

u3a Wirral

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

Chair's message

I think it was another successful year for Wirral U3A. During the summer, we were presented with a crisis by the Williamson. Three weeks before the start of the new season, they asked us to change our meeting day from Mondays to Tuesdays as well as substantially increasing the charge for building use. The Committee decided that this was not acceptable and frantically searched for alternatives which we have now found a venue which is both meets our requirements for the talks and is served by public transport: Upton Victory Hall Tennis and Bowls Club. I have been asked by a couple of members about Safeguarding procedures. The Committee is currently working on a policy statement and we'll report back shortly. I am pleased to announce that Steph has agreed to be our Groups Co-ordinator. She will be supported by Val. Steph is working hard on establishing some more groups, hopefully this will bring in some new members. As part of our approach to encouraging more people to join Wirral u3a, we are proposing a "bring a friend for free day"!! This would be on 23rd September. You are welcome to bring a friend to see what we have to offer and hopefully encourage them to join. On behalf of the Committee, and I'm sure all Wirral u3a members, to say a special 'thank you' to Derek who acted as our Treasurer for more than 10 years and also took on the task of setting up and running the website when it became an important to medium for communicating with new members. Derek has decided to step down from the Committee. We shall miss his presence because he was always willing to help and make suggestions. I would also like to thank all the committee for their support to me in my role as Chair. I am very new to this post and welcome any guidance you can give. I look forward to seeing you at the new venue for the start of our new season on 9th September.

Ros



Meetings

9th September Welcome Back

Creating A Garden: Casting Greenhouses on the Waters
JM Corfe, from the Wirral History and Heritage Association, will tell us how the purchase of a piece of land led to the creation of two gardens and gave satisfaction to many people.

23rd September

Mental Wellness

Mike Jones, who is a practicing psychotherapist, will talk about some of the stresses and strains we have to deal with in our daily lives. He will offer advice and strategies for how to deal with them.

29th Oct

Wirral U3A Anniversary Lunch, The Grange, Hoylake.

Important Announcements

September is the start of our new season. We are no longer meeting at the Williamson Museum. Instead, we are meeting at the **UPTON VICTORY HALL TENNIS AND BOWLS CLUB**. Please don't confuse this with the Upton Victory Hall. There are directions at the end of the newsletter. There is plenty of parking space. Buses 414, 423 and 437 stop nearby.

Annual subscriptions are due. The treasurer announced that for 2024-25, the subscription will be held at £10 but unfortunately the cost of attending a meeting will be increased to £3/visit. When you pay your annual subscription, you will be asked to confirm your personal details.

News from the Treasurer

First, I am pleased to report that the financial position is looking sound. The new location for our meetings is a similar cost to what we were being charged by the Williamson and there has not been a significant increase in speaker fees. The committee is also hoping to attract new members, and we would encourage you all to introduce any friends who you think might enjoy and contribute to our activities, for example, our 'Bring a Friend for Free' on 23rd September.

Many of us will have been affected by the announcement of the removal of the heating allowance from most pensioners. Later this year our guest speaker is Katie Palomo from Energy Projects Plus who will be able to offer advice on energy-saving ideas and answer related questions you may have.

Finally, my predecessor Derek is standing down from the committee and I would like to add my personal thanks and appreciation for his handing over of everything in good order and help in changing all the bank mandates etc.

Giles

Newsletter and Website Editor's message

Dear Wirral u3a member,

I would also like to echo Ros's sentiments about Derek. I took over editing the Website from Derek and he's been helpful and supportive. Derek has always circulated the newsletter promptly since he held the members' addresses.

The last sentence brings me to some changes in respect of the newsletter. Firstly, those of you who receive the newsletter via email will now no longer receive it from Derek, but directly from me since I have been authorised via the new administration system (Beacon) to email Wirral u3a members. Please be reassured that no-one can see your email address, nor do I share people's addresses without their permission.

Another change related to the newsletter production is that Alison and Chris P have agreed to join an editorial team! I'm looking forward to working with them to deliver an interesting and diverse monthly newsletter! Watch this space!

Something else that will change before the end of the year is the Wirral u3a website. We have now agreed to use the new system for building web pages. The new system allows us to have a more modern appearance with more options in the type of information we can present – so I'm open to suggestions about things you would like to include. If you know of a good web page belonging to another u3a or similar organisations that we could use for inspiration, that would be much appreciated.

