

u3a Christmas Concert

Wednesday 10th December



Yet another successful Concert involving various local U3a musicians namely Folk Group, Recorders, Ukelele Band and Singing for Pleasure, ending with a sing along of favourite Christmas songs. Can I just say by the time we came on the, Ukelele band, our microphones weren't feeling very festive as they stopped working. Being the stalwarts that we are we "carried on regardless". Hopefully everyone enjoyed the afternoon, see you next time.

Our thanks go to the Ladies who manned the kitchen serving refreshments.

Kathy Steel





Christmas Meal

Our Christmas meal at the Grapes was a great success again. Food was good and the Michael Bublé tribute act kept us entertained. Bingo was enjoyed by us all but might be fixed as Andy from the Committee won for the second time! Good value for money and they gave us free tea/coffee. A few took to the dance floor to prove we've still got it!

Author- Michael Lewandowski



Christmas Coffee Morning

Not as many as usual attended our Christmas coffee morning as we had just had the concert the day before. Next year we probably need to consider whether to go ahead. However our tea ladies did us proud as usual with lovely Christmas goodies and our thanks go to them for their hard work every month.

Author- Helen Lewandowska



Lytham Hall

We had a fantastic trip to Lytham Hall on 15th December – lots of people have said how brilliant it was and how much they enjoyed it. The decorations which were around the theme of nursery rhymes were outstanding.

Lytham Hall were expecting us and arrangements could not be faulted, Both the tea/coffee before and afternoon tea were excellent. A few of us enjoyed a prosecco to celebrate.

The Blackpool Illuminations on the way home finished what was a very enjoyable trip. Luckily we didn't lose anyone although it was a near miss with 2 who shall remain nameless going missing at Lytham Hall just before we were leaving!

Author – Helen Lewandowska

Photographs – Peter Broom



Theatre Visit to the Liverpool Royal Court

Thursday 15th January saw a visit to see the Royal Court's Christmas panto show – Scouse Christmas Carol. Oh yes, they did!

The plot follows Jacob Marley's wife, Barbara Marley, attempting to find out who bumped off her husband. The chief suspect was, of course, Jacob's business partner Ebenezer Scrooge. To quote the Royal Court "we're improving on the great Charles Dickens who always wanted his shows to have more silly jokes and live music!" I'm not sure if that was achieved but the scouse version was very entertaining. There was a great atmosphere in the theatre – the stage setting and cast were amazing with an excellent band and singers covering a variety of songs by Adele, Meatloaf, Bon Jovi, The Bee Gees and many more.

What will their 2026 show be I wonder. Whatever it is I'm sure it will be enjoyable.

Author and Photos: Andy Dickinson



The Singing for Pleasure Group

The Singing for Pleasure Group meets in Holy Trinity Church Hall in Formby every Friday morning from 10.00am to 11.30am. We sing a variety of songs from the musicals and other popular pieces.

Currently we have a few vacancies for all voices, sopranos, altos, tenors and basses. It is not a requirement to be able to read music but it is an advantage if you can. The key objective is to have a relaxed, enjoyable sing! Do come along and have a try.

Group Leader: Mike Hastie. Email: mike.hastie09@gmail.com Tel: 07516424426

Daytime Disco

U3a brings the daytime disco to Formby. On Wednesday 21st January from 3-6pm over 50 members met for an afternoon of dancing, drinking and chatting at the Wall of Fame in Formby. Kerry from the Wall of Fame organised the music and served us the reasonably priced drinks so our thanks go to her. The atmosphere was very relaxed and people seemed to have had a good time. Kerry has even offered to get us a singer if we wish in the future. The pictures expertly taken by Judith Aspinwall prove some did take to the dance floor just in case there are any doubters out there.



Behind the Scenes Tour at Empire Theatre, Liverpool



On a rainy day In November 2025 Local History Group 16 were lucky enough to undertake a Behind The Scenes Tour of the Empire Theatre in Liverpool.

