



### ***Chairman's musings***

Every year it seems we're on the edge of our seats as the AGM approaches. And this year was no different. Our constitution stipulates that we must have a chairman, secretary and treasurer in order to continue as a u3a. This year we needed a new secretary and treasurer as both Ann and Ian had to retire, having served their allotted terms. When Kim stepped forward as the new treasurer there was a sigh of relief but, come the day of the AGM, we still had no replacement secretary! Then, at 9.45 that morning, an email arrived from somebody who wasn't even a member at that stage but who wanted to join and was offering her services as secretary! I have never seen retiring secretary Ann move so fast. Within hours, Tracey was signed up and is already proving herself to be a great addition to the committee. So great relief all round!

This means we live to fight another year – and a very important one for Neston u3a as it is our 20th anniversary and we plan to celebrate the event in style with a big party instead of our normal February meeting. It was in February 2002 that a small group of volunteers decided to try and launch a branch of the u3a in Neston. Founder members Pat Rosser, Susan Morris, Reg Gilbert and Ann Flanagan put their heads together and formed the first committee. Thanks to them, Neston u3a is still flourishing today. The committee is looking into holding the anniversary party at Neston Cricket Club, the venue for the Christmas lunch, instead of the Town Hall and the possibilities of sponsorship of the event are being investigated. Groups will be invited to showcase their activities and a special souvenir edition of the newsletter will be produced to mark the occasion.



Members enjoying the Christmas Lunch.

We also have something else to look forward to in 2022. Neston Community and Youth Centre has announced its intention to take over the management of the Civic Hall with plans to reopen it again next year so we'll be able to return to our traditional home. So with that good news to report, it only remains to wish you all the best Christmas you can manage in the circumstances and I look forward to seeing you again in the New Year.

Michael Grumett



At the Christmas lunch, Michael presented Liz Marrs with a £50 Amazon voucher to thank her for all the emails she sent out during lockdown to keep us all sane.

## Geology Group

When Mark Buckley invited members to create and join a Geology group, little could he have anticipated that two years later the wide and varied group membership would continue to grow and that the thirst for new topics remained strong and would be enthusiastically supported. Mark should be complimented on his foresight.



Mark next invited members to also join new Meteorology and Astronomy groups for which there was similar enthusiastic support, but not enough Tuesdays on which to programme the groups separately. The outcome was to combine the three topics into the one group with the creative title of “Earth and Beyond” with meetings held in the Neston Community Youth Centre. Now with over 30 active members the group has been meeting on Zoom twice a month. On the second Tuesday we have a formal topic and speaker with the session lasting about an hour. On the last Tuesday we have a member’s meeting where individuals are invited to share topics and

experiences that fall within the very wide-ranging variety of interests.

Mark has been wonderfully supported, particularly by two members, each holding professorships in key topic areas. Jim Marshall has offered a seemingly bottomless pit of topics across the field of geology and Rob Marrs similarly in the field of ecological sciences.

Once the situation allows, the group plans to resume field trips that had to be curtailed due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

One innovation is a Padlet web page, introduced by Jim Marshall, which allows all members to share ‘things that interest them’. Other u3a members might find this worth a look, click here

[https://padlet.com/u3aneston\\_earthnbeyond/PinBoard](https://padlet.com/u3aneston_earthnbeyond/PinBoard).

Future talks by guest speakers will perhaps include ‘Phenology and Climate Change’, ‘Peat’, ‘Geology of Oil and Gas’, ‘The Silurian Controversy’, ‘Neston Mining’ and ‘Stellar Evolution’. In addition, members will be sharing talks on topics of their own choice.



New members are welcome, especially those willing to share experiences and knowledge across the broad range of interests. More information can be found on our u3a website (<https://nestonu3a.org.uk/the-earth-beyond/>)



## ***Imperial War Museum - Salford Quays***

On 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021 a group made a visit to the Imperial War Museum at Salford Quays. This visit was originally planned in March 2020 but, due to lockdown, we had to postpone it. However, all the people who were on the first list still wanted to make the visit and everyone agreed that it was worth the wait.

The museum is fabulous and the only purpose built IWM (North). So much is on display, from very large objects like the US Harrier suspended at the entrance, the field gun which fired the first shot for the British Army in the First World War and the mangled steel section recovered from the World Trade Centre after the terror attacks of 9/11/2001.