Joy

Visits

The Social Committee have a number of visits proposed for our new term:

- **Mersey Tunnel Tour** - Saturday p.m. 9th November, provisionally £11 per person. Visit the control room, fan room, and escape routes with a guide. The tour lasts about 2 hours and is unsuitable for anyone with breathing or mobility problems.
- **Bent's Garden Centre**, near Warrington. 22nd November. About £12 per person if we can hire a coach. This is not just a garden centre, this is a whole retail experience.
- **Williamson Tunnels Tour**. No date set yet. £4 per person and lasts about 45 minutes. This is not suitable for wheelchair users, and there are stairs and steps involved.

- **Gillmoss Recycling Discovery Centre.** The tour lasts about 2 hours and is free, but car share will probably be the best way to get there as it is on the East Lancashire Road. We are looking for expressions of interest for this visit.

Dave

Groups

Message about the Groups Co-ordinator

At our first September meeting, I am planning to have a social groups table where you can find out information about existing groups and some suggestions for new ones, such as a Sunday lunch group, a Bridge club (on another afternoon to the Wednesday afternoon one), a creative writing and poetry group. Two members (Jenny and Chris) are considering a holiday club.

I am pleased to report that the Book Club will continue to be run on the 2nd Thursday of each month at Birkenhead library.

Steph

Spanish Conversation Group

The Spanish Conversation Group meets 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. We are using a range of education methods. Members suggest something they would like to practice. 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.

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. Just to stress we have no plans to change this venue. 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 meetings.

Quiz Group

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

Coffee corner moment

Answers to the June Puzzle

Did you solve the anagrams?

Name the person

1. UR BONIFACE = Fiona Bruce
2. REMAIN SLIGHTER = Raheem Stirling
3. PLANT ODD RUM = Donald Trump
4. BURSTING PRESENCE = Bruce Springsteen
5. RARING SORT = Ringo Starr
6. DON ARMCHAIRS = Richard Osman

July & Aug puzzle

- a) 4×9 ; $\div 3$; x by itself; -92 ; $\frac{3}{4}$ of this =
- b) $84 \div 12$; x by itself; triple it; -59 ; $\frac{9}{11}$ of this =
- c) $\frac{12}{13}$ of 91; triple it; -117 ; $\frac{2}{3}$ of this; $\times 3.5$ =
- d) 16×11 ; triple it; -192 ; $\frac{2}{3}$ of this; $\frac{7}{8}$ of this =

Meetings

The Winchester Geese

This talk was given by Lesley Thomas who is a member of Wirral U3a. I have known Lesley since our secondary school days and this was the first time I'd heard her give a public presentation. I think those of you who heard her will agree with me that I've been missing out!

Not only did we learn about prostitution in the Middle Ages but also the origins of some familiar phrases. Prostitution in London was known in Roman Britain who had been brought from Rome for the soldiers. In London, brothels became established south of the river Thames, opposite to the City of London but outside of its jurisdiction, in an area called the Liberty of the Clink (situated in Bankside part of modern day Southwark). The Clink was a prison which is the derivation of the slang word. Because the Liberty was outside of the control of the City of London, all sorts of activities forbidden in the City could be found, such as, theatres (including the Globe we know from Shakespeare's association), bear and bull baiting. The term 'Liberty' meant in the Middle Ages that there was a manor house located in the designated area. In the case of the Clink, it belonged to the Bishop of Winchester who used it to carry out his governmental duties. Henry II granted the Bishop the power to licence prostitutes and brothels which also provided food and music. Brothels were known as 'stews' and the brothel keeper as a 'stew keeper'. The word 'stew', or 'stewhouse', is thought to have its origins from many of the brothels being based in what were once bathhouses where you could literally stew yourself in the hot water. The trade for brothels was no doubt helped by London Bridge connecting Southwark with the City.

The prostitutes who worked in the Liberty were known as Winchester Geese. They were not allowed to work if they had venereal disease. A symptom of the disease are small bumps on the skin, rather like those left after plucking feathers from a bird, which became known as 'goose bumps'. The Bishops profited financially from the licences for the 'stews' and the tax they paid. They also adopted the high moral ground by not allowing the brothels to open on Sundays and women who had their own lovers could be fined, sent to prison and ducked in raw sewage.

English kings had a range of attitudes to the brothels. Richard was apparently arrested in a brothel in Paris. Edward I closed the brothels in the city of London while Edward III was more liberal in his attitude although he required prostitutes to wear a red rosette. Edward IV made the stews paint their external walls white. Henry V fined his troops from visiting prostitutes but seems to have taken a more liberal attitude to the women. Henry VII worried about the increase in syphilis tried to shut the stews down. It was Henry VIII who ordered the closure of the Southwark stews in 1546 – although this didn't stop prostitution – it just moved elsewhere.

