

Secret Chester



Blue Badge Guide, Lyn, took **Local History Group 6** on a walk around the parts of Chester that visitors rarely manage to see. Having met her outside the Town Hall, we were privileged to access areas that are normally behind locked gates or doors and as a result of size can only accept small groups.

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The Water Tower, is probably the least-altered of Chester's medieval towers. It was built in the early 14th Century, attached by a spur wall to the City Walls and it originally projected into the River Dee. First called the New Tower, it was constructed during the reign of King Edward, who was busy building castles to control the Welsh and the city believed itself vulnerable to attack. £100 was spent creating a tower with an octagonal design and windows

Please remember that there is no Newsletter, Monthly Meeting, nor Coffee Morning in August. All resume in September.



on every wall, intended to protect what was then the important port of Chester, monitor the movements of shipping and to ensure that the custom dues were paid. However, the river silted up by the end of the 16th Century, moving its course further to the west and the tower became landlocked. Consequently it had many incarnations including a storehouse and museum, despite being described in 1728 as "useless and neglected."

Passing along the walls, Lyn pointed out Building 1761. 1761 was the date that the building, the original City Hospital was completed and the building remained in use as such until the opening of the Countess of Chester in the 1990s. The original stained glass windows with

illustrations of the virtues "Faith, Hope and Charity" were removed on the founding of the National Health Service as it was believed that "Charity" was an inappropriate word for such an institution. An upper room was pointed out, where Dr Haygarth, separated victims of infectious diseases from non-infectious cases. This segregation, in spacious, airy wards with a regime of scrupulous cleanliness resulted in an immediate reduction in the death rate and Haygarth began the "modern" practice of isolation wards. Amazingly, his proposals were met with opposition by those who saw it as an unnecessary precaution.

Chester Racecourse, was originally the site of the infamous and bloody Chester Football Match. The game was so violent that it was banned by the city, to be replaced by horse racing, with the on-site restaurant named "1539" after the first year that horse racing took place there. The course, known as the Roodee, is the oldest racecourse in England still in use on its original site. It is also thought to be the smallest racecourse of significance in England, being 1 mile and 1 furlong long. The site was once a harbour, but was closed as the river silted, making navigation impossible. Towards the centre of the course is a raised mound, decorated by a small cross, known as a "rood". Roodee is a corruption of "Rood Eye," meaning "The Island of the Cross." The first race held was by consent of the Mayor Gee, whose name is alleged to have led to the use of the term "gee-gee" for horses.

Opposite the racecourse is the Architect Public House, named in honour of Thomas Harrison, a prolific Georgian architect. He designed the building as his own residence and lived there for many years, working on the design of the Grosvenor Bridge and much of Chester Castle, among many other classical structures. The original part of the building retains cosy, domestic rooms.

When we arrived at Chester Castle, Lyn struggled to release the jammed locks to the

courtyard housing the 12th-century Agricola Tower, the first stone gateway to Chester Castle, which had been founded by William the Conqueror in 1070. The tower's first floor holds the very small chapel of St Mary de Castro. It has a heavy, copper-plated door, dating from when the chapel was used as a gunpowder store. Two hundred years after being used as a warehouse, the crypt and chapel in the Agricola Tower were re-consecrated for the use of the Cheshire Regiment and it is used for special events, such as weddings. As we left, Lyn was unable to secure the door to the Agricola Tower or the compound, despite assistance from some of the group, so we bid a grateful farewell to her at this, the last stop on a wonderfully informative tour of Secret Chester.

Stan Lowe

Looking for help?

If you are looking for help, the following may be of interest to Formby U3A members.

Age UK - is the largest charity working with and for older people.

Befrienders - Sefton - Age Concern Liverpool and Sefton is the local charity dedicated to providing practical help and support to improve the well-being of people aged 50 and over. As well as providing support, they are welcoming volunteers to become Befrienders to join their Befriending and Re-ablement team.

Government Direct - is a government website giving information and advice on a large range of subjects including retirement, pension planning, health, benefits, care and disabilities.

Formby Civic Society – aims to foster and preserve the identity of Formby, to safeguard its natural amenities and to assist with the development of its cultural activities, particularly its history.

