the existence of these WW2 air-raid shelters. The Shotwick visit was to look round the church but the party also walked down to look at the bridge that took medieval armies to invade Wales and walked up to the Manor House and Hall. Next stop was the RSPB Reserve in Burton village.

During the Home meetings discussions have ranged from wartime on Wirral, personal experience of evacuation to old sandstone quarries and their whereabouts. This should involve some research at Wirral Archives.

The New Year plans include Oxton village walk, Bidston Hill flag signaling system, Chester City walls, Liverpool Museum, St George's Hall and researching Thomas Brassey. With lots of interesting projects planned why not join the group?

Strollers:- leader Margaret Elston

Strollers enjoyed their largest turn-out of 2016 when they met at New Brighton station to explore some of the older parts of town. Our route took us past the large church with its dome dominating the local skyline and into St George's Park where the houses are built round a central garden. Magazine Lane led us down to the Seabank Road parade of shops with their old fashioned verandahs. Here members of the party happily browsed among all the impedimenta spilling out onto the pavement from the antique shop.

Next came Vale Park from which we emerged for a few yards along the prom. Just before we reached the Pirate boat built out of flotsam and jetsam we turned off to climb the steps onto the site of the long gone Tower. Then it was but a short stretch down to the prom and Wetherspoons.

Afterwards some of us browsed in Literally to marvel at children's books and toys from a bygone age.

New members welcome. As well as finding out about our monthly 1 hour walks from the notice-board in the Williamson you can give your email or mobile number to receive texts or email to keep you in touch

Northwest Region Summer School 2017

29th August-1st September

Courses include

ABC of Cities
About beauty
Architecture
Digital digging for armchair archaeologists
Geology of the Lake District
Medicine in the 21st century
Painting with stitches
Recorder playing
Russian and Soviet culture
Science is for everyone
Ukulele for beginners.

Cost- residential £275.00

£155.00 non residents.

£35.00 discount if booking by 31st March. Booking forms available from the Northwest region website. www.u3a.org.uk/north-west. Deposit £50.00

Over 90 people attended the 2016 Summer School at Newton Rigg college, Penrith. Feedback indicated 96% felt it good value for money. 98% felt the materials and delivery were suitable and 94% vowed to return another year. Its fame is spreading. Attendees included some from other regions.

MOOCS

[Massive open Online Courses]

There are over 5,000 of these and they are free.

Sunday Lunch group. Leader June Kerr.

Next meeting 29th January at the Grove House Hotel, Wallasey. Meet 12:30 for 1 pm.

Stemming the diabetes tide

Apparently nearly 10% of the entire NHS drugs bill for England goes on treating diabetes. Each year the % increase goes up. 7 out of 10 items were prescribed for the type 2 diabetes. The VAT received from sale of sugary foods and drinks could be invested in schemes to combat obesity and diabetes.

When U3A network ran a Health and Well being day I attended the Chairotics session. At this I was given a hand-out warning us against some low fat items. Many of the savoury items are loaded with salt and the desserts are laced with sugar. So low in fat doesn't always result in low in calories.

Apparently we need to eat good fats such as nuts and seeds, nut butters, olive and coconut oils to lose body fat. So beware the "Light" products with their hidden calories!

On the theme of food can you solve this puzzle?

3 diners order a meal with an overall cost of £15. Each diner contributes £5. But when the proprietor recognises them as his friends he orders the waiter to refund them £5. Instead of dividing the £5 equally between them the waiter gives them £1 each and pockets the remaining £2.

So each of the 3 men paid £4. If you multiply this then add the waiter's £2 it only totals £14! Where has the other £1 gone?

Submarine cables

Did you know that 95% of global phone calls and the Internet goes via submarine cables. When the tsunami hit it disrupted global communication. Back in 1850 a cable laid between the UK and Europe lasted but a few days before being destroyed by a ship's anchor!

Naively those who planned the first cable under the Atlantic expected the sea-bed to be flat. Half of the 1,6000 mile cable was manufactured in Birkenhead. It was loaded aboard HMS Agamemnon. Each mile of cable weighed a ton so its own weight took it down to the sea bed with brakes aboard ship to slow its descent. After 380 miles the cable broke because Agamemnon couldn't sail fast enough to keep up with the rate the cable was leaving the ship. It took 3 goes to succeed. Then suddenly silence after 23 days successful operation.

For the next attempt Brunel's passenger liner the Great Eastern was converted for cable laying and took the entire cable aboard. After laying 1,200 miles the cable broke. Then another attempt was made and as well as laying a new cable the broken cable was re-connected at the same time.

The next target was to connect with India by sea then Australia. Porthcurno in Cornwall was chosen as the start point to lessen the danger of damage by ships anchors.

Correspondents sent back news of the 2nd Boer War via cable. The last challenge was to wire the Pacific using islands as staging posts. This cable would be over 7,000 miles long. The company set up to achieve this still exists. A phone cable went across the Atlantic in 1956 and a fibre optic one in 1988. Modern cables still follow the route of the original cables. Eventually the sea floor was properly mapped. Modern cables are laid zig zag fashion. Can you guess why? There is no electricity flowing along fibre optic cable so stations are needed along the way to amplify the light.

The information was gleaned from a lecture by Prof. Linge, a guest speaker at the 2016 Regional Conference and AGM held at the Quaker Meeting House in Liverpool.

Ness gardens Lectures

I like to attend these but sadly they sometimes clash with the Sunday Lunch group meals at the Grove House Hotel. The gardens are an important wildlife oasis. The UK's leading expert on Hymenoptera has found 52 wild bee species in the gardens. One of the former curators now at Harlow Carr returned to tell us of his experiences trialling plants for the RHS Award of merit. Half a million folk are RHS members and the income from the Chelsea Flower Show helps fund the RHS.

Most trials have been conducted at Wisley but some plants like *Meconopsis* require a cooler garden in which to flourish so a 10 acre walled garden at Worsley has been selected. *Meconopsis* are very heavy feeders which need dividing every 3-4 years. Growing under trees they need moisture as well as good light levels.

Another speaker was renowned for large scale plantings of bulbs. Apparently most bulbs prefer neutral to alkaline soils. He warned us against planting out *tete a tete* daffodils in the garden because they are deliberately infected with a virus to reduce their height! By keeping plants small growers save money by using smaller pots.

Another tip was to plant purple carrots in the autumn ready for gorgeous blooms the following year. If you want ornamental foliage try sweet potatoes. Apparently Nerines can cope in open borders if given plenty of light.

Bluebells, The UK's favourite flower, grow in sheets in our woodlands. This sight is not often not seen in Continental Europe as the wild boar uproot the bulbs. The plant is restricted to the western edges of the continent as temperatures greater than 20°C wipe them out.

Many people seem to experience difficulty in growing snowdrops. These bulbs are poisonous to mammals. To guard against them drying out in summer plant them deep in good soil.

Another speaker told us of the modern trend for attempting to grow perennials as they would grow in the wild. Resist the temptation to cut everything down after flowering. The fashion began in Germany where former industrial sites were being turned into parks. A plant has to look good when it's dead to deserve space in some of these plantings.

Most of my snowdrops are planted in grass. The up-ended hanging basket frame prevents trampling by the wood pigeons.



Thanks to contributors Diane Adams, Lorna Moore Betty Nesbitt, email contributions for next issue to editor M.Elston

Honesty seed pods looking good whilst dead



Acanthus and teasel seed-heads