The museum covers so much, from the First World War to the present day, including small items such as ration books, gas masks and reminders of the Holocaust.

There is a cafe with a fairly good selection of hot and cold food and beverages, also a shop next to the cafe with some lovely items to purchase.

The outside of this wonderful building is remarkable. We see it each evening as the backdrop for BBC News, but much better to see the real thing.

The outing was a great success enjoyed by all.

Doreen Higgins and Dot Blunt



Madeline 'Lyn' Jack celebrating her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday  
with the Scrabble Group.

### ***Scrabble Group***

Many congratulations to Madeline (Lyn) Jack who celebrated her 90th birthday on 10th November.

Lyn was one of the very first members of the Neston U3A when it formed nearly 20 years ago. She is, and has been, Coordinator of Scrabble Group 1 and a member of the Antiques Group and the Craft Group since they were set up.

Lyn's career pathway was in Nursing and in the years up to her retirement she was a Health Visitor and supervised the running of the Mellock Lane Clinic.



### ***New Committee***

The new committee members are (from left to right):

Bob Kynaston;  
Kenny Bird;  
Anne Hine;  
Mark Buckley;  
Tracey Hardcastle;  
Michael Grumett;  
Kim Kaminski;  
Hilary Eaude;  
John Brignal.

### ***To the members of Neston u3a***

At the AGM in November I was awarded the honour of being appointed Honorary President for the year 2021/22 and I owe the membership my gratitude, though I remain unconvinced that the award is appropriate. As I said at the meeting, the clause permitting the appointment, in exceptional circumstances, of an Honorary President was introduced into our constitution in 2017 at my instigation, so it is embarrassing now to benefit from it. I also pointed out that I had done nothing more than perform the duties that could have been expected of me. Having said my piece I left the meeting for five minutes to allow discussion but I am informed that nobody supported my argument, so it would appear that the membership considers I carried out the responsibilities of a trustee rather well, which is a reward in itself. These responsibilities are voluntarily assumed by all the committee members and I have to say that I could have achieved nothing without their full support; never at any point did any of them fail to step up to the mark when there was a task to be completed. So I am going to view this award as an award to all the committee members with whom I had the pleasure and privilege of working.

Embarrassed or not, I am grateful for the recognition and the honour of this appointment and I assure you that if there is anything further I can contribute then I will do whatever I can. Thank you.

I am also grateful to the current committee members for volunteering for the role; many of them are new to the job (including our Chairman, Michael Grumett, who has successfully negotiated his first year as a trustee). I am not sure if the members as a whole realise how close we came to having to dissolve Neston u3a on two occasions in the last year for the lack of volunteers. There remain vacancies on the committee; in particular there is currently no Group Coordinator, a necessary post if new interest groups are to be formed or existing groups need support and I urge all of you to put your name forward.

Best wishes to you all, I am still hopeful at this time that we may soon return to normal after we have all been vaccinated.

Geoff Gibson

### **Poetry and Prose Group 3**

We continue to meet once a month and, for us all, our meetings provide a delightful interlude when we definitely have time to 'stand and stare' and slow down the pace of life.

I thought it might be interesting to find out why members of the group enjoy poetry and asked them for a little bit about themselves to include in this Newsletter.

**Jill Gibson** - When I was about 12 the elocution mistress at my school entered me into the Elocution Competition at the Cheltenham Festival. I don't recall winning anything but it awakened an interest in poetry that has remained with me throughout my life.

I first encountered the U3A movement in Johannesburg and when we returned to the UK in 2012, I set up (with encouragement from Marion Holland, then the Chairperson) the Neston u3a Poetry & Prose Group 3. The Group has now been taken over by Lesley Sutherland and all the original members, apart from two who have left the area, still participate. That in itself is a testament to the value of reading poetry.

I don't really have a favourite poet but I enjoy poetry about the beauty of nature or about people. I also like witty and humorous poetry so I appreciate the work of Pam Ayers and Joyce Grenfell.

**Belinda Ludlow** - My mum introduced me to poetry and I loved the rhythm of it from an early age. I love literature as a form of escapism, appreciate it as an art form, and that it can sometimes provide the reader with challenging philosophical ideas. The Group is a great opportunity to find out what other readers like and it expands our awareness and enjoyment, usually with a lot of giggling!

