

# u3a Wirral

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

---

## Chair's message

Hello Everyone!

This is the last message before we have our AGM. I am standing down as required by our constitution, so we need a new chairperson. I want you to seriously consider whether you could take on the post of chairperson. So, we do need someone prepared to take on the role, otherwise as I'm sure you know, Wirral u3a may have to close. I would be happy to be deputy chair and give as much support as possible to the new Chair. Here's a quick outline of what the chair does. They try to attend meetings as often as possible to welcome new members and match them with existing members; greeting the speakers and let them know how long they will be expected to speak for; chairing the committee meetings held throughout the year (around five); occasionally to represent the Wirral u3a at Northwest region meetings.

In the meantime, I hope you all have had a HAPPY EASTER!

Regards

**Janet**

---

## Newsletter Editor's message

Dear Wirral u3a member,

Easter Weekend did produce some sunshine which I hope you were able to enjoy.

I would also echo Janet's message about our need for a Chair. It would be a pity if Wirral u3a had to stop since we are showing signs of post-COVID recovery getting more groups and new members joining.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this month's newsletter.

The last section is about items that might interest some members, so please do let me have any information about events or places to include.

You will notice that there is no Poetry Section. I included that in previous editions because a member had shown interest in starting a poetry group which I was drawing attention to (unfortunately the group never materialised). To spark interest I'd included a poem which took the month of March as its theme. Someone challenged me to produce monthly a poem with that month as the theme. I accepted the challenge. It wasn't easy since poetry is not my subject area

## Meetings

---

### Important Announcement

#### The AGM

April 22nd is the AGM.

Derek circulated relevant information in an email 19<sup>th</sup> March.

The AGM usually lasts about 15 minutes. The scheduled talk will follow.

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

##### Songs And Monologues

*Jean Finney*

Speaker has provided no information about her talk.

#### April 22nd

##### The Changing face of Tranmere

*Mary Ward*

Mary is a member of the Wirral Heritage & History Association. Her talk will cover the development of Tranmere and its three satellite townships from their early history to the present.

and you have to ensure that you are using are in the public domain and not subject to copyright. So, if someone would like to take over this section, please do – you are most welcome to!  
See you at the next meeting.

**Joy**

## 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. There are also spaces in the French and Music Appreciation Groups. There will be more information at the Monday meetings.

**Ros**

### Book Group

The Book Group meets in the main Birkenhead library at 2.30 on the 2nd Thursday of the month. The next meeting will be on the second Thursday of April 11<sup>th</sup>. There is room for more members.

We had been reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. This classic raised so many life issues and therefore a good discussion was had regarding small town politics, race, and Christian values. The numerous characters covered the whole range of 'types', for example the family who 'kept themselves to themselves' and therefore suspicions arose around them, as well as the town gossip, the poverty stricken and those who just cried out for attention.

We are currently reading 'Pachinko' by Min Jin Lee.

### A personal message from Janice

I am delighted that our Book Group has been running for six months now. I am sad to tell you that I have to give up being the group facilitator because I'm leaving the area. I had no idea that I would be moving away so soon, providing it all goes through! Although there are only 4 very keen members at the present time, I would like to think that someone will take this over. So, I thought it would help someone to decide to take over facilitating the group if they knew what it involved. 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. To date we have titles chosen up until July 2024.

### 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. 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 is a new group meeting 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 that alternate with the Williamson meetings.

#### Leasow

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, a small but perfectly formed group of Wirral u3a members met in the car park outside the Leasowe Lighthouse. Perhaps the weather had put people off, but we did manage to walk just over an hour in the dry and it turned out to be less muddy under foot than had been feared.

We left the carpark, walking past a space which had been intended for residential caravans. The name on the fence says 'Lighthouse View' which probably refers to the old house at the back of site. Unfortunately, the property was badly damaged by fire and since then all progress in developing the site has stopped. Next to this site, are a few old farmhouses built in the 18th century. The first chairman of Friends of Leasowe Lighthouse lived in one of them. I suppose that it's quite difficult for those of us born and brought up on the Wirral not to have memories triggered when we wander around the peninsula. This walk certainly had some memories for me since we walked along the footpath which follows the Birket. The stream also marks the boundary of what was once the Cadbury's Factory Site. My uncle worked in the factory. Alongside his regular job, he was also one of the dedicated firemen. To ensure that any fire could be responded to quickly, the firemen where allocated houses adjacent to the factory in Reeds Lane. These were newly built with three bedrooms and an upstairs bathroom which must have been appreciated since there was still a shortage of good quality accommodation in the 1950s. I spent many enjoyable Sunday afternoons visiting my uncle, aunt and cousins. Inside their house was a fire alarm which would ring if there was a fire in the factory and the firemen would respond. I used to wonder what would happen if the bell rang and

### Coffee corner moment

#### Answers to the February Puzzles

##### Back to School!

The subjects were:

