

# u3a Wirral

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

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Dear Wirral u3a member,  
October has been a busy month with groups getting under way after the summer break, including the start-up of a new group. I'm appreciative of members who've written about their activities and Janice and Jo who reported on two talks which I missed – so I appreciated their articles. I also missed the anniversary lunch (see picture below) about which I have heard lots of positive reactions.

Kind regards

**Joy, Newsletter Editor**

## Chair's message

As I wrote my message, a wet miserable week was predicted with Storm Babet, and Scotland having it even worse, but at least we have our groups to look forward to and the talks on Monday mornings. My music group was a full house yesterday and lots of interesting music from USA and UK. Then today the French group were working on talking about shops. We're also reading a story about a bird and a whale who fall in love. Somehow, I don't think it will end well! By the way, in the French Group, there is still room for 3 more participants. Please speak to me at the meeting if you are interested.

See you on October 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Janet**



Wirral u3a members enjoying the anniversary lunch.

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## Meetings

**October 30<sup>th</sup>**

The Mystery of the Marie

Celeste

Derek Arnold

**Nov 13<sup>th</sup>**

Experiences as a Registrar

Carole Codd

**Nov 27<sup>th</sup>**

Sculptures of Port Sunlight

Brian Anderson

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## Events/Outings/Visits

**Liverpool Roman Catholic Cathedral**

Thu Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>

Guided tour. Free but small donation of £5 is normal.

Meet at 11:00 am outside the main entrance.

**St. George's Hall, Liverpool**

Thu Nov 16<sup>th</sup>

*Please note the new date and time*

Guided tour. £9 p.p.

Meet at 10:30am in front of the Hall.

**Wirral u3a Christmas Event with Entertainment**

Dec 11<sup>th</sup>

## Groups

### Message from Groups Co-ordinator

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

Ros

### u3a Book Reading Group

The Group has had its inaugural meeting. So far five people have joined and there's room for more. So, if you enjoy reading and would like to try new authors this is your opportunity. The Group meets at Birkenhead Central Library, Borough Road on the second Thursday of the month at 2.30 pm. Session lasts about an hour. Participation is free.

The next book title is 'The Blind Assassin' by Margaret Atwood which will be discussed at our next meeting on Thursday 16th November.

If you join the group, you will need to provide information naming your next of kin (email). There are no refreshments available in the library, but you are welcome to bring your own. Parking is available behind Lidl supermarket.

Janice

### Coffee Mornings, Williamson Café



Everyone is welcome to meet up for a cup of coffee and a chat in the Café in the Williamson Gallery. We are meeting at 11:00 on the Wednesdays in the weeks we don't have a talk. No need to tell anyone you are coming. Just turn up.

### Cinema/Theatre Group

#### Billy Liar, The Gladstone Theatre

Friday 17th November at 7.30 pm.

The cost is £12. If interested, please speak to (or email) Ros.

### Ballet at the Light, New Brighton

#### Don Quixote

Sunday 12th November (2pm)

Royal Opera House production. Duration: 3hrs.

No need to book in advance. Meet Janet (our Chair) at 13:30 inside the cinema. Seats can be booked together.

*{Editor's note: Ballet can be something people are not sure about. So, this is a good, and not expensive, way to dip your toe in the water to see if you like it.}*

### Walking Group

On 9th October, the Monday walking group enjoyed a very pleasant walk from New Brighton to Seacombe. The weather was beautiful. Five members started the walk from the Floral Pavilion along the Egremont promenade, passing very many interesting landmarks, which included many pavement arts completed by local school children.

We witnessed several military aircraft flying over New Brighton, apparently doing European Cobra training exercises. We enjoyed the architecture of some beautiful properties along the front, appreciating the lovely views that they obviously have. Arriving at Seacombe, after about 1 hour 15 minutes, we were able to catch a bus, using our bus passes, back to New Brighton, where we visited Daves' favourite fish and chip cafe, so we could enjoy coffees and a light lunch.



