

# u3a Wirral

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

Dear Wirral u3a member,  
I lived for nearly 30 years in the Netherlands where the tradition is that you can wish a person a 'happy new year' at any point during the month of January when meeting them for the first time since the year started. So, I hope you will allow me the indulgence of drawing on another country's tradition so that I can wish all of you a happy, healthy, successful in reaching your goals (keeping your resolutions!) and, above all, peaceful 2024.

This newsletter is an amalgamated November and December edition since I was away for quite a few weeks during those two months. Nevertheless, several of you have contributed items for this edition and I am very grateful for the material you have provided. I think having different perspectives and insights makes for an interesting and enjoyable read.

There is some good news and some sad news. First, a new group is starting next week: Spanish conversation. Please see below and there will be more at Monday's meeting.

The sad news, as many of you will already know, is the passing of Diane who was a very active member of Wirral u3a and a past chair. Several committee members attending the funeral in which we heard a very fitting eulogy to a remarkable lady. Our thoughts are with Derek.

Kind regards

**Joy, Newsletter Editor**

## Chair's message

Hello Everyone,

I'm so sorry I can't be with you on your first day back, but I'm still thinking of you all in stormy UK while I'm in stormy Australia. My thoughts are particularly with Derek after Diane's sudden passing. We shall miss her so much.

I hope you have an enjoyable meeting on the 8th and look forward to seeing you on the 22nd.

I wish you all a peaceful and healthy 2024.

Best wishes

**Janet** 🐼 🐼 🐼

## Meetings

### 8<sup>th</sup> January

The Great American Songbook.

Roger Brown

### 22<sup>nd</sup> January

The Trial of Dr Tomanzi

Angela Brabin

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## Coffee Corner Moment

### October's puzzle answers

For each group of words which word do they have in common?

1. Alligator; Drops; Prickly: *Pear*
2. Ginger; Pea; Pine: *Nut*
3. Day; House; Wide: *Open*
4. Extract; Single; Whisky: *Malt*

### New Year puzzle

The following consonants need some vowels to give the names of some musical terms.

1. SCL
2. MLDY
3. VBRT
4. CDNZ
5. YDL
6. FLSTT

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## 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**

### Spanish Conversation Group

We are pleased to announce that a Spanish Conversation Group is starting on Wednesday 10th January. We will meet, weekly, in the cafe of the Williamson Art Gallery at 10am. The Group is led by Wirral u3a member, Victor.

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## Meetings

### The Mary Celeste

October 30th

Derek Arnold treated us all to a riveting talk (pun?) on the Mary Celeste on 30th October which 'went down' very well. We've all heard the tale of the Mary Celeste aimlessly floating, uncrewed on the ocean 400 miles east of the Azores. In the mess room, the table was laid for breakfast, coffee was in the cups still hot and there was a fire in the galley stove. The door to the captain's cabin was smashed and papers strewn everywhere. There had been a mighty struggle and charts, compass and log were all missing. There was also a large red blood stain on the rug of the captain's cabin. This has proved to be one of the longest running sea mysteries of all time. Tales of shark attacks, pirates, sea monsters, abduction by aliens, Bermuda Triangle theories have, over the years captivated people. The truth, according to Mr Arnold is far more intriguing.

The Mary Celeste was found by the Dei Gratia, a ship commanded by David Moorhouse who knew captain and crew of the Mary Celeste and he immediately sailed both ships to Gibraltar. Accused himself of murder and piracy for insurance purposes, there was no proof but a witness account told by a suspicious 'surviving' passenger, Able Fosdyke appeared in the Strand Magazine. This was ultimately written up by the great Arthur Conan Doyle.

The true story involves characters of whom Charles Dickens would be proud with names like Benjamin Spoonerbridge and his quirky musical wife, Mrs Spoonerbridge whose 'only child' was a harmonium. There's also a first mate Mr Huddle whose night watch was always disturbed by Mrs Spoonerbridge's singing. Stir into this mix three vicious farmer boys, 700 barrels of wine, raw alcohol, kidnapping (shanghaiing), insurance fraud, a dead woman, a dyslexic captain, suicide and a plot that would make James Bond seem like Noddy and you will understand why we were all fascinated by the true story.

Lesley

### Experiences as a Registrar

Nov 13th

Carole Codd

A registrar has a legal responsibility to collect and record details of all births, deaths, marriages and, more recently, civil partnerships in the UK. Carole explained how the requirements were first set out in the 1837 Act for the Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths and how there have been changes over time. The Act was introduced for a number of reasons, including people who did not

want to marry in church but wanted formal recognition of their commitment. There were also issues related to inheritance. In 1753, the Hardwick Act had been introduced which required for the first time a formal ceremony of marriage which, at least in England, to be regarded as legal had to be performed in an Anglican Church after banns were called. (Scotland had different laws – hence why Gretna Green became synonymous with marriage ceremonies without the calling of the banns.) Interestingly, Jews and Quakers were exempt from compliance with the act. Roman Catholics would go through two ceremonies, one in their own church and one in an Anglican Church. The Royal Family apparently are not subject to compliance with either Act.

