

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

For those who do not know me too well I thought a little background would help introduce myself. I moved to Wrexham at 18 to train as a Business Studies teacher at Cartrefle College, married a Wrexham lad and went on to teach at a nearby secondary school for the next 35 years before retiring to look after our granddaughter.

Born in Chesterfield I am sure the picture below will confirm your thoughts that this is the town with the Crooked Spire. A symbolic structure and famous landmark synonymous with the town of Chesterfield since 1362.



The famous crooked spire in Chesterfield (Image: Steve Woodhead)

Strictly speaking it isn't crooked but more twisted and leaning. The construction of the tower occurred at a time when the country and county of Derbyshire had been ravaged by the 'Black Death'. It is suggested that due to this there was a dearth in skilled, experienced labour, which may have resulted in less than ideal practices. However the most plausible (and arguably least interesting) explanation is the use of unseasoned wood during its construction and a lack of cross bracing (for all you architects and builders amongst us). A more interesting legend is that the spire, surprised, turned to look at a virgin bride, who was getting married in the church. It's suggested that the spire will return to its perpendicular state when another virgin bride is married in the church.

Perhaps another well known suggestion is that a mischievous devil wrapped his tale around the spire. The church bells were rung to startle the unwelcome guest and, while this strategy worked, the damage left as the devil made its flustered getaway was there for all to see.

I leave you to make up your own mind. Enjoy this current issue of our Newsletter and please remember anyone can contribute.

Lynn Jones
Chair Wrexham u3a

U3A Annual Membership Fees 1st May 2025 to 30th April 2026
Membership renewal £15 New Members from January £15 until April 2026
e-mail: memwrexu3a@outlook.com

Please e-mail items for **October 2025 newsletter** to newsrexu3a@outlook.com by
20th September 2025.

**Issues of the Newsletter will now be released in January (winter) April (spring)
July (summer) and October (Autumn)**

Monthly Talks At The Memorial Hall. Wrexham

July 15th 2pm Chris Morris - Strains of Nostalgia.

British Light Music with lots of well known tunes and a fun quiz.

August 19th. Treasure Hunt. (no Talk)

Details on the website. This event can be booked in August.

September 16th 2 pm. Ian Lucas Digital Gangsters.

October 21st 2 pm. Mick Crumplin.

Naval Surgery in the year of Trafalgar.

November 18th 2pm. Stacey Deere - The Wellbeing Hub in Wrexham.

Digital Photography Group

For the group's final meeting in June, before a summer break, a number of members visited Plas Newydd, the home of the Ladies of Llangollen for a photoshoot.

The weather was just right and the members strolled along the riverside walk created by the 2 ladies, before coming back up to the house and gardens to complete the photoshoot.



Afterwards, the group visited the onsite tea room which is highly recommended.

There is no charge to visit the gardens or the tea room, so it is really worth a visit.

The images taken will be reviewed at the group's next meeting in September.

Ken Jones

DOG WALKING GROUP.

I am a four legged member of the U3A and on perusing the latest newsletter, I realise we canines are not represented at all. I feel our voices (or barks) should be heard and I have taken it upon myself to correct that.

We may be a small group, but nonetheless an integral part of the U3A, as without our presence there would not be a Dog Walking Group: a human cannot take part without the essential doggy partner, so who is the most important participant?

I wanted to share with everyone, our enthusiasm and delight with these outings, Quil and her human do a wonderful job finding interesting, lead-free places to explore; scent and trails galore.

In our March walk we enjoyed a lovely stroll along the canal towpath, it was a beautiful, hot day, the water looked so inviting, I could happily have jumped in for a quick swim, but as I didn't wish to stress my human, I resisted the urge.

Along the way, we stopped for a chat with other dogs who were enjoying the sun: don't you find everyone is much friendlier when the sun is shining, even the humans?

On leaving the towpath, we proceeded to climb a short, narrow, uphill path, where we met a large horse and his human, about to pass through a gate, at the top. Although the horse was very friendly, he was 27 years old - had seen it all before, been there, done that and, he was totally unperturbed by our near presence; but to me from my short stature, he looked like a giant, so you can guess who gave way and retreated, happy to retrace their steps.

Reaching the end of the walk, we were happy to rest outside the Chapel Tea Rooms, having a relaxing lie down, contentment flowing from the top of my head to the tip of my tail.

