

u3a Wirral

[Website] <https://u3asites.org.uk/wirral/home>

Dear Wirral u3a member,

This will be last newsletter until just before the new season in September. We have had an interesting series of talks with a lot of variety in the topics. So, thank you to Monica for organising the speakers which isn't an easy job. We have been particularly lucky that two of our own members have been speakers which shows what a talented group we are! This edition of the newsletter has two important messages for you from Committee members: Ros about Groups and Dave about possible visits in the coming autumn. So please read them.

At the end of the newsletter is a section called 'Around Wirral and the Environs' in which I've included a couple of items that are not organised directly by u3a which may be of interest. Please do tell me about any activities which you think could fit in this category.

I won't be at the last two meetings of this season. So, I'd like to take the opportunity of saying a big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the newsletter, and to wish you all a good summer, enjoy the last two meetings and I'll see you in September.

Kind regards

Joy, Newsletter Editor

Chair's message

Hello Everyone,

I hope you are still enjoying the warm weather, but also appreciating the rain in the evening and at night. I trust it will last for next week when the u3a travel to Northumberland. (Report and photos to follow in next Newsletter).

We have two more meetings before our Summer break. One about new developments for vision impairment and then our entertainment extravaganza on July 17th to say Au revoir. See you soon.

Best wishes

Janet

Meetings

July 3

New Developments for helping visually impaired and partially sighted.

Lynne Sedgewick

July 17

Au Revoir

Musical entertainment.

Outings/visits

July 14th

Llandudno

£20 per person. 8 seats booked with Timewell's coaches. Sorry coach can't accommodate wheelchairs.

July 21st

Ludlow

£22 per person. 8 seats booked with Timewell's coaches. Sorry coach can't accommodate wheelchairs.

Autumn

Plans are underway for the autumn. Please see in the main text about possibilities for visits.

Groups

Message from Groups Co-ordinator

We are trying to encourage people to start some more groups. Perhaps your passion is Art. We are lucky to have the Williamson and the Lady Leverhulme Art Galleries on the Wirral. In Liverpool, the Walker, Tate, Open Eye, Victoria Gallery and Museum and Bluecoat are easily accessible. Visits could be arranged with discussions afterwards.

Maybe you like literature and would consider starting a book club. Discussions could be held in peoples' houses or in one of the many cafes on the Wirral.

Do you like history? There are many interesting historical sites on the Wirral.

I hope to start organising visits to the Light Cinema in New Brighton to see the streamed art productions from the National Theatre. Starting in September there are choices of Opera and Ballet.

If you think you could lead a group, or if you are just interested, please do not hesitate to contact me either at the meetings or an email via Derek.

Ros

Message from the Social Committee Chair

We are planning for our outings in the autumn. The decision about destinations depend on you the members! So, I am looking for expressions of interest about the following possibilities. Please treat the dates as tentative – it might be possible to opt for other days in that week.

You can indicate your interest either when you come to the Williamson meetings at the desk (on 3rd or 17th July) or email Dave via Derek.

Half day narrow boat trip

13th or 14th September

Start from The Cheshire Cat, Christleton (just outside Chester) to The Crow's Nest at Tattenhall.

Cost £12 -£15 depending on numbers. Boat can accommodate two wheelchairs.

Car share will be required. This is a one-way trip, so one car will need to be taken to the end point to bring drivers back to the start to collect their cars.

You will need to bring a packed lunch and flasks, since there are no catering facilities on board.

Other possibilities

Sept or October

Guide Tours of the *Liverpool Roman Catholic Cathedral* and the *Liverpool Anglican Cathedral* (we won't include the Bell Tower). There's a small charge of £5 for each cathedral.

St George's Hall – we are waiting for confirmation that this is possible.

Dave

Meetings

At least 10 things you might not know about Charities

Ken Ashford

Wirral u3a member, Ken Ashford, gave us a very informative presentation at our June 5th meeting which is very relevant for the audience since the u3a is a charity. Ken is a good choice to talk about the subject. He is a qualified management accountant with a PhD in church/charity/NGO accounting. He's had many different rolls in charities including serving for 11 years as a charity accounting advisor to the Charity Commission.

