

u3a Wirral

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

Dear Wirral u3a member,
May has been an unusual month. Having three Bank Holidays, instead of the usual two, has had an effect on u3a activities with one of our regular meetings being postponed. The walking group has also been on hold. This means that there are less reports in this month's newsletter. So thank you to those who did submit material, including some great photos. Also thank you to those of you who shared what they got up to on Coronation Day and whether or not they watched the Song Contest.

Please do feel free to contact me about items you would like to see in the Newsletter or to share material for the 'About Wirral and the environs section'.

Kind regards

Joy, Newsletter Editor

Chair's message

Hello Everyone,

I wonder if this month will go down as the one with the most bank holidays ever? It's certainly been one of the busiest. I hope you all enjoyed the splendour of the Coronation and perhaps even went to a party too. Our u3a afternoon tea at Popsy's in Hoylake was lovely. Our thanks to Dave and Chris who organised it. Then there was the excitement of Eurovision, when Liverpool had a real buzz so I'm told.

We had a rather damp afternoon visiting the Lancelyn-Greens at Poulton Hall. It was a fascinating step back to the seventeenth century. They even had a bear with a top hat in the entrance hall!

The final weekend in May has events remembering the Battle of the Atlantic and I hope you were able to see some of them. Looking forward to seeing you on the 4th June.

Best wishes

Janet

Meetings

June 5th

Ten things you don't know about Charities.

Dr Ken Ashford

June 19th

Off the Grid in Spain

Brian Gill

Outings/visits

June 9th

The Crucible

Gladstone theatre. 7.30pm.
£11

June 15th

Towards Zero.

A nail-biting thriller based on Agatha Christie's book.

Little Theatre Birkenhead.
7.30pm. £8

June 22nd

Royal Liver Building

£16 per person. Tour starts at 11. Lift to 10th floor but to go higher you need to be able to climb a spiral staircase.

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.

Meetings

We are sorry, normal service cannot be resumed: How developments in linguistics theory changed the world

A rather intimidating title for the talk on May 22nd, turned out to be very entertaining and informative as well as very relevant to current technological developments. Many of us will have heard of CHATGTP even if we aren't sure what it does. Mary Clinton, a retired linguistics lecturer, certainly helped us understand at least the consequences of the group of technologies we call AI (Artificial Intelligence). Governments will use AI to further their political aims. Currently, revenge pornography (which is the distribution, usually via the internet, of sexually explicit images or videos of individuals without their consent) is the leading use of faked pictures (92%).

Fortunately, Mary started with some more 'innocent' pictures showing the Pope in a puffer jacket and some video clips of Jeremy Corbyn, Boris Johnson and Richard Nixon. Only the clip with Johnson had not been manipulated and the other clips were examples of what we now call 'fake news' which some people believe these items to be true. For example, based on the Nixon piece, there are people who believe that an Apollo Crew died on the moon (*Editor's comment: there have long been people who think the entire moon landing was faked and the numbers holding that view appear to be growing!*). We were then shown two photos of men – one real and the other fake – and we were asked which was the real one! Mary pointed out small flaws in the fake picture which can help in detecting manipulation. Glasses seem to particularly cause problems in reproduction.

Mary did point out that manipulation of pictures is not a new phenomenon. There were Victorian photographers who added ghosts and fairies to their pictures.

Mary explained why linguists are to blame for the rise of fake news. She said that they had collected huge quantities of text as part of their studies of what makes a language. However, computers are also able to analyse this text and learn which words go with which words, as well as the basis of grammar. Nevertheless, computers do not understand the meaning of a group of words which convey a particular meaning to a native speaker of a language as describing physical things, giving instructions or expressing feelings. For example, AI does not distinguish between 'fast food' and 'quick food'; while 'a quick meal' would be acceptable whereas 'a fast meal' would not.