We were able to see all the original features and tread the boards despite a lot of work going on for the production of Here & Now, the Steps Musical. We discovered the origins of the venue from it's beginnings as the Alexandra Theatre to its current running by ATG Entertainment. We were reminded of some very famous performers who had performed at the theatre including Laurel and Hardy and The Beatles.

We were guided by Badri and Tyler who were former pupils at LIPA where we had visited earlier in the year.

Would definitely recommend to other Groups.

New Members

Formby u3a is pleased to welcome the following new members

**Alan Carter | Albert Hobbs | Anthony Hart | Beverley Butler | Elizabeth Hart
Frances Baines | Garry Bolland | Julie Owen | Lillian Wright | Marian Garnett
Marie Lynch | Marie Hansen | Mark Lightwood | Mary Tyrer | Patricia Barrett
Petra Atkinson | Rod Dawson | Ruth Nixon | Tom Flanagan | Toni Buxton**



Local History Group 16 visit the Cunard Building

The 8th January saw members of Local History group 16 take a 'behind the scenes' tour of the Cunard Building, one of the three 'Graces' at the Liverpool Pier Head. The Grade II listed Renaissance Style building was opened in 1917 and formed the headquarters of the Cunard Shipping Line and a passenger terminal for ships such as the *Mauretania* and *Lusitania*. It was the gateway to America, and for so many the start of a new life across the Atlantic.

The Cunard is now owned by Liverpool City Council and houses offices for both public and private organisations, as well as the British Music Experience at the front of the building.

Our tour started in the Great Hall where we given a history of the building and the Cunard Line, and an interesting insight into what life would have been like for the passengers. First class passengers were well looked after and taken upstairs to wait in comfort with refreshments before boarding the ship. Everybody else were sent to the basement to wait in 'steerage' with their belongings. It would have been a depressing crowded place and not a pleasant experience.

The basement area still houses store rooms used by companies such as Lloyds Shipping Insurance and Billingtons Foods. One of these rooms was the strong room, with an impressive six-inch-thick steel door, where valuable possessions were kept prior to boarding. Today the room contains historical documents, which we were able to see, including information about the merger of the Cunard and White Star lines in 1934. The merger was forced by the British government to secure funding for the completion of the *Queen Mary*, which as well as being a luxury liner saw service during WW2.

The tour was completed with a visit to the beautiful board rooms on the 5th floor. Now used for meetings and corporate events they are often used for Films and TV, including the *Peaky Blinders* TV series. After the tour group members headed for the city and station but alas not for an adventure that would begin from the Cunard Building Great Hall!

Author: Andy Dickinson Photographs: Jaqueline McMillan

Walking Group 6 January Excursion

The location of Walking Group 6's January excursion is pretty familiar to us all. See if you can work it out from the photo!

As the days are short and the weather is unpredictable in January we generally start later and have a shorter local walk. This month we enjoyed a brisk march north along the beach, clambering over the dunes to check out the progress at Victoria Road.

We continued in a rough figure of 8, taking in Alexander Road and "devil's hole" before curving round to our destination – the Railway pub – for our belated "Christmas meal".

Several members of the group, who were unable to walk that day, joined us for the meal. It was lovely to spend time together, especially with our retiring Group Leader, Bill. Over many, many years Bill has shared his knowledge and sense of humour with Walking Group 6 and even managed to keep us in order. During 2025 we enjoyed another year of interesting walks, mostly good weather and we didn't get too lost, too often.

Roll on 2026!



The Bowling Group



The bowling group use the green in Formby Park and it won't be long before the group meets again – end of March/early April. Why not come and join us? Anyone interested will be made welcome. We have exclusive use of all the facilities for the afternoon. We meet every Tuesday from 1.45pm to 4pm. We stop mid-afternoon for a drink of tea, a sit down, and a chat. It's best if you have your own bowls, but there may be a set you can borrow to try you hand. Its all good exercise, not too strenuous, in a friendly environment. If interested please contact Mike Benson (07554 029010). All the details are on the U3a website.