Charities exist all over the world, but they differ in several ways including their legal status and how they are regulated. Ken focused on the UK. Although there are some slight variations in definition between the Home Nations, under UK law a charity is an organisation set up exclusively to achieve one or more charitable purposes which are for public benefit. The stress is on 'public' which does not have to the entire population but certainly more than one or two individuals. Interestingly, if the organisations sole activity is raising funds, it cannot be classified as a charity. Also, membership organisations, such as Rotary and the Masons, cannot be charities.

Ken had some reassuring words and advice for members who are or thinking about becoming committee members, technically called 'trustees': basically, keep within the organisation's objectives and follow the rules. When in doubt, ask for advice – which is readily available from u3a regional and national committees. The u3a protects all its trustees by providing Indemnity Insurance.

Joy

Off the Grid in Spain

Brian Gill

On 19 June, members of the Wirral U3A were treated to member Brian Gill's memories of life in rural Spain where he moved to in the early 1980s and stayed for 15 years.

Brian, a Transpersonal Psychologist by training, started by recounting how, having decided he wanted to learn a foreign language, selected Spanish and then ended up buying a remote semi-derelict house about two-hours drive from Valencia. He explained that he first got to know many families in Valencia itself. He realised that most families also owned a "house" in the country which they would visit on the occasional Sunday to cook a large dish of Paella, the local specialty, for family and friends but always return back to the city before nightfall. It was on such a visit with friends that he came across the house he fell in love with and eventually purchased.

The house was large, enough for seven bedrooms and a space to run yoga sessions and similar activities, but what sold it to Brian was

Coffee Corner Moment

May Quiz Answers

1. Which modern day country has the most pyramids?
Ans: Sudan
2. What was the first practical use for the wheel?
Ans: pottery making
3. Which planet has only orbited the sun once since it was discovered?
Ans: Neptune
4. What is used to ensure Big Ben keeps perfect time?
Ans: Small stack of coins

the Mediterranean Threshing Floor, something that had once been common in rural farmhouses but since replaced by less arduous means.

However, when Brian first acquired the house, it was fairly derelict with only two rooms inhabitable and no running water (apart from through holes in the roof) or other services. Fortunately, the house next door has a water "system" – rain was collected from the roof and stored in a large underground cistern. Brian was granted access and would use a bucket on a long rope to "fetch a pail of water". The owner wisely suggested Brian boiled the water before use as "he knew what was down there". Given the effort involved, Brian soon learnt to make good use of the water, first in the kitchen then for washing floors before finally for watering plants. Also given the lack of gas or electricity, heating the water to make a cup of tea involved a wood fire - so this was not a five-minute job.

In time, Brian built his own water system, modelled on the one next door, once his own leaky roof was refurbished. This improvement meant he had his own underground storage, and this was further "modernised" by the addition of a hand pump to ease getting water to the house. Many visitors would come from England and be told, if they wanted things like showers, they would have to do their share of the pumping! Another benefit of the new roof was that the timbers from the old one could be used as fuel for heating water and cooking. When it came to lighting, candles and oil lamps were the order of the day (or rather night). Visitors were given their own candle to find their way to bed. Eventually, Brian was able to obtain a portable gas stove which made making a cup of tea a much quicker process.

The nearest village was more than an hour's walk and provided the nearest telephone. You can imagine the frustration if the person you had gone to phone was not at home. Post also took about ten days to get to or from the UK so communication was slow.

In time, Brian became accepted and integrated into the village and was then able to call on the sense of "we are all in this together" and join with local skilled tradesman in solving crises that arose. This extended to hosting the annual village festival which were events where people would dress up as Moors or Christians to remember the history of the area. Apparently, most people wanted to "be" Moors – because they had the best outfits!

Although now back in England, with all the associated creature comforts, Brian clearly found his midlife period in rural Spain an enjoyable and enriching experience. Maybe for the audience, faced with sky-high energy bills, this look into an alternative way of life sounded appealing, but probably not for us in the U3A age group!