Possibly one of the most famous people to be a Registrar of Births and Deaths is Emily Pankhurst who after the death of her husband in 1898 needed an income so became a registrar in Rusholme, Manchester. Indeed, she would have been one of the first women to be employed in this capacity. This was at a time when women were prevented from entering many professions, including medicine and law, and being MPs and undertakers! Given Emily's radical views about women's position in society it is no surprise she chose to challenge the status quo.

There have been a number of changes to interpretation and implementation of the Act since 1837 which reflect changes in society over time. Originally, a marriage had to be in fixed structure, so if not an Anglican church, then the Registry Office. However, Anglican cathedrals are not legally allowed to perform marriages, since they are not parish churches. To get married in a cathedral requires special permission from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Since 1971, marriages under certain circumstance can be held in other venues than a registry office when one of the parties to marry could not be physically present, for example, if they are in hospital or prison. Marriages now can be performed outside a building, but they must be held at a venue. The London Eye is a popular choice.

In 2013, the law in England and Wales was changed to allow civil marriage for same-sex couples. Another modification, which reflects social changes, is that April Ashley, who had been born a man but had undergone sex realignment surgery to become a woman, was allowed to change her birth certificate to recognise that she was a woman.

Carole finished on a light-hearted note, by telling us that registrars will allow the registration of any name as long as it doesn't cause offence. She told us that a Liverpool footballer had his daughter named as Delfina, which is an anagram of Anfield. While an Everton Fan gave his daughter the names Eva-Tony-Ann!

### **Joy**

*{PS I found the following website by the UK's National Archives which gives some more information:*

<https://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/early-civil-registration/>

*The 1835 Act did not apply in Ireland, so my Irish grandmother had no record of her actual birth date!}*

### **Sculptures in Port Sunlight**

27<sup>th</sup> November

Brian Anderson

We had a very interesting talk on the sculptures of Port Sunlight accompanied by Brian's wonderful photographs. His photographs were able to show in great detail parts of the sculptures one might not have noticed when giving them a cursory glance.

Lord Lever (1851-1924) commissioned most of the work. He was an Art collector, politician and philanthropist, providing housing for his workers. A small dock was built in 1890 to offload the whale oil in Bromborough as Levers was the largest soap factory in Britain at the time. Unfortunately, this

help decimate the whale population.

In Lord Lever's opening speech to the Lady Lever Art gallery, he said "Art can be an inspiration to everyone". There were over 12,000 objects in the Art Gallery.

The war Memorial was unveiled in 1921 and sculptured by William Goscombe John. It consists of three bronze soldiers, 2 women and 6 children. The figures are really vital and lifelike, while the children's faces reflect the horror of war.

In Bath Street is the sphinx statue which is quite small. It has a sun dial and represents the Relief of Mafeking.

The Leverhulme Memorial was sculptured by William Reid Dick in 1930. It is an obelisk with four figures. The figure on the top represents Inspiration while those around the base represent Charity, Industry, Education and Art.

In the Gallery are two busts, one each of Lever and his wife, sculptured by his friend Edward Onslow Ford.

The most modern sculpture is the fountain statue "Sea Spirit" by Charles Wheeler, which depicts a Triton and child triton riding a sea horse.

The tomb of Lord and Lady Lever by Goscombe John is in Christ Church, the village church.

Poignantly, this has two children at the base, an unhappy boy looking for reassurance from his older sister.

**Ros**

### **End of Year Entertainment**

Our end of year get together took place at the Williamson Gallery on 11th December. Chris had laid on mince pies and shortbread biscuits as well as the usual fare. She'd also found time to buy a bottle of port and a bottle of Baileys for the raffle this time, as well as other goodies. Chris gave a short address to the meeting reflecting our sadness at the news of the passing of Diane, an active Wirral U3A member and past Chair.

Our entertainment came in the form of a group of talented musicians and singers from Wallasey U3A who had offered to fill-in when the original band had cancelled. Their mix of music included songs from the sixties through to the eighties played on a variety of instruments including a banjo and a 12-string guitar. Noteworthy songs included a lovely rendition of Dolly Parton's 'Jolene' with Jill and Pat singing, and Tom Jones' 'Delilah' with Trevor supplying the vocals. One or two ladies seemed to be disappointed that his shirt was left chastely buttoned up. A spirited accompaniment on the kazoo gave the right atmosphere for the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah band's 'I'm the Urban Spaceman' which most of the audience seemed to remember. This must mean something, though I'm not sure what!



