

# u3a Wirral

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

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## Chair's message

My name is Ros and I am your new Chair. I would firstly like to thank Janet, our previous chair for all her hard work in the past years and keeping the club going through the Covid pandemic, not an easy task. I hope I can serve you as well as Janet.

We have an interesting talk in May by J M Corfe about creating a garden. Please note the date is 13th May as the Bank Holidays have interfered with the pattern of our Monday mornings.

Please take the time each meeting to check the board and the red book, as well as the website, for information on our subgroups. The Book Group needs a new leader as Janice is leaving the area, so make yourself known if you think you could fill that role.

The Interest Group is thriving with several trips suggested, if you would like to be included on the WhatsApp group, let Stephanie know. I will point her out at the next meeting.

Theatre trips are also planned and any suggestions are welcome.

I hope you all agree that the increase to £3 for each session is reasonable, we have a great venue at the Williamson and continue to have two speakers a month. Is this not great value? So, tell all your friends about what a wonderful time we have and encourage them to join!

**Ros**

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## Message from our Retiring Chair

First, I would like to say thank you to the executive committee for all the help and support they have given me during my time in office. I'm also grateful to the leaders of the groups who do such sterling work. I always say that the u3a is run by the members for the members and this is one way to get involved, so if you have any interests or gifts you would like to share with others, please let a member of the committee know.

I'm sure you'll be pleased to hear that Ros has volunteered to be the new chairman and I wish her all the best in her new role.

Kind regards

**Janet**

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## Meetings

### May 13<sup>th</sup>

#### Creating a Garden

*John Michael Corfe*

Our talk has the intriguing alternative title 'Casting Greenhouses on the Waters'. John Michael, who is a member of the Wirral History and Heritage Association, will be speaking about the purchase of a piece of land which led to the creation of two gardens and gave a great deal of satisfaction to many folks.

### June 10<sup>th</sup>

#### Suffer Little Children

*Anthony Annakin Smith*

Anthony is also a member of the Wirral History and Heritage Association. He will tell the story of the eighteenth-century Founding Hospital in Chester which took in London's unwanted children. I am told that the content of this talk is different to Judith Foxon's talk we had earlier this year.

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## Newsletter Editor's message

Dear Wirral u3a member,

We held our AGM in April which was notable for several reasons. First, it took place in the Williamson Café. Members sat round tables both to drink their coffee and tea and listen to the speaker. It was good to see people chatting and getting to know each other. The acoustics seems to be better in the café than in the main hall. The staff at the Williamson have kindly found us a screen for projecting the speaker's slides. A regular speaker (Jean Symons) said she thought the sound quality was better. The Committee is proposing to continue to have the speaker session in the café, unless the membership grows too large to be accommodated in the room – which would be a satisfactory reason to revert back to the larger room!

Another feature was that there was actually a vote during the AGM! The treasurer explained to members about the financial situation of Wirral u3a and the need to increase the fee for meetings from next September. Asking the meeting to vote underlines the ethos that it is a membership organisation in which we are all to play a part.

Unfortunately, the AGM did run longer than had been planned which meant that our speaker had far less time than she'd anticipated so had to rush and skip parts of her presentation. Jo who has written up the meeting has added some more recent history, including a personal element!

The AGM also saw us say 'good-bye' to Janet who stepped down as Chair. I proposed a well-deserved vote of thanks because she had the position thrust upon her (when the previous Chair stepped down) and she held the position longer than usual due to COVID. I'm pleased to say that Janet is staying on the Committee as deputy Chair to support our new incumbent, Ros, who you know as the Group Coordinator. We also welcomed two new members to the Committee, Val and Jackie. I'm sure you will join me in wishing them well.

May is a strange month since we only have one meeting but I hope to see you there.

**Joy**

## Treasurer's Report

This is a report on my first year as U3A Wirral Treasurer. First, I would like to thank my predecessor Derek for his advice and help in taking on this position and Mo, Lorna and Chris on the front desk who have made my job much easier.