- 1 MuSiC; 2 SoCioLoGY;
- 3 eNGLiSH; 4 BioLoGY;
- 5 HiSToRY; 6 LaTiN; 7 aRT;
- 8 SCieNCe

##### General Knowledge

1 Who wrote 'Little Women'?

*Louisa Mary Alcott*

2 Dispur is the capital of which North-east state in India? *Assam*

3 What does the 'W' stand for in George W. Bush?

*Walker*

4 Who is the daughter of Zeus and Hera who was the cupbearer to the gods on Mount Olympus? *Hebe*

##### March Quiz

A lot of chocolate is consumed at Easter so here are a few relevant questions to distract you (my apologies to anyone with dietary issues and thanks to Penny from Lumley WI for sharing the questions).

1. How many Easter eggs are sold in the UK every year?  
60 million, 70 million, 80 million.
2. Where was the UK's first Easter egg produced?

Work out the names of the chocolates!

1. Clever people
2. High class thoroughfare
3. Price on a person's head
4. Locals in Malta
5. Food for felines

he was upstairs – would he slide down the banister rail? I'm happy to report that this is one question I did not find the answer to! The fields we children used to play in have been made over to much needed housing – as has a large part of the Factory Site.

When we reached Reeds Lane, we turned left and walked past my aunt and uncle's house. It was good to see that the rose I bought them is still in the front garden. At the end of Reed's Lane is Leasow Castle which is now a hotel. They have blocked access to the coastal path, so we had to follow the road for a short distance after which a footpath took us to the shore. The group split at the café, three of us took advantage of coffee and entertainment by a flock of young starlings looking for titbits from the customers while showing off their iridescent plumage.

## Joy

{Editor's extra: See the end section of the Newsletter for opening times of Leasowe Lighthouse}

## Visits

### Forthcoming

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

Mon Apr 29th

A coach trip to **Ludlow** on market day.

Full day trip, £22 p.p. if we book. All our seats have been sold but a reserve list has been opened. Alternatively, you can book separately but it slightly more expensive (£24 p.p.).

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.

## Reports

Tour of Liverpool Town Hall,

Thursday 14th March.

This month the Days Out Interest group enjoyed a tour of Liverpool Town Hall, organised by Stephanie.



The Town Hall was built in 1749, the original architect being John Wood (of Georgian Bath fame) who had recently completed the Exchange Hall in Bristol. Bristol was Liverpool's great trade rival at this time, so, of course, our Town Hall had to be more opulent to prove a point. Opulent it is! You are overwhelmed by the riches on display right from the beginning of the tour.

The wonderful elegant grand staircase is said to have been the inspiration for the main staircase on the Titanic. The chandeliers throughout the building were the largest I have ever seen and the larger of the two ballrooms reminded me of Versailles: gold decorates the high ceiling, and huge mirrors at either end of the room would have made it appear to the dancers as if it went on for ever.

One of the rooms contained portraits of early mayors of Liverpool. James, our very knowledgeable

guide, told us stories about their social action in the early C19th when there was so much poverty and disease in the City. In the context of the wealth that surrounded us as he spoke, it was particularly poignant: the role of an ordinary woman, Kitty Wilkinson, inspiring the mayor to provide free wash houses and baths for so many in poor housing. A mayor who employed the very first district nurse in the UK. Set against this was the story of George Case, the slave-owner at the heart of the Zong Massacre scandal, whose ship's captain threw slaves overboard to their death and shocked the public: one of the steps along the way to the abolition of slavery.

A highlight of the tour for me was going out onto the balcony at the front of the Hall, in the footsteps of Queens, successful football teams and the Beatles! What I liked was that James our guide talked about the original six streets of Liverpool and showed us from our high vantage point where they were and how prominent the Town Hall would have been in the C18th, before most of the buildings we see around it now were built.

Another highlight was the Council Chamber, which looked to me like a historic Court, again everything of the finest quality. All in all, it was a very informative and enjoyable tour. Afterwards, I walked along High Street next to the Hall to see the marks from the WW2 bomb which fell there, so narrowly missing the Town Hall and to see the Nelson statue in Exchange Flags at closer quarters, following our guide's description.



I'd certainly recommend the tour if you are interested in history. As a recent incomer to Merseyside, I found it fascinating.

**Alison**

**Photos by Ken**

## **Meetings**

March 4th

### **Radio 1 – The Early Years**

*Brian Cullen*

Brian is a local lad, originally from Tranmere. He now lives in Mold. He still does a Programme 'Radio Caroline Flash Back'.

Pirate Radios broadcast between 1964 and 1967. They were a response to a shortage of pop music on BBC radio. Pirate DJs included Kenny Everet and Tony Blackburn (still going strong at 81).