Queenscourt Hospice - provides services to the population of Southport and Formby as well as offering volunteering opportunities.

Sefton Cancer Support Group - has been in Formby for some 25 years and exists to care for anybody who is suffering from Cancer in all its forms, as well as providing services to their carers.

Sefton Citizens Advice - helps people to resolve their problems by providing free advice and influencing policy makers. The main areas of advice are Benefits, Debt, Consumer, Employment, Relationships and Housing.

Welcome To June's New Members

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Anthony Bibbington | Janet Hill | Janet Knowles |
| Margaret Lees | Patricia Marl | Neera Nirula |
| Barbara Quine | Jean Spofforth | Diane Vernon |
| Philip Vernon | Thomas Watt | |

U3A Golf Competition



The U3A Golf Sections organise a number of golf competitions at various locations within Merseyside and Cheshire during the summer months. The Tuesday U3A Golf Group organised a Stableford competition at Frodsham Golf Club in Cheshire. This is a lovely course situated on the hills above Frodsham, with wonderful views over the Mersey Basin. It was a lovely day enjoyed by all, apart from the last 3 holes when it started to rain.

After the game there was time for a drink, followed by the presentation of the prizes and a very tasty meal.

Prize Winners:

Stableford competition Winner Men - Gordon Cowen

Stableford competition Winner Ladies - Bruni Jones

Longest Drive Men - Oliver Whitaker

Nearest the Pin Ladies - Chris Hanson

As it is a Society rule that only one prize can be won by an individual, Gordon Cowen's longest drive, Bruni Jones longest drive and nearest the pin had to be forfeited. No man won nearest the pin (difficult hole) and no other lady won the longest drive, so these prizes will be passed over to the next competition at Kirkby GC in June. The winners of the Tuesday Group Stableford Competitions will also receive a trophy at the golf presentation evening in October.

If anyone would like to join one of the U3A Golf Groups and there are vacancies in the Tuesday and Wednesday Groups, please contact Beryl Perrin, or John Adamson, or enquire through the U3A Group Secretary, Linda McAuley, Tel: 871890.

John Adamson, Organiser

Media City



Local History Group 4 members enjoyed their recent visit to Media City, Salford.



Ness Gardens



Given that **Local History Group 6's** visit to Ness Gardens on the Wirral coincided with the summer solstice, members had hoped for decent weather, but drivers set off from Formby in heavy rain accompanied by a solid, dark sky. They had fortunately given way to light, intermittent showers by the time the group arrived at their destination. Our guide, Chris gave a short talk on the history of the gardens, before showing footage of the gardens in the 1930s and then taking us on a tour of the extensive, pleasant and peaceful gardens.



Arthur Bulley was a philanthropic member of the Temperance Society and amateur naturalist. Having established his wealth by trading cotton, he set-up a home, Mickwell Brow, on land near Ness. During a miners' strike, he and his wife arranged a "slate" at the various local shops so that none of miners' families went without food. Bulley, who believed that gardening was a healthy and appropriate pursuit, set about creating his garden between 1898 and 1904, wanting to share his interest in plants with

others. Locals were permitted to freely wander in and around the garden. He was interested in introducing new plant species from abroad and sponsored expeditions to the Far East, thinking that Himalayan and Chinese mountain plants could be established in Britain. Bulley employed British plant collectors George Forrest and Frank Ward to prove his theory and, with their help, introduced hundreds of new plants to Britain, including rhododendron and camelia, which have since become the hybrids many gardeners love today. Many of the seeds from the Far East were cultivated in a part of Bulley's garden devoted to the propagation of plants and this led to the development of his plant and seed company, Co-operative Bees Ltd, which in 1906 became Bees Ltd. In 1905 it was the first firm to sell seeds in penny packets, as well as being the first to market seed in illustrated packets. The original buildings of the packing sheds are still evident on site, although the business,

now part of Webbs, moved to a 1,000 acres site at Sealand.



Bulley's daughter, Lois presented the gardens and a £75,000 endowment to the University of Liverpool in 1948, after his death, with the stipulation that they be kept as a botanic gardens.