The year has seen some members leaving but also a healthy interest with some new members. Nevertheless, the overall membership has fallen from the previous year, putting some strain on the finances. My initial assessment shows that the assets in the general account have slipped from just over £3000 to just below £2500 while the social account saw a smaller increase to end the year with a balance of £1850. While this remains a healthy position, the sad reality is that the attendance income does not cover costs when we pay a speaker. While this is not an immediate issue given the healthy bank balance, the committee felt that steps should be taken to address this sooner rather than later.

To illustrate the reality, a recent meeting's speaker charged £75 and the Williamson charges us £75 for hire of the room (including setting up and tea/coffee cups and preparation). Forty-four members attended bringing in £88. So, there was a net loss of £62. Although some speakers charge less, others charge more, and Monica indicates there is a marked upward trend in speaker fees. Further, with Council budgets being squeezed, we cannot rule out a significant increase in room hire charges. To date, we have been able to cover the shortfall from the annual subscription (£10) but

with increasing contributions to U3A overheads plus general inflation on things like postage this is becoming increasingly difficult.

The committee considered various options and reluctantly concluded that the best option to secure the finances would be to increase the attendance fee to a level that would cover the costs of a meeting. Based on 50 people attending a meeting that costs £75 for a speaker plus the same for room hire results in a figure of £3. Although this is a steep increase, the Committee believes it still offers good value for money in that this figure would often not cover the cost of a hot drink and a biscuit in most cafés. Given the scale of this increase, the Committee decided to put this to a vote at the AGM to allow discussion and for members to suggest alternative strategies. The meeting agreed to the proposed increase, albeit with some dissension, and this new figure will be introduced from the first meeting in September. Should the financial situation change, the new figure will be reconsidered.

Finally, I would like to thank Ken, a Wirral u3a member, for offering his wisdom on various aspects of accounting practice and the Charity Commission, and for agreeing to act as Independent Examiner for the accounts. Once he has examined the accounts, a fuller record will be published on the website.

**Giles**

## 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.

I'm pleased to report that new groups have started but there is always room for more. There are spaces in the French and Music Appreciation Groups. There will be more information at the Monday meetings.

**Ros**

### **Book Group**

Unfortunately, Janice who has been the group facilitator is leaving the area, so the group needs a replacement. It is not an onerous task. It requires someone who will be happy to liaise with Sophie Rose who is the Librarian at Bebington Library by e-mail or phone letting her know of new members so that she can order the required number of books. Sophie is lovely, she does all the hard work, she chooses the books and ensures that they are at the library on the right day. We do not buy the books. They are on loan from the library for one month, so we book them out individually on our own library cards. Sophie is very helpful and really hopes that the group will continue to meet and increase in numbers. Books have been chosen up until July 2024.

If you would like to become the new group facilitator, please contact either Janice or Ros.

### **Spanish Conversation Group**

The Spanish Conversation Group has started. We meet weekly for an hour in the cafe of the Williamson Art Gallery starting at 10am. We use both Iberian and Latin American Spanish. Beginners are welcome. There is no fee to participate but the café appreciates you buying some refreshments.

On alternate Wednesdays you can stay on for another coffee and chat (in English!) – see next item for details.

## Quiz Group

This group meets once a month at 10:30 usually on the last Friday in a member's home.

Jenny



## 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.

## Walking Group

The walking group meets on the Mondays (unless it's a public holiday) that alternate with the Williamson meetings.

## Visits

### Forthcoming

Several trips are planned before the summer break. If you are interested contact Chris at the Monday meetings.

#### Wed May 8th

A trip round the **Liverpool docks** on the Floating Grace. 12:00 to 2:00 pm

£22 p.p. Afternoon Tea included.

#### Wed Jun 26th

A trip on a **canal boat** from **Christleton** to the centre of **Chester**.

This is a whole day trip, passing through several locks. £16 p.p.

Bring your own lunch or visit a local eatery.