On 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 8 of the Monday walking group members met at Hoylake Station car park. We started our walk along the cinder path at the side of the car park and turned right onto the railway crossing over the tracks and onto Meols Drive, passing the edge of the golf course. We then made our way towards Kings Gap, and along the front after 1 hour and some rain, we stopped at Hoylake Community Centre for coffee at Popsies." On our way back along Meols front, we went through Kings Gap and turned left onto Valentia Drive, where we stopped to view the Hoylake lighthouse, which was built in 1764 as one of 4 lighthouses along that stretch of the peninsula. The weather was kind to us on the return journey when the sun came out.



### **Stephanie**

**Editor's note:** The group meets on the Mondays which fall between the Williamson meetings. There's a WhatsApp group which shares information about the walks. Or speak to Dave at the meetings. We try to include an element for walkers who want a short, relatively easy walk and an element for those who would like to go a bit further. At the end there's often the possibility of a cuppa.

## **Meetings**

### **Strawberry Field**

Local folk have no doubt mostly heard the John Lennon song "Strawberry Fields Forever" and are perhaps familiar with the iconic "Red Gates". However, we are not all aware of the history of the Strawberry Field. Our 2nd October speaker Christine Francis gave us an insight to the story behind the Red Gates of Strawberry Field. The original gothic revival style mansion house was built in 1870 and was occupied by 5 families until 1936 when the building and surrounding lands were acquired by the Salvation Army. The house was then used as a Childrens Home for girls with up to 40 orphans living within its walls. The rooms within the house were all named after flowers The Home was opened by Evangeline Booth, the daughter of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. Later in the 1950's the Home began to accept boys as residents too. For nearly 70 years Strawberry Field gave the vulnerable children of Liverpool a safe home environment. In 1973 the original house had to be demolished due to being deemed an unsafe structure and this was replaced by 3 purpose-built units which were used by the Salvation Army until the 31st May 2005 when the Home closed its doors. John Lennon, as a young boy, had a fascination with Strawberry Field and his childhood home in Woolton was close by. He and his pals would climb over the walls and explore the grounds. He immortalised the Home by the writing of his song "Strawberry Fields Forever" in 1967. After his untimely death his wife Yoko Ono and their son Sean visited in 2005. The famous red gates were stolen in 2011. However, they were recognised and returned to their rightful place. After recounting the interesting history of Strawberry Field, Christine then went on to tell us of her own personal involvement with the Home. She and her late husband visited the Home and decided to offer to foster twin boys. One of the boys happily remained with them and was later adopted by the couple. **Jennifer**

## Experiences of a Pharmacist

John Donoghue delivered an interesting and enlightening talk (on 16 October) about his experiences as a pharmacist. He began his talk by describing the role of a pharmacist, which is to ensure the safe and effective use of medicines by patients. John outlined the five phases of his career: training, work in the community, Health & Safety management, hospital pharmacy, and consultancy.

In 1975 John enrolled on a course at the School of Pharmacy at Liverpool John Moores University. Incidentally, this School of Pharmacy is one of the oldest in Europe, with a history going back to 1849. The course included pharmacology, physiology & pathology, and lots of chemistry. Later in his talk, John pointed out that a pharmacy student had lectures on pharmacy every day for three years, while a typical doctor had just one lecture per week for two terms. John remarked that pharmacy is very different now from how it was in 1979, when he completed his university course. Society now makes better use of pharmacists for various services in addition to dispensing medicines.

Most pharmacy graduates progress into working in local pharmacies, but some work in hospital pharmacies or in the pharmaceutical industry, while others undertake post-graduate studies. But one of John's colleagues moved into forensic science, as the pharmacy course provided excellent skills for this role.

John has attended international conferences, in the United States and other places, including two exotic locations, Samarkand and Vladivostok. While in the US, he learned about one way in which wastage of medications is reduced. In the US, nursing homes are required by law to employ a consultant pharmacist to review medications (every 1 to 3 months). The pharmacists give advice and participate in staff education about medication.

Medication wastage can quite a problem, particularly in care homes, where older residents often need considerably more medication than the general population. Without checks, drugs continue to be prescribed when no longer beneficial.