The Fate of Keir Starmer, Military Schools and Teenage Joyriders.

Author: David Kirkby

These were some of the topics discussed at the February meeting of the Current Affairs Discussion Group.

This meeting was hosted by John, and after the essential coffee and biscuits, the six of us present took it in turns to introduce a topic gleaned from the news of the day. As usual, we debated the dominant news story of the moment, which this month concerned Sir Keir. We had a vigorous debate about the rights and wrongs of the story. Like all of our debates, it ended when we seemed to have followed all the interesting avenues of thought, and when we began digressing (which is a very common occurrence). We almost never attempt to come to any conclusions in our debates – that's not

the point. We are there to express our opinions and explore and question the opinions of others.

As well as the dominant stories of the day, we do try to bring more unusual clippings from the news. Into this category I would put a story about a military school for disaffected youth brought by John, and an account of a teenage joy-rider being given points on a driving licence he did not yet possess brought by Brian. We also try to find entertaining items, but sadly no-one could find anything in this category this month.

Sadly, ill-health has reduced our numbers recently, so if anyone reading this is attracted by the idea of spending a couple of hours once a month in a good-humoured review of the news, we would be glad to hear from you. Contact me on davidkirkby@sky.com

Formby u3a Golf Group



Formby u3a Golf first started in about 2003 with the formation of a weekly golf lesson on a Wednesday at Formby Hall GC Driving Range. Group tuition was given by David Lloyd, the golf professional at Formby Hall. Because of the popularity of this type of tuition, two further tuition days on Tuesdays and Fridays were added. These lessons are still held but the location has moved to the Driving Range in Moss Side, Formby. The golf lessons are usually followed by a social chat in the Driving Range Coffee Shop.

Some of the golf members wanted to play golf on a regular basis and as a result, some of the men get together Mondays and Thursdays at local courses and others further afield. Some of the ladies also play regularly at local golf courses. A golf Committee was formed, and golf competitions for all u3a Golf Members are organised at local courses and other locations further afield. These events are for players of a reasonable standard. Winners of the competitions are presented with their golf trophy at a dinner and presentation evening in November, currently held at West Lancs Golf Club.

John Adamson



New u3a groups

In recent months I've had several conversations with members who are interested in joining a group but find no vacancies shown on the groups page of the website. Nevertheless I always encourage them to ring the group leaders anyway (I hope you don't mind, group leaders!) as there's often a bit of flexibility depending on the circumstances.

I also try to persuade them to start their own group. It's not as daunting as you might think. Often the group leaders of existing groups are happy to share their experiences and advice – they just can't accommodate more people, especially if they meet in a small venue. If the meetings are in members' homes then it's even more straightforward to start a new group. In the case of a possible French group, for example, I offered to help by passing on resources we use each week and other recommendations. There's even a small budget, £200 from the u3a committee, to cover initial start-up costs; for example, the new audio equipment for the Line Dancing beginner's group.

As we know, people are often reluctant to commit themselves, thinking that being group leader will be an onerous responsibility. In many groups the Group Leader might be better called the "Group Contact" – the main point of contact for new members and for disseminating updates about events from the committee. Walking group 6 has recently moved to having a different group leader each year so I'll be keen to keep an eye on that – especially as the 2026 group leader is me!

I'm sure many members would agree with me that being part of a u3a group brings interest, friends, human interaction, expertise, enthusiasm and entertainment. More than 1,000 members cannot be wrong! Last year I sent out emails to all group leaders for figures to keep the website details up to date. (Thanks to all the prompt responders! BTW). Sadly, I discovered that some groups had folded since the last survey. But that's a natural process and a few new ones had started, which is also very heartening.