## Meetings

### April 8<sup>th</sup>

#### Songs and Monologs

Jean Symons

Our speaker wouldn't reveal the content of her session beforehand. However, she explained why at the start: she had given all of her talks to Wirral u3a! So, she had decided to present us with an assemblage of songs, stories, poems and monologues. Jean started with a song and tried to get us to join in. The monologues were pieces she had used as fill-ins when she was playing music with her husband and there was a pause while he

## Coffee corner moment

### Answers to the March Quiz

1. How many Easter eggs are sold in the UK every year?  
80 million.
2. Where was the UK's first Easter egg produced?  
Bristol (by Frys in 1873)

Did you manage to work out the names of the chocolates?

1. Clever people  
Smarties
2. High class thoroughfare  
Quality Street
3. Price on a person's head  
Bounty
4. Locals in Malta  
Maltesers
5. Food for felines  
Kit Kat

### April General Knowledge Quiz

1. Which legendary surrealist artist is famous for painting melting clocks?
2. In which US state is the city Nashville?
3. Which Tennis Grand Slam is played on a clay surface?
4. In which part of your body would you find the cruciate ligament?
5. What was the Turkish city of Istanbul called before 1930?

changed the backing tape. One piece she had been inspired to write was based on her experience of looking for a partner. Jean had looked at the 'lonely hearts' page in the local paper and found what people wrote not very inspiring to encourage a response. So, she hit upon the idea to write that she was looking for a hero to remove a spider from her bath. The man who replied to her request with a good tip, which didn't involve killing the spider, she eventually married. Jean did an entertaining piece of theatre in which she played all the parts using masks to represent the characters. She'd practiced with her grandchildren. Her final piece was about a budgerigar, Joey, which was sad about loneliness but did end positively. Something that was different about this session was that to listen to Jean we had to sit in the Williamson café. I had the impression that the sound quality was better. It was also good to see people sitting around the tables chatting to each other.

## Joy

### April 22nd

#### The Changing face of Tranmere

*Mary Ward*

On 22 April 2024, Mary Ward presented a talk entitled "The Changing face of Tranmere". She introduced her talk by indicating some views from Tranmere, one of which was on display in the room where the talk took place. This was the earliest painted view of Birkenhead and the River Mersey, looking from Holt Hill, Tranmere over Tranmere Pool and Birkenhead Priory (1767).

Mary referred to the two possible derivations of the name Tranmere. Firstly, Tranmere may come from the old British name for "town on the hill". In thirteenth century documents, Tranmere was listed as Tranmull, Tranmoll and Tranmoel, with very little difference from the original British form, Tre-yn-moel, meaning "town (or village) on the hill". The alternative derivation comes from the Vikings. "Tranmere" possibly comes from Old Norse Trani-melr, meaning "crane sandbank" or "sandbank with the cranes".

The sandbanks in the River Mersey were at least a mile away from the main road in Tranmere. I doubt cranes would have been visible from this road. On the other hand, the hamlet of Hinderton, which later became part of Lower Tranmere, was much closer to the sandbanks, so why was it not called Tranmere, if indeed cranes were present on the sandbanks.

Mary gave a summary of Tranmere in prehistoric and Medieval times. Later, she mentioned the Sportsman's Arms at the top of Prenton Road East. There had been a public house on this site for very many years. The Sportsman's Inn was listed in 1571. Mary showed a photograph of a red sandstone house, reputedly dating back to Tudor times, but I have not been able to find any reference to it. However, I did find a photo of a very similar house, in Wellington Terrace, but it dated from the 19th century.

Later, Mary referred to Tranmere Old Hall, describing the decorated windows in some detail. The Hall and estate were situated between Church Road and Greenway Road, south of Dial Road. The main building abutted Church Road and faced south close to present-day Tower Hill.

Circa 1850, Joseph Mayer (1803-1886), who lived in Bebington for many years, wrote a paper about Tranmere Hall. The paper includes front and rear views of the Hall, an internal view of the great hall, and some details of the decorated windows. The artist is unknown but may have been Mayer himself. The paper was read at a meeting of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (HSLC) of which Mayer was a founder member (1848).