We were challenged as to what is language. Is it only verbal communication? What about sign language? Pictograms? Mary gave us a quick summary of the history of the theories of how we learn language. A significant finding, that has implications for treatment after brain injury, has been that in the past it was thought that we stored language in a specific part of the brain,

Coffee Corner Moment

April Quiz

Answers

The single word linked to the group of three words are:

1. Remaining; completed; six balls. **Over**
2. Ringlet; canal feature; secure. **Lock**
3. Ellipse; cricket ground; US Office. **Oval**

May Quiz

Here are some general knowledge questions (with some suggestions – only one of which is correct!)

1. Which modern day country has the most pyramids? (Sudan/Egypt/Mexico/Ethiopia)
2. What was the first practical use for the wheel? (Transport/pottery making/water pumping/milling)
3. Which planet has only orbited the sun once since it was discovered? (Jupiter/Uranus/Neptune/Mars)
4. What is used to ensure Big Ben keeps perfect time? (Naval chronometer/Bag of sand/small stack of coins/tuning fork)

which if damaged would impair communication, whereas it is now recognised that language is stored across the brain allowing for therapy to promote communication.

Joy

PS As I was writing this piece the Government announced that it was looking into how to curb the negative aspects of AI.

Events

A Grand Afternoon Tea in Celebration of the Coronation of King Charles III

On Friday 5th May, twenty-one members joined together to celebrate the forthcoming coronation of King Charles III. Our venue was Popsy's Tea Room in the Community Centre on Meols Parade, which is a lovely venue with a sensory room, exercise spaces and meeting rooms. The food consisted of the usual fayre with much negotiating and swapping of sandwiches and cakes



according to peoples' tastes. Janet, our chair, made the opening address to the welfare of the King and thanked all for coming. During the afternoon our tea pots and coffee cups were refreshed when ever asked for by staff who were always attentive and pleasant.

As chair of the Social Committee, I must say thanks to Chris whose idea it was and who did all of the organising. Thanks to Popsy's for making a lovely afternoon, and also to our members who seemed to enjoy themselves with, perhaps, some new friendships made.

Dave, Chair Social Committee

The Big Sing

The Big Sing took place on 10th May at the Quaker Meeting House in Liverpool. The idea is singing for fun. The event was organized by Gillian Russell, Acting Chair of the NW U3A's.

Approximately 50 U3A members from across the NW including Wirral, Bromborough, West Kirby, Northwich, Chester, and Lancaster came along to enjoy the day. The singing group from Lancaster U3A came with their musical director, a professional musician, Fredrik Holm. The group was accompanied by Fredrik's bassoon, a gifted pianist, Pam, and two ukeleles played by members of the Lancaster group, singing songs such as Hey Jude, Can't Help Falling in Love, Sweet Caroline, Dancing Queen and What a Wonderful World. Fredrik also taught us two choruses which we sang as rounds (with a lot of laughter) and a sea ditty finishing the day with Thank You for the Music. Drinks were provided and we all took our own lunch.

What did you do on Coronation Day/Eurovision Song Contest Day?

I asked some members what they did on the day two May events. Any standout moments?

Mo: Watch the whole Coronation live. Then had drinks and nibbles with friends.

Dave: Recorded the Coronation and watched later. Thought Liverpool did well in the Song Contest.

Sue: Not planned to watch it then saw the whole thing. Thought Will and Kate's children were wonderful. I've seen too many Eurovisions so I don't watch any more – but proud of Liverpool.

Lynne: Watched all day even though I wasn't interested in monarchy before.

Kath: Even though it was my birthday, I still watched the Coronation.

I watched the Song Contest until the UK entry.

Jo: Highlight of the Coronation was the Drum Horse walking sideways down the Mall. Song contest: avoided like the Plague!

Here is Major Apollo – the dancing Drum Horse.



It was a privilege to meet this gifted musician and other U3A members from across the NW. No soprano's, alto's, base or performance just a group of people all together having fun. A most enjoyable day.

Janice

Visits

Poulton Hall

We were greeted by Sir Scirard Roger Lancelyn-Green, who gave a talk about the Lancelyn-Green family tree from circa 1080 to the present day. We saw photographs of his parents and his Auntie Gwyn, who was married to the comedian Tommy Trinder.



