

u3a Wirral

<https://u3asites.org.uk/wirral/home>

Dear Wirral u3a member

Although February is a short month, Wirral u3a members have managed to pack a lot in which you can read about in this newsletter. I'm pleased to say that several members have contributed to providing material for this edition of the newsletter. So a big 'thank you' from me.

In this issue, I've introduced a new topic: poetry! I can hear the groans now. Possibly the school subject that ties with Maths for least enjoyed! The poem included this time is written by a new Wirral member – so a special thank you to him. If anyone else feels the bardic urge then please share with me for inclusion in the newsletter. Or if you have a particular favourite, I'd be happy to include that – provided of course that it is out of copyright.

At the end of the newsletter, I've included something in the recently introduced section 'Around Wirral and the environs. Please feel free to share any similar material about events you think might appeal to members.

See you at the next meeting.

Joy

Chair's message

Hello Everyone!

I'm so pleased that we have had several outings this month and thank our very busy social committee for organising them. It is much appreciated. I hope you look up at the screen to see what else is planned, including afternoon tea on May 5th, the day before the Coronation. Details to follow.

Our AGM has had to be brought forward because of all the Bank Holidays in May and will now take place on April 17th, followed by a talk on Radio Caroline North.

Best wishes to you all and thanks for your support.

Janet

Meetings

March 6

Witches and Superstitions
Jean Finney

March 20

The Terracotta Army
Judith Foxon

April 3

Barrow to Baghdad and back again
Philip Caine

Outings/Theatre Visit

16th March

Liverpool bus tour
Hop on/Hop off. Lasts 50 minutes. Departs from Albert Dock.
£8. Pre-booking not required.
This is a Buddy Trip.
Contact Dave Buckingham

17th March

Memories of Water
Little Theatre, Birkenhead.
£8.00 7.30pm

28th April

Bury Market
Coach trip
£19 or £17 if booked on-line.

24th May

River Dee Boat trip
£15.75

Venue

We have returned to the Williamson!
Tea and coffee are served at 10.00am. The speaker starts at 10:45.
Entrance fee is now £2.

Meetings

Brush Up Your Shakespeare

Coral Greenwood

I'm sure that several of us might not have been looking forward to this talk. The very name 'Shakespeare' bringing back memories of school days and grappling with the language. Well, I hope you stiffened the sinews and summoned the blood and entered the Williamson for you were served a thoroughly entertaining and informative talk by Coral Greenwood who described herself as a 'really sad ex-drama teacher'. We learned that lots of everyday quotes come from Shakespeare such as 'neither a borrower nor a lender be' (Hamlet). Shakespeare also invented words – apparently 1700 commonly used words today have their origins in his works (e.g. bump, accommodation). Not all of the play are original. He drew on contemporary English sources, such as a poem that gave him the plot for Romeo and Juliet, while a text in Latin told the history of Danish kings and so inspired Hamlet.

Coral also explained about how the English used in the plays falls into 6 types: descriptive, explanatory, dramatic, exciting, moving and poetic.

Coral pointed out that the opening 12 lines of Romeo and Juliet give away the plot and instruct the audience to be patient!

In an aside, Coral explained the origins of the 'V-sign' used as a gesture of abuse in the UK. Two fingers are needed to steady the arrow as it is about to be fired from the bow. If an English archer was caught by the French, the appropriate two fingers were chopped off. Hence waving the two fingers indicated that the archer still was capable of inflicting damage on the enemy.

She gave those of us who are nervous about watching a Shakespeare play some tips on how to get to grips with him. First, don't be afraid of him. Don't try to understand every line. Try his writing in bite sized chunks. Read it out loud and go to see live performances. Coral also recommended the BBC series 'Upstart Crow' which is a comedy about Shakespeare, his family and his job as a play write.

She finished with a solo performance of the comedy scene from Midsummer Nights Dream between Pyramus, Thisbe and the Wall.

I'm sure you will have left with a much more positive feeling about Shakespeare and probably wishing you'd had such excellent drama teacher!

Joy

Postscript: The weekend after this talk, I visited Shakespeare's House in Stratford-upon-Avon. On a board the opening 12 lines of Romeo and Juliet were written with the heading 'Spoiler Alert'. I was able to demonstrate my knowledge of Shakespeare by explaining to my companion the link between the heading and the text!

My Life with Animals

Teresa Ferguson

Teresa shared with us some of the incidents, insights and wisdom gained from her life living and working with animals. We were well entertained. Many a teenager has wanted to run away from home and no doubt quite a few will have dreamed of joining a circus but there are few who will have followed in Teresa Fergusons footsteps and done just that. Teresa's main work was with the horses, which she loved but when it was decided, being stationed in New Brighton, that the five elephants should be taken down to the beach for a treat, everybody gave a hand.

Maureen, the matriarch, was used to publicity so when she discovered that their outing was to be televised, she made a bee-line for the cameraman. Alas he mistook her compliant curiosity for aggression and abandoned his post, demanding to be rescued. Maureen enjoyed taking possession of his equipment and once having done so was reluctant to relinquish it. From the

elephant's point of view the excursion was a great success to the extent that it took their carers five hours to persuade them to get back into their boxes.