The Hall was constructed about 1614. It was built of grey stone and had many gables, windows and mullions. In front of the house was a large garden, the entrance to which was from the high road, through an ornamental door-way. Above the doorway was the motto LABOR VINCIT OMNIA with the initials GL and AL and the date 1614. These initials were for George and Ann Langford (née Glegg), who were married at West Kirby in 1614. George Langford was born in Bebington in 1574.

Our knowledge of Tranmere Old Hall depends on the writings of historians such as Joseph Mayer as Tranmere Old Hall was demolished about 1862, because the new owner wanted to develop the land. He subsequently became bankrupt, so the Hall was lost for no good purpose.

### **Additional material**

A new Tranmere Hall had been built by 1875. It was located where the upper part of Mallory Road now joins Greenway Road. Tranmere (New) Hall was demolished about 1936 and its grounds became part of the Tranmere Hall estate.

Until the early 19th century, Tranmere was the second most populous settlement in Wirral, with a population of 353 in 1801, centred mainly around what is now Church Road and the nearby hamlet of Hinderton. The most populous settlement in Wirral before 1820 was Neston (in 1801 the population was 1,486).

### **The Rubicon**

A small river ran from the southern end of present-day Borough Road to Tranmere Pool, which was an inlet from the River Mersey, south of the Priory. Apparently, this river was called the Rubicon but the local folk may have had another name for it.

Stepping stones across the river were provided at the bottom of Whetstone Lane and a bridge carried Clifton Road across the river towards the eastern end of Grange Road. Clifton Road was built about 1840.

The river was covered over sometime between 1860 and 1872 by the new Borough Road. Culverts directed the river along Hind Street, Blackpool Street and Waterloo Place, draining into the Mersey near the eastern end of Waterloo Place.

### **Holt Hill**

The name Holt Hill refers to a holt or wood on a hill. Holt Hill, at the top of Whetstone Lane, is labelled on an 1840 map of Tranmere. According to the historian, William Fergusson Irvine (1869-1962), who lived in Birkenhead, the name Holt Hill occurs in a document dated 1327.

### **Shewell's House**

The Reverend Richard William Shewell (1753-1829) was vicar at St Oswald's Church, Bidston, from 1793 to 1819. Beforehand, he had been the curate at Woodchurch, from 1775-1791. Shewell lived in a large house (called Shewell's House) situated between the eastern ends of Elm Grove and Chesnut Grove. The previous name for Chesnut Grove was Shewell Road. If Shewell had the house built for himself, then it probably dated from about 1793. William Shewell died in May 1829, aged 76. He was interred in the Shewell vault at St Mary's Church, Birkenhead, on 20 May 1829.

Shewell's daughter, Eliza Ann Shewell (1802-1851) married Henry Bushell Walker (1793-c1850) on 1 April 1824 at St Andrew's Church, Bebington. They were living at Shewell's House by 1841. The



Walkers developed the grounds around the house into gardens. Eliza Ann Walker died, a widow, in September 1851. At the time of her death, she was living with two visitors and five servants as well as a young woman Sarah Ellen Sutton (aged 14), described as an adopted daughter. Eliza Ann was buried at St Mary's Church in Birkenhead, as were her parents.

The Faithful Companions of Jesus nuns bought Shewell's House in 1856, probably from Eliza Walker's estate. The Community and about 40 pupils moved from Hamilton Square to Holt Hill in the spring of 1857. Initially, the nuns named the new school "Tranmere Hall Boarding School". This was a confusing name as the actual Tranmere (Old) Hall was half a mile further along Church Road (to the south). However, the name of the school was changed to Holt Hill Convent, sometime between 1871 and 1875.

The 1871 census for Tranmere Hall Boarding School shows that Mary Elizabeth McMahon (aged 13), born in Liverpool, was a boarder. Mary was my great grandmother. My grandmother and two aunts also attended Holt Hill Convent, and I was a pupil there from 1955 to 1965, the fourth generation of my family to attend the school!

Holt Hill convent was demolished in 1982 and a housing estate was built on the site. The names Shewell Close, Rectory Close and Convent Close reflect the history of the grounds.