On completion of his course, John undertook a year's probationary work with Boots, and discovered he did not like working for this management-heavy company. Subsequently, he worked in a small, private pharmacy. He underwent an "apprenticeship" in developing good communication skills with the public, an important aspect of a pharmacist's work. Later, John worked as a locum, then was offered a job as manager of a pharmacy in Wallasey. During this

## Coffee Corner Moment Answers to September's puzzles

1.  $60 \div 5$ ;  $\times 3$ ; doubled;  $+5$ ;  $+6$ ;  $-15$ ;  $-\frac{3}{4}$  of it; square it;  $-157 = 132$
2. 18; square it;  $\times 2$ ;  $\div 8$ ;  $+40$ ;  $-73$ ;  $-\frac{1}{4}$  of it;  $\times 9$ ; half of it; half of it = **81**
3.  $112 - 25$ ;  $\times 3$ ;  $+46$ ;  $-295$ ;  $\times 5$ ; double it;  $-75$ ;  $\div 5$ ; triple it = **27**

## Doublets or Word Ladders

The challenge was to go from the first word to the last in the given number of steps. This type of puzzle was invented by Lewis Carroll.

1. Lion to Lamb – in 2  
Lion-limn-limb-lamb.
2. Nose to Chin – in 5  
Nose-note-cote-core-corn-coin-chin
3. Four to Five – in 6  
Four-foul-fool-foot-fort-fore-fire-five.

## October's puzzle

What have they in common? The following three groups of words have a fourth word in common. Can you name them? (Hint – they all consist of 4 letters)

1. Alligator; Drops; Prickly
2. Ginger; Pea; Pine
3. Day; House; Wide
4. Extract; Single; Whisky



time, John sang and played guitar in a band called Jealous Heart. They had a small success, when their record reached the top thirty, in Belgium!

After a couple of years in Wallasey, John bought a rundown pharmacy in Garston. The previous owner of the pharmacy had concocted his own very profitable cough mixture, called Mr Wizard. He extracted a promise from John to continue making this cough mixture, as a number of his patients depended on it, quite literally, as it turned out. John soon discovered the cough mixture contained high levels of morphine. He was concerned that pharmacy inspectors would prosecute him for selling such a product, so he set about gradually reducing the morphine content of "Mr Wizard" to a legal level.

John went on to describe the impact of computers on pharmacy work. Not only do they enable prescription labels to be printed out efficiently but also, they allow for electronic communication between GP surgeries and pharmacies, thus avoiding the danger of prescription pads falling into the wrong hand. But, very importantly, computers enable pharmacies to keep patient records, so the pharmacist can read about the history of a patient's medication and references to any side effects or contraindications, thus making the prescribing of drugs much safer.

John wanted to move on from simply dispensing to making more use of his specialist knowledge. An opportunity arose with the introduction of Care in the Community in the 1990s, to address the situation in which patients were being discharged from mental hospitals into the community, but community-based services were not coping very well. Medication plays a large part in the treatment of severe mental illness, so pharmacists could play an important role in the dispensing of psychiatric medicines. John took part in a two-year project, which established a network of pharmacies across Liverpool to dispense psychiatric medicines safely. The team also developed outreach services, providing advice to community health teams and care workers. The project was a major success, but the NHS funding was withdrawn on conclusion of the project. However, John continued his interest in psychiatric medication by taking on a clinical pharmacy role in the psychiatric department at Clatterbridge Hospital. This position allowed for closer involvement with patients, taking medication history, and monitoring progress and side effects. After about six months, John was appointed principle clinical pharmacist with oversight of the whole department.

John continues his interest in the safe and appropriate use of psychiatric medicines and has undertaken research projects. Currently, he is the director of Medicines in Mental Health in Liverpool, a company he founded with the aim of improving the ways medicines are used to treat severe mental illness. He has come a long way from his early days, contending with the Mr Wizard cough mixture!