Later, when stationed in Manchester two tigers escaped. That, as one may well imagine, was not such a happy event. Dressing up in a gorilla suite and interacting with the audience however was – though parents, coping with their terrified progeny might have thought otherwise.

It all ended for Teresa when the education authorities caught up with her and school became the inevitable alternative.

A very important and essential part of Teresa's life involved her work in helping to prepare guide dogs for their lives working for their blind and partially sighted owners. When carefully selected puppies leave their birth litters, they undergo a period of basic training in a new but temporary home which became Teresa's task. Not all puppies qualify to go on to 'big school' but supported by Teresa's empathy, skill, and understanding only one of all the puppies that she took on failed eventually to become a guide dog.

It was interesting and highly entertaining to hear of some of their little idiosyncrasies. One liked digging holes and succeeded in working his way through the vinyl and concrete of her kitchen floor to foundation level, another tore out the bottoms of any upholstered chairs to hand when in public places – and so on. It is difficult to imagine these patient animals, plodding along beside their handicapped owners having ever been such wayward creatures. Derek was an exception though; he was already old and wise at eighteen months of age.

Teresa's current dog acts as an ambassador for our Wallasey and Wirral fund raising work for the Guide Dogs Association.

The time seemed to pass very quickly as we were being so well entertained and informed. I am convinced that we would be seriously impoverished as a species if it were not for our interaction with animals. Thank you, Teresa, for sharing with us something of your life with animals.

Brian

Groups

10 Pin Bowling

Next get together is on 10th March at 11:00 am at the Riverside Bowl in New Brighton.

Scrabble Group

This is a new group which plans to meet at 2pm on 3rd Monday of the month. Contact details for the organiser can be found on the bulletin board by the tea/coffee counter.

Walking Group

Liverpool 13 February

The summary of this walk is a little bit different to avoid repetition of the talk from the previous meeting. The group decided to meet at Central Station in Liverpool and follow a route taking in as many of the features we could remember from Cledwyn's talk. I asked members what memories/reactions the walk conjured up and that's what I've included here:

Daphne: I've good memories from Paradise street: 'The Beehive' and sitting in the Radio Merseyside studios while my husband gave the traffic reports!

Joan: My first job was in the Liver Building. I would eat my sandwiches at lunchtime in St Nicholas's church yard.



Janice: Seeing the tablet with the brass cross in Church Street marking the site of St Peter's Church – the number of times I've walked over it and not realised it was there {**editor:** I think she speaks for all of us! The picture left shows the group standing by the tablet.}

Dave: How much has changed and disappeared in the city. I used to take the tram home from outside the Adelphi to Wavertree.

Ros: I must look up more often – there's so much history above my head that I've missed.

Chris: The Iron Gates at the end of Paradise Street which were originally at the entrance to the Sailors Home on Canning Place – I've walked past the Home many times.

My grandparents met in Coopers where they were there as performers at social events.

Joy: I remember the smell of roasting coffee in Coopers and being astonished at some of the exotic food items they sold such as Kangaroo Tail Soup which we couldn't get in the Coop.

Meols 27 February

It's 30 years since I took my dog on this walk, so it had many memories. We started in Roman Road in Meols, crossed the common and down Forest Road to reach Meols Parade. We walked along the Parade towards Hoylake until we saw the lovely pictures which make up Waders' Walk. We went into the Community Centre, the old Hoylake Secondary School, and had refreshments at Popsy's. I love the china cups for the tea and the display of teapots, but soon it was time for us to move on to Queen's Park where the snowdrops, daffodils and crocuses were beautiful. Then crossing the other half of the common, we were back to the cars, having enjoyed a pleasant start to the week.

Janet

Visits

Lion Salt Works, Nantwich.

An interesting tour of the Lion Salt Works Museum was undertaken on a sunny first day of February. We learnt that the salt works, after producing salt for nearly one hundred years (and on an adjacent site for another hundred years before that), closed in 1986. What was a surprise to many was that the main market for the salt was West Africa and that the Nigerian Civil War in the late-1960s led to the decline in sales and eventual closure. After some decades of further decline, it was determined that



the site should become a working industrial museum and the "Lion Salt Works Trust" established. Since then, with National Heritage Funding, the site has restored many of the original buildings and created several audio-visual displays to illustrate the process and the fairly grim working conditions endured. Further, the site now boasts a café and shop although, on the day of our visit, there were no sandwiches but very tempting cakes. Fortunately, a local café and pub provided the required sustenance!

Giles

Oswestry

On Wednesday 1st March, a 14 strong group from Wirral u3a joined Timewells coach trip to Oswestry. It was a full bus and left Birkenhead on time which is always a good start. We arrived without incident about 11.15 - so quite a short journey. The group then split up into shopping enthusiasts who wanted to visit the quirky shops and Antique Emporiums and others who wanted to visit St Oswalds Church, it being the first day of Lent. Some two and half hours later, we all



boarded the bus again for a short trip to the British Iron Works Centre. This was absolutely amazing (see photos). Had the weather not been inclement, we (well some of us!!) could have walked all-round the park and visited the Museum, instead we stayed inside and wowed at the gorgeous metal architecture and Objet d'Art none of which were for sale. The Centre is well worth another visit and indeed has a scheme whereby for £5 OAPs can buy an annual pass and can come back as often as they wish.