**Jo**

## **Around Wirral and its Environs**

### **Williamson Art Gallery and Museum**

#### Going to the Match

19th April - 27th July

An exhibition of Lowry's paintings including 'Going to the Match' will be on show alongside some of his other works together with a selection of pictures from the Williamson's collection. The intention is to place Lowry in the wider context of painting in Northern England in the mid-20th Century.

Entry is free.

#### Events in May

Fridays 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> – 11am-12pm: Meditation with Wirral Unitarians (Free)

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm – 8:30 pm: Life Drawing (No Booking required £10)

or

Books N Banter (No Booking required Free)

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> 2pm: Peter Rainsford Piano Class (1<sup>st</sup> Session Free, Payment thereafter)

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> 11am: Music with Peter Rainsford (No Booking required Free)

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> TBC: Liver Sketching Club (Free)

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm – 8:30 pm: Music in Café, Wirral 3L's Choir (No Booking required Free)

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> 6:30pm – 8:30 pm: Music in Café, Music and Poetry by Alison Shlutz (No Booking required Free)

### **Oxton Secret Gardens**

Sunday 12th May 10:00am to 5:00pm.

£10 on the day, or £8 in advance from several shops in Oxton Village. Information either phone 07962 248 268 or email: [secretgardens@theoxtonsociety.co.uk](mailto:secretgardens@theoxtonsociety.co.uk)



## Leasowe Lighthouse

<https://leasowelighthouse.com/wp/2023/07/22/a-visit-to-the-lighthouse/>

Open days are on the first and third Sunday of the month. The opening hours will be from 12 Midday until 4 pm with the last tour starting at 3:30 pm.

The ground floor is free to enter where you can buy Tea, Coffee, cold drinks etc. there as well as small gifts and information leaflets. To visit the rest of the building you need to buy a ticket for one of our regular guided tours which cost £2 for Children and £3 for adults. There are some restrictions for children – so check the website or ask Janet.

## The Big Sing

Saturday 15th June 2024, 10.15 a.m. – 3.30 p.m.

The Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool.

Cost for the event: £15.00 including refreshments but not lunch.

Registration by June 7th.

There's a flyer with more information on the u3a region website:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events>

Also, you can contact the organiser Gill Russell: mob: 07710531876 [u3anwrchair@gmail.com](mailto:u3anwrchair@gmail.com)

## English Country Dancing

Heswall U3A Country Dancing Group has space for new members. They meet on alternate Friday afternoons from 2pm-4pm at St. Michael & All Angels Church at the corner of Gills Lane and Pensby Road.

You are welcome to visit to try it out. It's a very friendly group & beginners are most welcome.

The final two meeting this term are on 13rd May, with a live band, and 17th May. The new term starts on 6th September at a cost of £15.

Remember to bring your Wirral u3a membership cards with you.

See Janet or Lorna if you have any queries.

## Heritage of Eastham Country Park

Guided walks by Dr David Mottram, which last around one and a half hours. During the walk, you will learn all about the history of the area and relive the 1840s to 1920s, when the area was Eastham's Victorian Pleasure Gardens providing extensive attractions and entertainments for day trippers on the Liverpool to Eastham Ferry. The attractions included circus acts, a boating lake, water chute, loop-the-loop railway and a zoological garden.

Walks will be taking place on the following days:

Monday, May 27: 11am to 1.30pm

Saturday, June 22: 11am to 1:30pm

Friday, July 26: 11am to 1.30pm

Saturday, August 17: 11am to 1.30pm

There is no need to book to attend, just turn up on the day at the meeting point on



Eastham Ferry Landing Stage, 1 Ferry Road, Eastham CH62 0AU.

Everyone taking part is advised to wear appropriate clothing and footwear for a woodland walk.

### **The Wirral Viking Festival 2024**

Leasowe Castle Hotel

25 & 26 May

On 26<sup>th</sup> there's a Viking Funeral with a Boat Burning.

Tickets are required.

<https://www.wirralinfobank.co.uk/Services/10155>