On a tour of the grounds, we saw the footings of the original castle that was built on higher ground to

ward off the Viking raids and likely had connections to the battle of Brunaburgh. There has been a house on the present site for at least 900 years.

In the library, we saw documents signed by George III and George IV. We saw some of the rooms that were used on film sets for films such as "Longford" The Ipcress file and soap dramas such as Hollyoaks. Apparently, the comedy series Ghost is to be recorded there soon. All in all, it was a very interesting visit.

Stephanie

Chester Boat Cruise – Welcome Aboard!



Twelve sprightly members from Wirral U3A were indeed welcomed on board 'The Mark Twain' cruise boat on Wednesday 24th May 2023 at Deeside Chester Boat Cruise's mooring place at 2.15pm.

We all managed to be there at 2pm ready. Quite a feat as we all journeyed on different routes i) train, link, walk; ii) park at Hooton and follow train route; iii) drive to Roodee carpark near Chester Boat mooring iv) or make a day of it and browse round beforehand. We gathered at the boarding place excited but a little apprehensive about how to access the boat. No worries, we all managed it. We discovered the seating

What did you do on Coronation Day/Eurovision Song Contest Day?

Chrispa: Watched the Coronation for the whole day. Liked the music. Only watched the Song Contest semi-finals. Not particularly interested by Liverpool produced a great show.

Christine: Watched the Coronation. The Song Contest – it's shouting rather than singing!

Daphne: Watched the Coronation in relaxed manner. Was out for the evening of the Song Contest.

Joy: I avoided both events by visiting friends in Vienna and the Netherlands. I am relieved that both events passed off without incident.

Launa: Watched the Coronation with my daughter, then went for a walk. I tried to watch the Song Contest for an hour. Don't think the UK song was good enough.

Chris: Watched the Coronation with my three Tongan great-nieces who tried to find their flag and King but sadly didn't see them!

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1654773529634562051>



arrangements – up some stairs to the main deck or stay on the ground deck where there seemed to be better viewing but greater difficulty in hearing the commentary. Some of us moved between the two if only to locate the bar on the ground deck!



Here are some interesting points from the Commentary as summarised by me. If you would like to read the whole paper version of it, please see me or Dave. Chester Boat cruises emailed the commentary which is very much appreciated.

The River Dee itself rises in the mountains of Snowdonia in North Wales just to the West of Lake Bala – then flowing North East to Corwen, plunging down to Llangollen eventually leaving the Welsh foothills at Bangor-on-Dee. It then travels a further 18 miles along the Dee Estuary ending up in the Irish Sea. Water is stored in reservoirs and then released back into the river by controlled sluice gates. Thomas Telford, a Shropshire engineer was the forerunner in this endeavour and the same principles still apply. (Where would we be without Telford?)

Birds to look out for: mallards, waterfowl, heron, cormorants, and swans. The commonest swan to be found is the Mute Swan. These swans almost disappeared but fortunately today 25 to 30 swans are breeding. Peter mentioned spotting a Great Crested Grebe.

There are two main types of fishing under licence: salmon fishing, coarse fishing above the weir. The Dee at Chester is renowned for its historical regattas. 1814, 10,000 people lined the riverbanks in celebration of the defeat of Napoleon.

Upstream is the long straight mile famous as a practice area for the British National Squad Rowing Team.

We pass the Duke of Westminster Estate – family name Grosvenor – the present Duke owns 13,000 acres South of the city. Properties also in London located in Belgravia, Mayfair and Grosvenor Square. The Duke of Westminster's Home is in Eaton Hall.

We approach the Huntington Intake. Water Treatment Works which supplies North Liverpool, Runcorn, Widnes, Warrington, Speke and St Helens.

We pass the village of Eccleston mentioned in the Domesday Book.



Meandering on upstream, we see the Aldford Iron Bridge. We sail under the bridge and turn round. Built in 1800's by a Chester Victorian Architect, John Douglas and completed in 1824 by William Hazeldine for the first Duke of Westminster. Bridge span is 150ft and a roadway width of 16ft. The bridge of course was inspired by Telford's Iron Bridge over the River Severn in Shropshire.