The BBC's response to Pirate Radio was to rebrand the existing stations with Radio 2, 3 and 4 with pop music being played on Radio 247 which later became Radio 1. The BBC did recruit 2 Pirate DJs: Tony Blackburn and Kenny Evert. They thought that since it was the BBC that they had better turn up for work wearing suits and ties – they were surprised to find that they were rather overdressed since many of the staff were wearing fashionable Carnaby Street clothing!

Radio 1 started broadcasting on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1967 when Tony Blackburn played 'Flowers in The Rain' by The Move. The second song was 'Massachusetts' by The Bee Gees. The song which was No1 in the charts was 'The Last Waltz' by Engelbert Humperdinck. There were restrictions on the amount of time that records could be played on air – there had to be broadcast time available for live music.

The first DJs were an older group of men who had their own 'specialisation' or jingles: Brian Matthew, Pete Murray (Late Night Extra), Alan Freeman, David Jacobs, Jimmy Young (Recipe of the Day) and Terry Wogan (Fight on Flab). Wirral contributed with John Peel who had a late evening



programme 'Night Ride'.

Annie Nightingale was the first female DJ. While Janice Long was the first to have a daytime programme. In the early 80s, she had 19million listeners.

Notable unplanned events included Dave Lee Travis resigning on air and Kenny Everett made what he thought to be a light-hearted remark about Mary Paton, the wife of the then Minister of Transport, passing her driving test by giving the Minister £5. Kenny was sacked.

Efforts to promote Radio 1 included the Road Show which toured the country. Alan Freeman was put in charge. There as also a Radio 1 Annual.

Local Radio also started. Perhaps Billy Butler is Radio Merseyside's most famous presenter. In London, LBC was the first commercial radio.

Change to Radio 1 came when John Burt appointed Matthew Bannister as the controller of Radio 1. He came with the intention of bringing the station back to its original purpose which was to entertain young people. He thought that the presenters, many of whom had been broadcasting since the start of Radio 1, had aged with their listeners and didn't reflect the original purpose. So, he set about replacing the old gang, some of whom moved with their audience to Radio 2, with new younger presenters. Symbolically, Tony Blackburn's last record on Radio 1 was 'Flowers in the Rain'.

## **Steph**

### **Thomas Coram and the Foundling Hospital**

*Judith Foran.*

Judith gave a very interesting and enlightening talk, taking us through Thomas Coram's life and the founding of the Foundling Hospital.

Thomas was born in 1668 but his mother died when he was 3. Later his father remarried and moved to London. He was sent to be a cabin boy but when his father set up a timber yard by the Thames, he recalled Thomas to be an apprentice. The business was successful as Wren was rebuilding St Pauls and timber was needed.

After finishing his apprenticeship, Thomas went to Liverpool where William of Orange was building a navy. There was a lot of fraud in the building trade and Thomas was paramount in detecting the fraud.

Eventually he went to Boston to set up ship building and the transport of timber. Here he met and married his wife, Eunice. Unfortunately, his strong Anglican religious views enraged his neighbours and they threatened to burn his house down.

At 36 he returned to London and worked to clear his debts. At 44 he joined Trinity House and was involved in charitable works.

He retired at 60, noticing the poverty, unemployment and gin abuse with babies left to die in the street, he was horrified. He walked and knocked on the doors of influential men for support but with little success. However, an appeal to the emotions of influential women brought about a petition to the King.

At the age of 70 Thomas was granted a Royal Charter for the Foundling Hospital which led to a hospital being built.

Babies were wet nursed by foster mothers. At the age of 5 children returned to the hospital to be educated. At the age of 10 they could return to their foster parents.

At first 28 children were baptised and given new names. Demand was so high that a ballot system was introduced, with only 20 children admitted each month. Each child registered and pieces of cloth pinned to a book. The mother was given a piece of cloth too so that she could be linked to her child.

To raise money, Hogarth painted portraits and encouraged other artists to display their works in the hospital.

In 1741 land was bought in Bloomsbury to house 400 children. The wealthy would visit and give donations.

#### Health.

Meat was served 3 times a day with porridge, milk and vegetables. Physicians gave their services for free. In 1744, they introduced smallpox vaccinations.

#### Education.

Younger children were taught to read, older girls spinning, knitting and needlework. Boys learnt ropemaking, gardening and military marching. Religion was also taught.

Handel raised money for the hospital. He donated an organ and staged the Messiah there.

John Stanley, a blind musician, taught blind children music. Charles Dickens, who grew up near the Hospital, also raised funds.

When the Hospital was eventually demolished. In 1936, some of the land was used to make Coram Fields which is a park for children. Indeed, it was the first public playground for children in London.

Adults are only allowed in if they are accompanied by a child. There is also now a museum.

#### **Ros**

More information can be found on these sites:

<https://www.coram.org.uk/about-us/our-story/>

<https://coramsfields.org/about-us/>

## **Around Wirral and its Environs**

### **Williamson Art Gallery**

#### 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.

### **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**

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 (our Chair).

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

[lighthouse/](#)

# 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)