I must say, I really enjoyed their music. Just seeing people playing 'live' to an audience is such an uplifting experience. Who knows, perhaps we may see them at our summer extravaganza?  
Dave

## Visits

### Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King Liverpool

I grew up in Liverpool and as I approached my teenage years it would have been hard to ignore the unusual structure that was emerging onto the Liverpool landscape, affectionately to become known as 'Paddy's Wigwam.' This term has stuck. It looks as if the Irish heritage and influence of the Cathedral will never be lost amongst the population of Liverpool. When the cathedral was being built in the days of the early sixties in Liverpool the remnants of the WW2 blitz were still evident, reminding us of difficult post war times alongside stark signs of deprivation and poverty in the city centre and surrounds. The new cathedral stood in utter contrast to the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral just down the road. I remember many a discussion and debate about this new edition to our landscape, however it has become a hallmark of reverence and beauty for many people where there are two spiritual homes in the city of Liverpool for its people and worldwide. Whatever your faith or non-faith or somewhere in between the Cathedral conjures a sense of transcendent memories that pervade our consciousness. So, whether you like the Metropolitan Cathedral or not I'll be interested in your views because as we know only too well, Merseysiders always have an opinion!

On November 2nd, also known as All Souls Day, a spirited group of Souls from Wirral U3A visited the Metropolitan Cathedral on a rather inclement and very rainy day. Chris (me), Ros, Eileen and Dave B braved the weather and met in the foyer of the Cathedral to be greeted by Tommy, an experienced guide for many years, who led us at a gentle pace through the 14 chapels present in the wonderful body of the church. The cathedral displays each chapel in the name of a saint – all with accompanying pieces of art and/or windows. Visitors can opt to choose an audio tape to guide you round however we liked our guide who considered our different needs by allowing resting pauses and giving succinct information regarding the saints and the pieces of art that embellish the chapels as well as the magnificent windows exemplifying a range of colours and hues which convey a spiritual meaning.

According to the History, Heritage and Learning section on the Cathedral's website – the 'Spirit of the Cathedral is deeply embedded in its fascinating history – a tale of determination, tenacity and conviction that despite the odds, saw architects, builders and craftsmen, residents and church elders work together to fulfil their holy ambition – to create a place of special, deeply spiritual resonance for all who use it.....' the striking design of the present Cathedral is actually the fourth attempt by the Catholic Church in the North West of England to build a mother church for the Liverpool Diocese – and the culmination of a story that stretches back over half a century.

If you are really interested in the fascinating story of the history of the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, I can recommend viewing the display in the nave of the church and St Lutyens Crypt. It is a graphic illustration of the building of the Cathedral starting in the early 20c to its completion in 1967. I have also found Wikipedia very informative and detailed if you wish to pursue your own research. Undoubtedly for some, the actual visceral experience of being there outweighs a google search, nevertheless the two should complement each other.

Some important features you might like to further research:-

- St Lutyens Crypt (below the Cathedral – its history and design, well worth looking at the plans displayed in the Crypt).
- Sir Frederick Gibberd's design of the cathedral over laid upon St Lutyens Crypt – present construction began in 1962 and completed 1967; a remarkable achievement.
- Organ - operates by electro-pneumatic motion. Built by JW Walker and Sons and only completed 2 days before the Cathedral Opening in 1967.
- Interior design – particularly the Tower displaying large areas of stained glass in 3 colours yellow, blue and red representing the Trinity.



- Blessed Sacrament Chapel which lies underneath the Organ. Other chapels include the Lady Chapel and the Chapel of St Joseph also the Baptistry.
- The Four Bells mounted on the façade as you walk up the steps to the Cathedral.
- The Altar – made of white marble and placed in the middle of the interior on the circular platform.

After our visit the four of us briskly moved towards the Everyman Theatre for our lunch and refreshments. It was good to be able to visit the theatre and enjoy some hot food or maybe that is an exaggeration as Dave might tell you. Lots to remember and fortunately there are plenty of sites on-line to give you more insight. Christine

## Poetry Corner

When trying to find a poem about December, most seem to describe winters not like the one we have experienced in 2023. I chose a poem by someone I think of more as a novelist than as a poet – although Wikipedia informs me that he published 'A Children's Garden of Verses'!

### Winter-Time

Robert Louis Stevenson

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,  
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;  
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,  
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,  
At morning in the dark I rise;  
And shivering in my nakedness,  
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit  
To warm my frozen bones a bit;  
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore  
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap  
Me in my comforter and cap;  
The cold wind burns my face, and blows  
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;  
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;  
And tree and house, and hill and lake,  
Are frosted like a wedding cake.

Just when you thought you escaped Christmas – here are some Cracker Jokes

1. Why do humming birds hum?  
Because they don't know the words.
2. When should you buy a bird?  
When it is going cheep.
3. What do you call a crate of ducks?  
A crate of quackers.

One Wirral u3a member let us know that after all the eating she did over the holidays, she's happy to report that her socks still fit.

Another item from last year: visit to St George's Hall in November (photo by Ken)