Medieval church law did not allow prostitutes, unless they had repented, to be buried in consecrated ground. The Winchester Geese were buried in a cemetery known as the 'Single Woman's Burying Ground' which is close to the Clink prison. The cemetery had become a paupers cemetery by 1769. It closed in 1853.

Joy

RNLI

On July 8th, we welcomed to U3a Brian Jordan, Visiting Officer for the RNLI. He gave an excellent talk, punctuated by video clips to illustrate his points and geared towards our local lifeboats. The RNLI was founded in 1824 by Sir William Hillary, who had lived on the Isle of Man and had seen, first-hand, the many tragedies of shipwreck that resulted there from a lack of co-ordinated help. There are now 238 lifeboat stations around the UK and Ireland, aiding over 16,000 people in 2022, with 389 lives saved in that year. In addition to the lifeboat stations are the lifeguards, once funded

by local councils, but now paid through, and part of, the RNLI. Unusually for the organisation, lifeguards are salaried (because they work set hours). 95 per cent of the people who work for the RNLI do so voluntarily.

The RNLI is also involved in International Development, helping with expertise in setting up lifeboats abroad and donating older equipment. Saving lives in the English Channel is another of their tasks. At this point, the talk became quite dark. Brian told us that several members of the RNLI and their families have been threatened over this work and many have resigned. Yet another danger adding to an already dangerous job undertaken by volunteers.

Then, we were on to the three Wirral lifeboats. Firstly, the New Brighton lifeboat, established in 1863, and now nestling near to Morrisons in a position Brian described as less than ideal, prone to flooding and madly congested in the summer. Nonetheless, over the years, the crew there has received 48 awards for gallantry.

Then there is the 1966 West Kirby lifeboat (or "the bathtub" as Brian jokingly called her), once kept at the sailing club but now with her own station.

Finally, the Hoylake lifeboat, (1803), one of the oldest lifeboats in Britain, established 21 years before the RNLI by the trustees of the Liverpool Docks. Brian told us how the original basic rowing boat used to be towed to launch at low tide by 12 horses borrowed from local farmers before the tractor improved things for the rescuers. At Hoylake, there is a monument to ten volunteers killed over the years on missions, eight of the ten during a call-out in 1810.

It's a very different story at the Hoylake station now. The Shannon, the £2.5 million state-of-the-art lifeboat has a top speed of 25 knots, can stop in 3 seconds and is powered by water jets, like a jet ski. Brian showed us a (hair-raising) video clip of the Shannon in rough seas showing her ability to self-right, turning over and over as the waves crashed round her. I was amazed to learn that the Shannon is washed down by hand after every call-out, with each wash lasting between 2.5 and 3 hours (not after each day but after each call-out, of which there could be more than one in 24 hours).

Hoylake is also home to the "Hurley Spirit" hovercraft. This is invaluable in places like Thurstaston for rescuing people and animals stuck in the mud as the cliffs there gradually collapse. A recent case to hit headlines was a horse spooked and ended up in the mud, and was freed by RNLI volunteers after 4.5 hours of scooping out the mud by hand and keeping the animal calm as they did so, for an eventual hovercraft transfer. Two women with their combined 8 dogs were also dug out of Wirral mud and a sheep stranded on a sandbank was re-united with its farmer and sheep dog, advancing towards it on a hovercraft!

Brian highlighted how important our donations are in keeping the service running, given the cost of the equipment. Each shock-absorbing seat in the Hoylake boat, for example, cost £20,000.

Afterwards, I talked to U3a member Eileen. She told me that she herself had been rescued by the hovercraft after breaking her hip on Hilbre Island four years previously. It made me wonder...how many other of our U3a members and their families have been on the receiving end of this fantastic organisation?

Alison

Visits

Hoylake lifeboat station

On Thursday 25th July 10 members of our U3A joined with the members of Arrowebrook Trefoil Guild (Girlguiding for Grown Ups without children) for a planned trip and tour around Hoylake Lifeboat Station. The Trefoil Guild are undertaking a challenge for 2024 called Motivate covering activities from land water and air.