The groups are fundamental to a lively u3a. We are pleased to have such a well-maintained website which shows the diversity of interests covered. Formby's u3a will continue to thrive only if members continue to contribute and take up the challenge to keep it going. It's not such a big step and can bring many and varied rewards. Contact me on groups@formbyu3a.org.uk

A u3a Member's Hobby

I have been a member of the Formby u3a for about 20 years and have very much enjoyed my involvement with Christmas Shows, Pantomimes and the Science, Discussion, Skiffle and Cycling Groups. I have over the years covered many happy miles in the companionship of the Cycling Group.

I also have a hobby of restoring old bikes and selling them for charity. People donate old, unwanted and often unusable old bikes, which I strip, clean, repair or replace broken parts as necessary, and then reassemble and test to ensure they are in full working order. I then donate the bike to a Charity Shop or sell it directly and donate the proceeds to a Charity. I also repair and restore bikes for people for a small charge, which I donate to a Charity.

If you have unwanted and unused bikes to donate, to have brought back to working order, or you are looking for a good cheap bike, please contact me.

Nic Dickson (nicdickson21@gmail.com)

Newsletter Contributions

Articles informing members of your group and its activities are always welcome.

When submitting Newsletter reports could authors please ensure all article have:

- A title (not the group name/number) to reflect the activity (please feel free to be creative/attention grabbing).
- The author's name.
- The group name/number is included somewhere within the report.
- Photographs (no more than 3, please) relevant to the report, showing some or all members on the activity. Please ensure that all people shown in photographs are aware that photographs are being taken for inclusion in the Newsletter and may be shown on the Formby U3a website.
- Photos sent as one of the common picture format attachments (jpeg, png, tif etc) to the report and not embedded in the text for the report. Please do not send photographs as a separate message as there is a risk they will not be identified as part of the group's report, nor embed them within the writing but send as an attachment to the submission.
- Photos submitted must be members' own photos as copyright of third parties' photos remains with the owner and the Newsletter cannot publish such photos.
- Please send submission to the newsletter editor asap after the event occurred and, where possible, are not sent within the final few days before a deadline. Please remember, it is contributor's responsibility to check articles for grammar, spelling, punctuation etc, not the Newsletter Editor's.

Previous Newsletters: are available at: https://formbyu3a.org.uk/?page_id=331

Next (June '26) Newsletter

The next Newsletter can be viewed found at: https://formbyu3a.org.uk/?page_id=331 from 1st of June. Paper copies can be collected at the monthly meeting & coffee morning.

Important: AGM for Formby U3a

11th March 2026,14:00

Author, Graham Higley, Formby u3a Secretary.

Please note this date for your diaries.

Formby u3a has had problems in recruiting new Trustees over the last few years and we are coming to a stage when a number of Trustees will have to stand down. This may have implications for the viability of Formby u3a as a whole. We may have to make some critical amendments to the Formby u3a Constitution to ensure continuity.

We can only make these amendments if the meeting is quorate – which means at least 55 members attend. It is vital that you attend this meeting if you are able.

We are keen to encourage more of you to become Trustees. If you are interested in hearing more about running Formby u3a, please call me on 0780 126 1537 or email secretary@formbyu3a.org.uk

Formby u3a Committee 2025-26

Chairman	Helen Lewandowska (2022 Co-opted) 07548 213496 chair@formbyu3a.org.uk
Secretary	Graham Higley (2023) 0780 1261537 secretary@formbyu3a.org.uk
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Chairs Report

Happy New Year to everyone. I'm pleased to say that all our Christmas events seemed to go very well and feedback has been very positive. Whilst I have agreed to do another year as Chair it is important that we find someone to take over from me. I am happy to chat to anyone interested about what this entails. It is not a great commitment and can be quite enjoyable. I think it would be a great shame for an organisation like ours with over 1000 members to fold due to lack of volunteers. Also if anyone is willing to join the Committee generally you would be most welcome.

The AGM is on Wednesday 11th March at 1pm and it is very important that enough people attend so that this can go ahead. Last year we nearly had to cancel it as we were struggling for numbers. For this reason I am asking every group to send at least one representative to the AGM.