However, during the war the staff had become depleted to just 2 and when the University acquired the gardens they need considerable attention. Director, Ken Hulme was appointed and spent many years achieving a more naturalistic setting for the plants. Much of the red sandstone used in the hard landscaping was recycled from the railway stations and platforms abandoned following the "Beeching Cuts" on what is now the Wirral Way. The present emphasis is on Ness as a botanic garden, rather than a display garden and whilst herbaceous borders have been added, some of the plants are there because of their botanic importance, rather than their beauty. One such plant is a non-spectacular tree which is the only one outside Japan, where it is increasingly endangered. Another is important because it was the first "Flame of the Forest" that was grown from seed by George Forrest and is said to be the plant from which all other Flames in the Forest grow. As Liverpool University no longer offers Botany courses it has gradually cut back on research and staff so that the gardens are now reliant on an increasing number of volunteers. Conservation and education, especially schoolchildren, remains important as the gardens move toward being increasingly financially self-supporting.

Liz Card

National & North West U3A

The Secretary is normally in attendance at each monthly Wednesday Speaker Meeting and Thursday Workshop. His noticeboard publicises various National and North West Region U3A meetings and events, along with other items which could be of interest to individual members. Next time, have a look; you never know.

2017 Diaries

U3A diaries covering 2017 and with a red cover can now be ordered at a price of £2.00 each. Orders can be placed, along with the money, at the Wednesday and Thursday meetings with the Secretary, Jack Ashworth.

Group News

You are asked to show your green 2016 membership cards when you attend group meetings. All groups are for current, paid up members, so please remember your 2016 subscription was due on January 1st, £9 per annum. Any members who have not renewed their subscriptions by 28th February will be removed from membership lists and should not attend any U3A activities or groups.

Art Appreciation: Is there anyone who has some knowledge about art and artists who would like to guide a new Art Appreciation group?

German: The German Conversation group are looking for a few new members to join this established group on a Tuesday morning. If interested please contact Gordon Mayne on 874219.

Japanese: Interest has been expressed about starting a Learn Japanese Group. Has anyone any knowledge of Japanese, or would like to learn?

Bridge 4: This newly formed beginners group is up and running and at present is full. However, they are taking names for a sub list. They meet weekly on a Monday afternoon at Holy Trinity Tennis Club. Contact Lynn Burrows on 382633 or e-mail: burrows.lynn@yahoo.co.uk

Cookery: We would like to bring together keen but basic cooks with more experienced cooks to have the opportunity to exchange tips and to improve cooking skills in a friendly setting. Please contact me.

Creative Writing Group: We need a few more names before we start this new group.

Italian For Beginners: A leader has come forward to run this new group. Having lived in Rome, he has a great knowledge of Italian life.

Poetry: Do you enjoy poetry? If you would like to share your interest with others, please let me know.

The full list of group vacancies is on the website. Contact group leaders if you are interested.

Linda McAuley, Groups Secretary
Tel: 871890 or e-mail: groups@formbyu3a.org.uk

Theatre and Music Group

(Events are open to all members of Formby U3A)

Sat. 16th July. “Last Night of the Summer Pops,” Philharmonic Hall. The coach leaves the Cross House bus stop at 6:15pm.

Thurs. 15th Sept. “Chicago,” Liverpool Empire, 7:30pm, starring EastEnders actor and Celebrity Big Brother star John Partridge as Billy Flynn. Based on real life events back in the roaring 1920's, nightclub singer Roxie Hart shoots her lover and along with her cell block rival, Velma Kelly, they fight to keep from death row with the help of smooth talking lawyer, Billy Flynn. Tickets including transport £35. The coach will leave The Cross House bus stop at 6.15pm.

Thurs. 1st Dec. “Nutcracker” (English National Ballet), Liverpool Empire, 7:30pm. Over 100 dancers and musicians bring Nutcracker to life with exquisite dancing, beautiful sets and Tchaikovsky's glorious score played live. Expect enchanted toys, mischievous mice and sparkling snowflakes in a colourful ballet. Centre rear stall tickets, including transport cost £35. The coach will leave The Cross House bus stop at 6.15pm

Dave Irving can be contacted directly, if necessary tel: 630192.

Eileen Jones

Outings Group

Outings are only open to all paid up members of the U3A. All we ask is that you have the ability to get on and off the coach independently. We cannot be responsible for providing assistance. The coach can accommodate mobility aids which are kept in the luggage compartment on the bus.