I'm pleased to report, that this time on the return journey (unlike recent Wirral u3a coach trips), there were no incidents of flat tyres or damaged windscreens, and no one was left behind!!

Chris A

Editor's addition: St Oswald's Church website has a short history about Oswald (who was a King of Northumberland, a recent convert to Christianity killed in 642 AD at a battle near Oswestry) and the origins of the Church

<https://www.stoswaldsoswestry.org.uk/church-history/>.

You might have seen a piece of sculpture from the British Iron Works Centre recently in Birkenhead – the Knife Angel was exhibited in Birkenhead Park as part of a campaign against violent and aggressive behaviour as well as acting as a memorial to those who lost their lives through knife attacks: <https://www.britishironworkcentre.co.uk/>

September in the Rain

by John Godber

Theatre Visit to the Little Theatre Birkenhead

A group of theatre goers from Wirral U3A recently enjoyed an excellent play about a visit to Blackpool for Jack and Liz – a trip which they embarked on every year to revisit their memories as a married couple. This play used 'observational comedy' as well as many instances of married life. It was engaging, funny and skilfully written by John Godber in his own inimitable Yorkshire style. An excellent performance also from Jack and Liz who entertained us with their interpretation of John Godber's playful dialogue. A humorous and real-life play.

I really enjoyed it and intend to visit more plays this year. The Little Theatre needs support to keep going and despite many challenges it 'stays open' as an example of local theatre and entertainment.

Chris P

Poetry Corner

This is a new section. This poem is by a Wirral u3a member and is a little bit of nostalgia. I'm sure you'll recognise the person who is the subject of this poem.

Nitty Nora

Nora, nitty Nora,
School nurse explorer,

What worlds you travelled!
What jungles unravelled!

What beasties you found!
O, the scalps you made sound!

Battling your way through,
All those stinkers you slew...

In those long dawning days, Nora, when we were so young,
When lives closed and opened, with some never sung.

And you, dearest Nora, have followed each beast,
Served up and garnished to Time's endless feast.

And we, left behind, remember so sad, suns and moons turning,
Embers low burning, in bright days and dark nights, fears ever churning.

So here we are now, like dear Nora of old,
Gazing at scalps yet seeing skulls cold.

On the shore, the dwindling shore,
Of our horizons we pore...
Endless, like Nora, dearest Nora, no more.

Wallace

Coffee Corner Moment

My apologies. I didn't include as promised in the January Newsletter the answers to the puzzles in the December edition! Here they are:

Names of places of entertainment

CAME IN = Cinema
AT THREE = Theatre
AROUSE HOPE = Opera House
HORN CALL ETC = Concert Hall
USE CAMERAMAN TED = Amusement Arcade

Maths

6; $\frac{3}{4}$ of it; $\times 7$; -63 ; $\div 3$; \times by itself = **49**

11; $\times 8$; double it; -68 ; $\frac{4}{9}$ of this; triple it = **144**

78; $\div 13$; $\times 9$; triple it; -78 ; $\frac{5}{6}$ of this = **70**

154; $\frac{9}{11}$ of this; triple it; -222 ; $\div 12$; \times by itself = **169**

February challenge

Commonality

Each group of words has a four-letter word in common. The common word can be placed before or after the given words.

For example: boot; peg; room (3 letters) – answer is 'leg'.

Bootleg; pegleg; leg room.

Your challenge:

1. joy; over; time
2. by; miss; sighted
3. bear; deep; flint
4. bargain; guilty; heartfelt

Maths

14; double it; $+12$; $\div 10$; $\times 4$; $+17$; $\div 3$; $\times 6$; -29 ; double it =

28; 75% of it; $+100$; $\div 11$; $\times 8$; $+1/2$ of it; -32 ; $\div 5$; $\times 7$; -67 =

6; cube it; -57 ; $\div 3$; $\times 4$; $+50\%$ of it; -6 ; $\div 6$; $+75\%$ of it; $\times 9$ =

Around Wirral and the environs

Wirral Repair Café

Saturday 4th March 2pm,

Wirral Environmental Network (WEN)

The Sandon Building, Falkland Road, Wallasey, CH44 8ER.

WEN is proposing to set up a Repair Café and is looking for volunteers with a wide range of skills to help run the cafes. They are aiming to repair a range of items from clothing, electronics and furniture.

Editor: Apologies that this announcement will arrive too late but thought it worthwhile to mention it. You can still contact the Wirral Environmental Network.

<https://wirralenvironmentalnetwork.org.uk/>

More Important News

Photo ID to vote

From 4 May 2023, voters in England will need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections including the forthcoming local elections. Don't panic! You may well already have the right documents with a photo you can use (e.g., passport, driving licence and bus pass). If you are not sure, then you can check on the Electoral Commission's website:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id/accepted-forms-photo-id>