In the past, we have visited Minera Quarry Nature Reserve, where some fascinating, historical mining sites remain, it is a renowned geological site, home to a 440-million-year-old seabed, fossils can be seen throughout the area.

This is all very interesting for our human companions, but it was the flora and fauna that set my senses buzzing. So much open space to explore, I zigzagged from one spot to another, following spoor trails, here, there, and everywhere, only to stop dead in my tracks as other scents assailed my super sensitive nose, but from different directions. Which trail to follow next? It became quite intoxicating, I was very aware of an "atmosphere" in my surroundings, was it the spirits, of long dead creatures, that still roamed this prehistoric wilderness, reaching out.....?

The February walk was just as exciting, we crossed the Chirk Aqueduct (don't look down Quil!): we ambled through some fields, then down some steep steps to meet the railway level crossing situated in the small valley below. Scary, I was on high alert, listening for any oncoming trains; the steps out of the valley were steep and awkward and it was a relief to reach the top. The best bit came last, a rather large tree had blown down in the recent storms, blocking the path; it wasn't only the fallen trunk we had to negotiate, but fighting through the huge, overhanging branches was tantamount to hacking through a jungle!

We canines loved it, we were up, over and away, exploring and plunging amongst the devastation wrought by the wild storm. Behind us, we could hear the sounds of exertion as our humans battled their way clear of the impeding foliage, but they were game old birds and didn't give up!

It's a dog's life and what a life! The freedom to explore our beautiful countryside, without leash or hindrance, to experience life on the wild side - more like this please!

Mollie Sprocker.



Friendships

We started as a Strollers group of twelve u3a members in Wrexham but by now we are eight members of a friendship group outside the official Wrexham u3a organisation. Around once a month we organise a short-by now very short-walk and a visit to somewhere interesting usually followed by a meal/ coffee and cake.

Our latest venture took us to a 1950s museum in Denbigh. Do check how many of the items you recognise in the photographs. Nostalgia at its best!

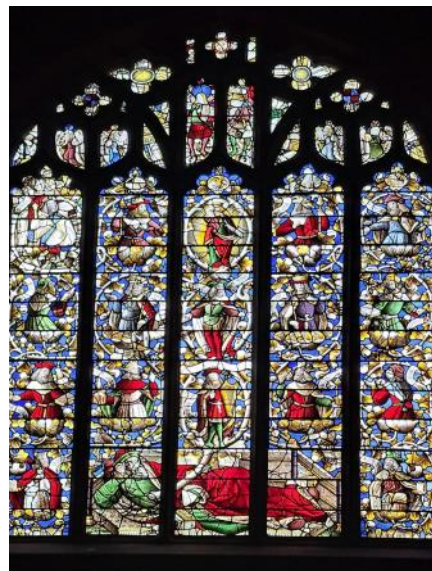
We moved on to Llanrhaedr (half way between Denbigh and Ruthin) where we had a most enjoyable lunch at The Lodge.

We then made our way to St. Dyfnog's church to see the magnificent Jesse window, said to be the best in Wales, if not the UK. We followed this with a walk up to the 'healing' well. The water is said to cure a number of ailments though we did not test it. Having said that, we did see a young couple from Australia filling some large plastic bottles which they told me they would be drinking because they had read it was totally pure. I hope they were right to be so confident!

Any suggestions for a future visit most welcome.

Janet Lewis

I will just mention here that recently one of our founder members, Gareth Vaughan Williams, died recently at the Maelor hospital and is very much missed by us all as a dear friend -and as a historian.



STROLLERS 2

Our walks this year began in February with a walk along the Llangollen Canal to the Horseshoe Falls. Once again, as you can see, our intrepid strollers braved the weather once again.



Our choice on this occasion was because a member, on our previous walk here, had said that it would be nice to come when the snowdrops were out in force. Going at this time of year, with a walk up to the Churchyard, really did not disappoint as you can see.

We also agreed to another walk at Ellesmere, even though we got rather wet on our last attempt. They say that lightening doesn't strike in the same place twice but, on the day, we thought we were in danger of proving this wrong. However, as we set off the weather finally decided to be kind to us and we had a lovely stroll and delightful refreshments in the Boathouse.

There is a walk every month if you wish to join us, just apply on the website - all welcome.

Lynn Jones

Rainfall over the Aran Mountain Range.