Giles

Visits

Towards Zero

On Friday 15th June a group of 4 Wirral u3a members were booked to see "Towards Zero" by Agatha Christie at the Little Theatre Birkenhead.

It was a typical Agatha Christie i.e. of its time, now and then, there was a lot of dialogue. It was well acted even if one of the Players needed prompting.

Billed as a nail-biting thriller, it was about relationships and jealousy which resonates even in these days.

I hadn't a clue who had done it. All 3 of us chose different people. (There was 1 no show from our group.)

All in all, well worth £8 of anyone's money for nearly 3 hours of live entertainment.

Chris

The Crucible

Several members went to the Gladstone Theatre to see The Crucible by Arthur Miller. I thought it was a brave decision by Bebington Dramatic Society to put on this play but they did so very successfully.

Arthur Miller wrote this play in 1953 about the Salem Witch Trials that took place in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1692. Miller wrote the play as an allegory for McCarthyism, the name given to the period in the US when the US government persecuted people accused of being communists.

The production brought out the latent internal tensions in the Colony with a group of young girls being accused of witchcraft. The girl's ringleader Abigail, accuses Tituba, a slave, and she breaks down and falsely confesses to witchcraft.

This starts a series of events whereby almost everybody in the village is accused. Those not confessing are hanged. There is confusion and hysteria, well portrayed by the young girl actors.

John Proctor, one of the main characters, at the end, refuses to confess to witchcraft, knowing it is all nonsense as it has stemmed from Abigail's jealousy as they had once had an affair. At this point he is led away to be hanged.

This is a powerful and thought provoking play which was well executed and we all enjoyed.

Ros

The Liver Building

On the longest, and very warm, June day 8 intrepid Wirral u3a members set out to climb the 124 steps to the top of the Liver Building. The visitor group consisted not only of our u3a but also a young woman from Chile who had very limited English – so it gave a couple of our members the chance to try out their Spanish! We were led by a very lively guide who told me she did the climb 8 times a day! Perhaps I should point out that the 124 steps don't go from the ground floor to the top! There is a lift to 10th floor and it's walking after that – but the view is well worth it! We were fortunate that it was a clear day with no wind. However, our visit did coincide with the clock chiming 12! So, if you don't like loud noise, I suggest you don't sign up for the 11:15 visit!

The history of the building was explained by the guide and a video film projected onto the inside of the clock face provided an overview of key events in the lives of people from Liverpool and Merseyside since WW1. It is amazing to realise that a building, which at the time it was built was the tallest building in the UK (possibly Europe), was funded by an act of solidarity of ordinary working men. In 1850, a group of working men from Liverpool who used to meet in the Lyver Inn set up 'The Liverpool Lyver Burial Society' to meet the cost of funerals and support bereaved families. The



Burial Society became the Royal Liver Friendly Society and eventually the Royal Liver Assurance who relinquished ownership of the building in 2016. One of the new owners also has a major stake in Everton FC who have offices in the building. Evertonians are such nice people, we even let Liverpool supporters in!

Construction of the building we know today started in 1908 and completed in 1911. It was designed by a Birkenhead architect, Walter Aubrey Thomas. The building managed to escape bomb damage in WW2 even though the surrounding dock area suffered badly. It's thought that the German Airforce left the building intact to use as a landmark for orientation of their targets.



Another explanation is that Adolf Hitler had spent time in Liverpool prior WW1 and loved the building so much that he ordered the Luftwaffe not to destroy it. That Hitler had been in Liverpool came as complete news to me! The evidence to prove this categorically is hard to find – indeed much evidence has been destroyed particularly by family members trying to distance themselves from their unsavoury relative. Certainly, his half-brother lived in Liverpool and was married to an Irish woman who is the source for much of evidence and her credibility has been challenged. Hitler arrived in November 1912 – possibly to avoid conscription in the Austrian army and possibly to enrol in arts college having failed to be admitted in Austria and Germany. He left after 6 months and what he actually did during that time is difficult to ascertain.