The tour lasted approx. one and a half hours with information on both the history of the RNLI to the present day 3 very knowledgeable volunteers from the RNLI guided us through the experience. The

show gardens or stands selling plants but a lot of stands selling non-garden products (so more like a Saturday market) plus entertainment. I did manage to buy some plants and I think Southport u3a are to be congratulated on their show garden. You can read more about their efforts here: <https://www.southportu3a.org.uk/southport-area/2024-southport-flower-show/>

Joy

Around Wirral and its Environs

Wirral Heritage Open Days 2024

6 to 15 September

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Heritage Open Days, although Wirral has 'only' been participating for 16 years. There are a number of buildings open for visitors as well as guided walks and talks – participation is free but some require booking. The event is organised by the Wirral History & Heritage Association. There's an information booklet available to download:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s2-V4yz3gfiadHIN8hc9rec1mV6ID-Os/view>

You are also advised to check on the Association's website for any last-minute changes:

www.wirralhistoryandheritage.org.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.



Special event

On Saturday September 14th there is an abseil at the Lighthouse. Please come and give your support to friends from 9.30 onwards. Tea and coffee available.

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.

There are no more sessions this term and the new term starts on 6th September - costs £15.

Remember to bring your Wirral u3a membership cards with you.

See Janet or Lorna if you have any queries.

Singing in the Library

Everyone is welcome to come and sing along to the hits of the 50's to the 80's, monthly on a Tuesday morning in Birkenhead Central Library on Borough Road from 10.30am to noon. Dates: 8th Oct, 12th Nov, 10th December (although the website recommends checking on Facebook for any changes).

Crisper Corner

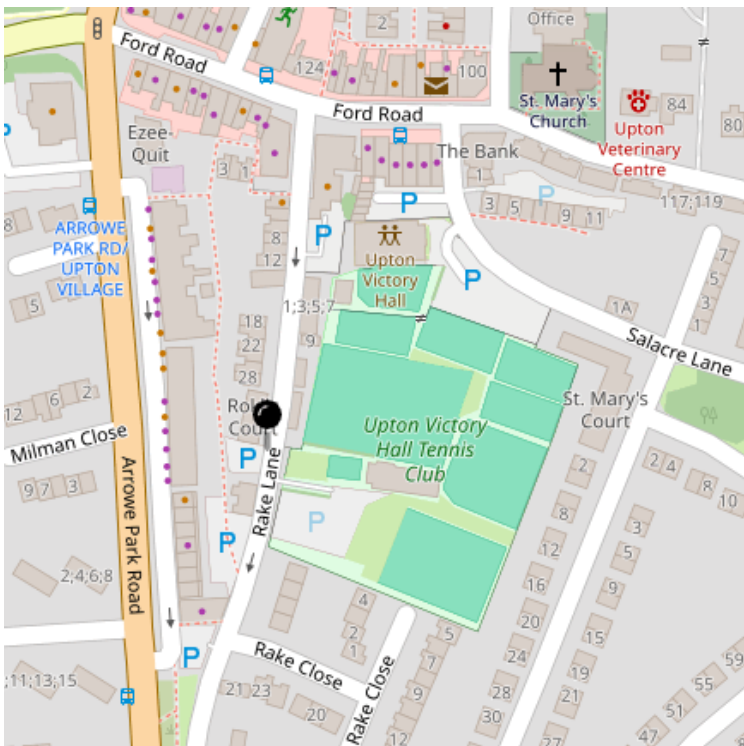
Smart Meters

Two years ago, my energy company were bombarding me with emails about Smart Meters. I'd read all the blurb about them and decided that I'll carry on without them. After a while I had a rethink and thought maybe I'll save some money and raise my awareness about energy usage.....it could be useful to know if you are actually saving money by having a cup of tea without turning the light on! Or does it make much difference?

Smart meters installed and the engineers left me a number to ring if any problems. The meters worked for about a week but after another engineer came round shortly after the job to check them, they ceased working. So frustrating, especially when I stood over the new meter with the Smart Display Unit (many times) to make it come back to life. The months went by - actually 18 months plus - when like a lot of people I turned the SDU off and stuck it in a corner.

Directions to Upton Victory Hall Tennis and Bowls Club

Address: Rake Lane, Upton Village, Wirral, CH49 0US



From the M53-Exit Junction 2 to Hoylake and West Kirby

Take first exit to Upton and turn left at traffic lights

After about half a mile at traffic lights turn left into Upton Village (Ford Road)

Take first right, at the Eagle and Crown Pub, into one-way Rake Lane

Halfway down on left you will see the Club signboard.

Turn left into car park