Over the Aran Mountain range,
Near to the town of Bala
A fine rain falls.
It is misty and grey.
And yet the sun shines through,
Like a painting.
I shiver when I look up at the mountains.
Golden rays shine through the haze,
through the veneer of rain.
Suddenly, without warning,
The deluge...
A heavy downpour falling in torrents.
Everything is sodden,
Fields are flooded,
Water tables rise,
River banks burst.
Relentless, incessant rainfall upon the Arans..

Poem written by one of our members

Wrexham U3A - Coach Outings



For the months of April to June 25, three coach trips were arranged and, on each occasion, it was good to see that the coach was near full and also good weather prevailed.

Thanks, as usual must go to Margaret Hadwin Smith for arranging the outings.

In April the trip was to the National Trust property Dunham Massey where the early spring sun shone. In May the trip took the members to Samlesbury Hall which is an outstanding Tudor style mansion house and this followed with a visit to Bents Garden Centre. Finally for the quarter in June a trip was made to The National Arboretum where 80 years from the end of World War 2 was being commemorated.

Ken Jones



The National Arboretum



Samlesbury Hall

Dunham Massey



Heritage Group

The group continued its monthly visits and for the quarter ending June 25 the following visits took place. The visits are arranged on a rotational basis with a number of members taking the lead for each visit, so many thanks to them for their time and effort.

April 25 - Gladstone Pottery Stoke on Trent

Over 20 members joined the visit for a guided tour of the pottery which was excellent and everyone enjoyed the day. The pottery is the location for The Great Pottery Throw Down competition featured on TV.



May 25 - Overleigh Cemetery Guided Tour Chester.

Again, a well-attended visit and we all thought we would be soaking wet due to rain that morning, but the skies cleared for a very pleasant morning. The guide took us around the cemetery and we were told some extraordinary stories about some of those laid to rest there. For example, Mary Jonas who had 15 sets of twins, Edward Langtry the husband of Edward VII's mistress and William Bidulph who made his own coffin from matchsticks.



June 25 - Shrewsbury Museum and Guided Town Tour

This time we visited Shropshire to visit Shrewsbury Museum and Gallery and to be given a guided tour of the town. This again was very interesting and the guide Robert took the group to areas of Shrewsbury that some of us did not know existed.

He gave us a fairly detailed history of Shrewsbury and its importance to the area. Following the tour there was time for another visit to the museum, lunch and shopping, or all three.

Ken Jones



Connections

This morning I read an article in our daily newspaper which included the words **'cooking utensils can magically connect us to loved ones who are no longer with us'** and I thought of my own son who recently perished, in the best possible sense of the word, one of my late mother's mixing bowls which I had kept and to which I felt an indefinable attachment. Gareth loved his Mamgu and could remember the two of them making jam tarts. 'Cold hands, warm heart and good for making pastry' she would say as they poured flour into the bowl. These were words I'd often heard my own grandmother say to me under slightly different circumstances when rationing still existed, nothing was wasted and everything carefully measured.

I thought of that same grandmother, my 'Mamo' who liked her cups of tea-usually accompanied by a Nice biscuit - in what she called a proper china cup. I've kept just the one cup and saucer which very much reminds me that she was born in the Victorian era.

Not exactly a cooking utensil but very much related is a sturdy but elegant cutwork tablecloth which, as a teenager, I remember my mother bringing home from a chapel ladies meeting where they were addressed by someone from a missionary society. The tablecloths were for sale in aid of that society, a Bible Society I think but I don't suppose I took that much notice of it at the time though I saw it brought out for use on special occasions. It was only when I 'inherited' it that, out of curiosity, I studied the label only to discover it had been produced in an area of India that we had recently visited. What were the chances of that? I wish I'd looked at that label before we'd visited Kerala!

I have a bean slicer which still works well after fifty nine years of marriage. Though I probably was not over excited by this as a wedding present it brings back fond memories of the Gwendraeth valley where my parents lived for many years, where we got married and recollections of the many kind people I met there including those who gifted us the, at the time, slightly underwhelming bean slicer

Most precious of all is a book in which my mother noted her favourite recipes. She was rightly famed for her bara brith and has noted several versions. One type of bara brith made on special occasions was outstanding and this was a recipe she did not share. I came to understand that there was alcohol involved!

I look at her handwriting and somehow she lives on. In these recipes I hear her voice instructing me on how to make boiled fruit cake, faggots and teisen lap.

Amazing how everyday objects can keep generations in contact no matter that time has meant we are forever apart.

Janet Lewis

Please email your own recollections to our hardworking newsletter editor. We'd love to read them.