The 2 Liver Birds which sit on top of the building were designed by a German sculptor, Carl Bernard Bartels, who won a competition for the commission. He lived in the UK and was married to a British woman. However, that did not stop him from being confined to an internment camp on the Isle of Man during the First World War and then deported once the war was over. His drawings for the Liver Birds were destroyed. He did return to the UK to spend the rest of his life here. Yet official reference to his design of the iconic symbol of Liverpool recognised the world over has been a long time in coming. However, it is never too late to right a wrong. On the 100th birthday of the Liver Building, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool was posthumously awarded Mr Bartel a Citizen of Honour award.

The visit was a reminder for me that you can always learn something new about something seems so familiar and you rather take for granted.

Joy

PS Thank you to Ken for the pictures.

Poetry Corner

This month's poem with a theme related to June was suggested by Peter, a friend, from Deal u3a. Edward Thomas was a writer who enlisted as a soldier in the First War. He was killed at the Battle of Arras in 1917 just as his first book of poetry was about to be published. His father was a railway clerk – I'm not sure if this has any significant influence on this month's poem. Suggestions for a poem with a July or August theme are welcome.

Adlestrop

by Edward Thomas

Yes, I remember Adlestrop —

the name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop – only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Around Wirral and the environs

Wirral Repair Café

Sunday 2nd July

Wirral Deen Centre, 371 - 375 Borough Road, Birkenhead, CH42 0HA

The Wirral Repair Café is holding its first session is on 2nd July. The centre has a large foyer with a coffee bar, tables and sofas, and a separate classroom-sized room for the repairs. The venue is accessible by public transport and opposite a free car park.

There will be a Café on the first Sunday of each month. The organisers stress that they are not aiming to put professional repairers out of business and they will refer people to a professional if it's appropriate. The aim is to stop sending items to landfill which can be repaired but the cost of a new one is less than the repair cost.

The Website has an enquiry form so you can check if your item can be repaired:

<https://www.wirralinfobank.co.uk/Services/7487/Wirral-Repair-Cafe>

Weekly Well Being Walks

Thank you to Janice for drawing the editor's attention to this opportunity for walking with a group. Particularly useful since our walking group is on its summer break.

Wirral Council is promoting walking for health. There are walks organised all round the Borough. They are free and no booking is required. You simply turn up 10 minutes before a walk is due to start and introduce yourself to the trained volunteer. Enjoy the exercise and the company.

- Birkenhead Park - Sunday and Monday 11 - 12 noon and Thursdays 1 - 2 pm. Meet at Visitor Centre.
- Wallasey Village Library Walks - Monday, Wednesday and Friday 11 - 12 noon. Meet at the Library St Georges Road.
- West Kirby - Monday and Wednesday 12 - 1pm. Meet at reception in West Kirby Concourse.
- Bromborough Village Walk- Monday 10.30 - 11.30. Meet at St Barnabas Church car park.
- Port Sunlight River Park Walk - Tuesday 10.30 - 11.30. Meet in car park Dock Road North.
- Wallasey evening walk - Tuesday 7.15 - 8.15. Meet at Grove Road station.
- Arrowe Park Walk - Tuesday 10.30 - 11,30. Meet outside Red Rooms cafe.
- Port Sunlight Walk - Wednesday 11 - 12 noon. Meet at Port Sunlight railway station, near the bowling green.
- Royden Park walk - Thursday 1.30 -3pm. Meet in car park near the toilets.
- Vale Park Walk for those living with and beyond cancer - Thursday 12 - 1pm. Meet by Community House in Vale Park.

If you have any questions about the walks listed above, you can either call 0151 929 7823 or send an email to Fiona who is the Wellbeing Walks Co-ordinator (FionaHanik@Wirral.gov.uk).

NW Region News

NW Conference and AGM in Liverpool July 4th.

This event is for anyone. There are discussion groups and a performance by concert pianist Andrew Wilde as well as the AGM. Please see the NW website for more information and the link to the booking form.