If you would like a more detailed commentary, you are welcome to ask me for a printout or I can email it to you. We saw some magnificent houses on the riverbank and the weather was gorgeous with a lovely breeze. The trip took 2 hours. Afterwards we all sauntered back home or a group went for a meal. Some of us discovered that the Rail Link ends at 17.07pm. However, this completed a grand day with a healthy walk to the station namely me and Lil, my buddy for the day.

Bon Voyage until the next venture.

Chris

Contact details for Chester Boats: www.chesterboat.co.uk; 01244 325394; enquiries@chesterboat.co.uk

Poetry Corner

Keeping with the theme of a poem which contains the name of the month, I found this one by a favourite poet of Queen Victoria (an appropriate choice given that the month has a royal flavour!) Suggestions for June are welcome.

The May Queen

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear;
To-morrow 'll be the happiest time of all the glad new-year,—
Of all the glad new-year, mother, the maddest, merriest day;
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
There's many a black, black eye, they say, but none so bright as mine;
There's Margaret and Mary, there's Kate and Caroline;
But none so fair as little Alice in all the land, they say:
So I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never wake,
If you do not call me loud when the day begins to break;
But I must gather knots of flowers and buds, and garlands gay;
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
As I came up the valley, whom think ye should I see
But Robin leaning on the bridge beneath the hazel-tree?
He thought of that sharp look, mother, I gave him yesterday,—
But I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
He thought I was a ghost, mother, for I was all in white;
And I ran by him without speaking, like a flash of light.
They call me cruel-hearted, but I care not what they say,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
They say he's dying all for love,—but that can never be;
They say his heart is breaking, mother,—what is that to me?
There's many a bolder lad 'll woo me any summer day;
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
Little Effie shall go with me to-morrow to the green,
And you 'll be there, too, mother, to see me made the Queen;
For the shepherd lads on every side 'll come from far away;
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
The honeysuckle round the porch has woven its wavy bowers,
And by the meadow-trenches blow the faint sweet cuckoo-flowers;
And the wild marsh-marigold shines like fire in swamps and hollows gray;
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
The night-winds come and go, mother, upon the meadow-grass,
And the happy stars above them seem to brighten as they pass;
There will not be a drop of rain the whole of the livelong day;
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.
All the valley, mother, 'll be fresh and green and still,
And the cowslip and the crowfoot are over all the hill,
And the rivulet in the flowery dale 'll merrily glance and play,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

So you must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear;
To-morrow 'll be the happiest time of all the glad new-year;
To-morrow 'll be of all the year the maddest, merriest day,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

Around Wirral and the environs

Wirral Repair Café

Sunday 2nd July

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

In last month's newsletter, I posted an announcement from the Wirral Environmental Network (WEN) that they were hoping to start a Repair Café. WEN has found a venue: The Wirral Deen Centre. 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. The first session is on 2nd July with the intention of holding the Café on the first Sunday of each month.

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.

Smart Devices Research projects.

Laura Pemberton, a PhD student at the Manchester Business School, is seeking participants for research study involving older adults, over the age of 60, who are able to come to the Manchester business school to take part. The research is funded by BT.

The purpose is to look at the preferences older people have of smart home technologies.

Participants will be exposed to different kinds of smart home devices and then will complete a questionnaire and an interview.

It will take about an hour a half, and each participant will get tea/coffee and an Amazon voucher as a thank you for their time.

Travel expenses cannot be met, but free parking can be arranged. Timing will be geared to allow free bus pass use.

If interested, enrol via this link <https://tinyurl.com/3vyv637t> where there is more information about the project.

Or email Laura at: laura.pemberton@manchester.ac.uk

NW volunteer 'coffee morning'. June 7th 2023 on Zoom

There are many volunteers in u3a – committees members, events planners, refreshment organisers, 'meeters and greeters' - to name but a few. It's important that we recognise and value their contribution to our wonderful organisation. As part of the National Volunteer Week, we would like to invite members to join an informal Zoom meeting and chat with other people around the region about what goes on in their u3as.

You can register via the NW website.