Owing to increased demand, we cannot reserve tickets: **Tickets will be allocated on a first come and paid for – first served basis.** A separate cheque is required for each outing and **it is essential that members include their telephone number with each booking.** Several cheques have been received with no information and I have struggled to identify what they are for. If no contact details are provided, I am unable to contact people when outings are fully booked.

Bookings and information are available at U3A monthly meetings, or coffee mornings. Alternatively please send a stamp addressed envelope to:
Ann Blackman, 9 River Close, Formby, Liverpool L37 6DJ, enclosing a separate cheque for each outing made out to **Formby U3A Outings Group**, having your name, address and telephone number **on the back.**

Thursday, July 7th, Ullswater Lake Cruise & Lunch. Depart Cross Green 9:00am.

Monday August 1st Plas Newydd. Tickets £21.00 for Non-members of the National Trust **or £12.50** for National Trust Members. The outing includes return coach travel and entrance only. Refreshments can be purchased on the day, or take a picnic. Plas Newydd is an elegant house set in amazing gardens with stunning views of the Menai Straits. Depart Cross Green 9:00am.

Friday, September 9th, Fleetwood and Blackpool Ice show. Tickets £46.00 include morning coffee in Fleetwood, with time to explore the sea front or market. At 5pm we will travel to Blackpool for a two course fish supper with tea/coffee before going into the stunning 80th Celebration Ice Show. **Later departure time, Cross Green 10:00am.**

Wednesday, October 26th, Salford Quays Shopping Mall & Imperial War Museum. Tickets £11.00 include coach travel only. Salford Quays has an indoor shopping outlet with cafes and easy access to the canal and War Museum which is free entry. Depart Cross Green 9:00am

Monday, November 28th, 2016 Bartle Hall Celebration. Tickets £30.00 include coach travel, meal and excellent entertainment. Dress to impress for an outing/party to celebrate over 50 coach tours over the past 5 years by the Outings Group. We will have a brief visit to Barton Grange to see their splendid Christmas decorations before continuing on to Bartle Grange Hotel for an afternoon of fun, music and mirth. We begin with a two course lunch with tea/coffee. Our entertainer for the afternoon is Judith Hibbert, an extremely popular and versatile artiste who travels far and wide to entice you back to the beguiling Good Old Days of English comedy. Having performed in opera in America and numerous pantos in UK, her singing will have you begging for more. To enhance the event you may like to bring along a small gift which we can use in the free raffle. Depart Cross Green 9:00am

Ann Blackman, Tel: 871127

Monthly Meetings

Are at 2:00 pm in Holy Trinity Parish Hall, the second Wednesday of each month

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| August | No meeting, nor coffee morning | |
| September 14 th | My Eggheads Experience | Betty Hayhurst |
| October 12 th | Iceland - Fire and Ice | Frank Nicholson |
| November 9 th | A History of Cartoons | Ian Barclay |
| December 14 th | Christmas Concert | |

Please remember to bring your current (green) membership card to all events, including group activities.

COFFEE MORNINGS are from 10:30 to 12:00 on Thursday, July 14th and each Thursday, the day after the monthly meeting, *except August*. These are held in the Workshop, Holy Trinity Church, with free coffee and the chance to pick up information about other groups and meet some of your Committee.

Formby U3A Committee, 2016/17

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Chairman | Glyn Pike | 0151 929 2996 | chairman@formbyu3a.org.uk |
| Vice-Chairman | David Bosworth | 0151 345 1347 | vicechair@formbyu3a.org.uk |
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To Help You

If you need to tell us that **you have changed your address, telephone number, or e-mail address** please contact datamanager@formbyu3a.org.uk or tel: 873597, remembering to include your full name and address, or membership number.

If you need **information about your membership card, or subscriptions** please contact treasurer@formbyu3a.org.uk

There is no August Newsletter. The next edition of the Newsletter is due to be sent by e-mail and be on the website on 1st September. Paper copies can be collected at the monthly meeting & coffee morning.

Contributions are always welcomed. **The deadline for receiving articles is the penultimate Thursday of each month; midday 18th August at the latest to:**

The Editor, Email: newseditor@formbyu3a.org.uk

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