On a positive note we are looking forward to a year filled with fun trips and events which I'm sure everyone will enjoy. Our first trip this year will be to Wollerton Old Hall Garden in Spring. We are happy to be starting a new Padel group at Formby Lawn Tennis Club on Gores Lane and our thanks go to Sally and Jayne from the Club for offering this opportunity.

Monthly Meetings

Meetings are at 2.00 pm in Holy Trinity Parish Hall. **Access:** There is ramp access to the hall.

Parking: Please remember to enter your vehicle registration number on the electronic pad in the hall foyer each time you park. There is no charge for parking, but failure to enter your number will almost certainly result in a heavy fine. If you are unsure what to do please ask for help.

Future speakers: If you have any suggestions of Speakers/talks that you think may be of interest to members, please email us at speakers@formbyu3a.org.uk or use the suggestion box at monthly meetings.

11th March, A Solo Walk across Africa, Fran Sandham. Fran is a critically acclaimed author and former Rough Guide editor.

8th April, The Story of The Formby Lifeboat, Nic Dickson. A lifeboat was on Formby Shore 250 years ago, the first in all the world. This illustrated talk covers the reasons for its establishment, its history and the lifeboatman who braved the seas and saved hundreds of lives.

13th May, The Co-op. This light-hearted talk provides a look at some serious issues such as long-term care fees and how to protect your home and savings, inheritance tax, lasting power of attorney and of course the Toy Boy situation. It includes some top tips for things you should consider.

10th June, Songs of The Sixties.

Please remember that from January onwards you need to show your **2026 Membership Card** at all events, including group activities.

Coffee Morning will be from **10.30am** to **12 noon** on the 2nd Thursday of the month, except August. They are held in the Workshop, Holy Trinity Church & offering free coffee, they give a chance to pick up information about other groups and meet your Committee.

Formby u3a

Speakers for July, September and October

July is Julia Clayton who will be talking about *“From the Parthenon to the Monument: The Architecture of Lord Street, Southport.”*

September is a talk by two volunteers from the Daniel Adamson Preservation Society who are going to tell the remarkable story of the Danny *“The Tug that Survived to Sail Again.”*

The Daniel Adamson is coal fired steam tug tender launched in 1903 from the golden age of British engineering and had a career ranging from towing humble barges to entertaining Kings and Queens on the famous Manchester Ship Canal.

After a working life of over 80 years, she was eventually abandoned and destined for the scrap yard. At the 11th hour in 2004 she was rescued by a dedicated group of volunteers and after many trials and tribulations was returned to her former working glory, sailing the waterways of the North West for the enjoyment of all.

October is *“The Assassination of Lady Diana Spencer”* as she was not a royal at the time of her death. Pete will commence with a timeline of Diana’s life from her engagement to Prince Charles in 1981 to her arrival in Paris on August 30th 1997.

He will then follow events from her arrival at Le Bourget airport with Dodi Fayed to the fateful journey from the Ritz Hotel to the crash in the Alma Tunnel.

Utilising witness statements from the Diana Inquest, the presentation will refute the French & Scotland Yard verdicts that the crash was caused by a drunk driver being chased by paparazzi. He will submit that Diana had only minor injuries after the crash, and was mistreated in the ambulance, causing her death. He will further claim that this was an assassination run by British & French intelligence services.

Thanks Helen

Hello to all members old and new!

As you will have read earlier in the newsletter that Dave Goodwill is finally hanging up his mouse and relinquishing the editorship of the Formby u3a newsletter. Dave as most of you will know has produced an excellent, informative newsletter which has no doubt increased Formby u3a membership to what it is today.

Over the time that Dave has created the newsletter, we at The Print Quarter in Southport have printed the paper copies. Dave has been a pleasure to work with, so methodical and professional. Dave may be going but the newsletter will continue!

So in the future articles need to be sent to Ian Robertson who will check the content and send to us at the Print Quarter to print. Keep up your excellent contributions and your membership will flourish.

Ian Robertson 07922 424924

5thofficer@formbyu3a.org.uk

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