**Jo**

*{Editor's note: It was a rather fortuitous choice to ask Jo to write about this talk. When she was deciding which subject to study at university, she had considered pharmacy but eventually chose biology. So, in this talk Jo got to hear about what she could have been involved with!}*

## Outings

### A trip on a boat

On Thursday 5th October a small group of Wirral U3A members arrived at the Cheshire Cat pub which is on the Whitchurch Road just outside Chester. The pub is conveniently located right next to the Shropshire Union canal at Christleton. A couple of us (myself included) managed to drive into the Costa Coffee which is on the main road just short of the access road to the Cheshire Cat.

Fortunately, the mistake was realised before the boat set off, otherwise this would have been a short report about coffee beans.

The day itself was very wet and I felt sorry for our crew Gary, Phil, and Richard whose job it was to stay outside at the rear of the boat to steer it and carry out other maritime duties. They are a lovely bunch of people, all volunteers, and did so much to help us enjoy the day. The charity they work for is the Wirral Community Narrowboat Trust (WCNT) and they provide trips around Wirral and Chester area for all sorts of groups, many less fortunate than us.

As we had booked a full day trip, we were heading for the Shady Oak (another pub) deep in the Cheshire countryside although not very far from Beeston Castle. The outward trip took about two and a half hours with the rain briefly clearing only to resume again. However, canal boating is not



necessarily about glorious sunshine, rather it is enjoying the peace and the countryside passing, along at a pace which enables us to appreciate it. We passed some beautiful property on the way, some with little jetties for their own boats, before coming into open country. We were accompanied by varieties of waterfowl including geese, ducks and moorhens. Or they may have been coots, I'm not sure how to tell the difference. At one point a lone heron was spotted in a field fifty meters or so back from the water's edge. Unusual as they are usually seen at the water side. Maybe there were frogs in the field for dinner?



Having been sustained so far with tea, coffee and biscuits, we arrived at the Shady Oak at half past twelve. This is a lovely pub and from a very varied menu, seven of us chose fish and chips! Our boat had been turned and was ready to head back to Christleton when we finished our meal. We stayed on the boat past the mooring to a winding hole where the canal has been widened to allow 70-foot-long boats to turn. It's a bit like turning a car round in a road which is only just wider than the length of the car.

A canal boat trip may not appeal to some as there is very little activity for most of the time, but that's the whole point. Drifting a long a quiet canal with a group of friends is a very pleasant way to pass the day. We hope to take another trip next year, this time towards

and through the centre of Chester passing through some locks towards the end of the outward trip. There may be an opportunity to lend a hand opening and shutting the lock gates for those who want a bit more hands on. In which case, let's hope for a dry day.

**Dave**

## Poetry Corner

This month's poem is by W B Yates who had clearly experienced a different October to the one we've just had!

### The Wild Swans at Coole

The trees are in their autumn beauty,  
The woodland paths are dry,  
Under the October twilight the water  
Mirrors a still sky;  
Upon the brimming water among the stones  
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me  
Since I first made my count;  
I saw, before I had well finished,  
All suddenly mount  
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings  
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,  
And now my heart is sore.  
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,  
The first time on this shore,  
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,  
Trode with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,  
They paddle in the cold  
Companionable streams or climb the air;  
Their hearts have not grown old;  
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,  
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,  
Mysterious, beautiful;  
Among what rushes will they build,  
By what lake's edge or pool  
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day  
To find they have flown away?

## Around Wirral and the environs

### Live Music at Birkenhead Library



I spent a lovely afternoon today at Birkenhead Central Library to hear BREAD. Good singing and guitar playing. It's a fortnightly programme with a range of performers (see picture) and supports a local library.  
**Christine.**

### Wirral Environmental Network Pre-Christmas Fair

Saturday 18th November, 11am - 2pm

Sandon Building, Falkland Road, Wallasey, CH44 8ER

It's a great opportunity to treat yourself and others with a festive mix of cakes, crafts, plants and gifts. Wirral Unplugged will also be there to run children's activities. If you get peckish, soup and vegan 'bacon' butties are available.

Entry is free but donations are much appreciated. Cash payments only. **Joy**