**Liz Marrs** - I noticed that there was to be a new poetry group and that Jill was looking for people to join and so went along to the inaugural meeting. I am science trained and knew little about poetry so I thought I would give it a go. I'm so glad I did. I've not only been introduced to different poems but also met some incredible people. My favourite poem is 'For A' That and A' That' by Robert Burns and I have recited it at our group meetings several times. I always cry at the end and I've noticed other group members reaching for their tissues too!

**Pauline Sallis** - Reading memorising and listening to poetry makes me feel happy. I love quotes that help us to cope and understand different situation and experiences in our lives. I especially love quotes from Shakespeare, who, in some magical and profound way, seems to fully understand what it is to be human.

During the lockdowns I loved quoting his 'O call back yesterday. Bid time return'. When bigoted opinions are expressed I remember 'There is no darkness but ignorance'. Lately I have taken much comfort from 'How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world'.

Poetry keeps me relatively sane!

**Lesley Sutherland** - I liked poetry from a young age as my mother read to me and inspired me with poems such as 'The Highwayman' by Alfred Noyes and 'The Inchcape Rock' by Southey. They appealed to my imagination and tell a story and I was addicted to stories. My real devotion came, however, when, at the age of 12, I had my own poem accepted for inclusion in my school's magazine (a real fillip to my ego) and my English teacher introduced us to the work of John Keats. I fell in love with Keats and tried to pay homage by learning his Odes by heart. I can still recite parts of 'To Autumn' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'. I keep meaning to re-learn them but never seem to have the time as there are so many poems to read and u3a activities to attend!



**Valerie Wray** - I had an inspirational primary school teacher who introduced us to many memorable poems. When I too became a primary teacher I enjoyed sharing poems with my young pupils, many of them funny. But it wasn't until Liz suggested I joined Poetry and Prose Group 3 that I realised that I hadn't read poetry for many years. I have enjoyed being part of our lovely group and have learnt so much about poems and poets from the other group members. We cover a huge range of poems and prose, emotional, thoughtful, memorable and humorous.

Thank you to my Group for sharing these thoughts. I hope the wider membership also finds them interesting. Maybe other groups could do something similar and tell us about why they became interested in their activities? I know I would enjoy reading such articles. *Good idea (Ed).*

Best wishes for a happy, healthy festive season.  
Lesley Sutherland

### ***Dear Friend***

Full many a glorious morning have we shared  
Dear friend, making beautiful old rhyme with you,  
Our inspiration, thoughtful, you always cared,  
Gentle and considerate, fair, kind and true.  
Devouring time will never blunt your love  
Of truth, beauty, eternal Summer's song.  
Like the lark at break of day rising above  
You soar beyond black nights of worry and wrong.  
How like Winter then will your absence be  
When we summon up remembrance of things past,  
Your calm and your wisdom, your serenity,  
Sad that the golden hours dear friend did not last.  
Yet your sweet self remembered such wealth will bring  
That our hearts with Summer's honey breath will sing.

*(This is a poem written for Marion Holland to mark her move to Dorchester. It appeared in the last newsletter minus the last two lines so apologies to Pauline, who penned this tribute, and here it is in full. I hope I've got it right this time Pauline!)*

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### ***Medium Walks:***

3rd August - On a pleasantly warm day we met up for a 5 mile walk. The walk started from Leasowe and took the group along the seawall, past Leasowe Castle and, as the tide was out, we were able to walk across the sand which forms part of Leasowe Bay. We followed the seawall towards New Brighton before turning inland and finding our way to the River Birket where we walked along the riverbank towards Moreton. We then headed towards Leasowe Lighthouse before rejoining the seawall to return to the car park. We took a short break for refreshments - as shown in the photo - sitting on a conveniently placed concrete wedge by the river.







7th September - Another warm day and a new 4.5 mile walk for the group. Gill and John Miles had worked out a route starting from the Bluebell Café, at the top of Boathouse Lane, which took us along a footpath that emerged on the outskirts of Thornton Hough. We then followed another footpath which took us into Thornton Hough village where we crossed the Green, having stopped for a refreshment break, to pick up another footpath which emerged close to the Red Fox. Another footpath then led us to the A540 where we managed to cross the busy road and walk along the footpath, back to our starting point. The photo shows the group enjoying their refreshment break at the Green in Thornton Hough.

5th October - walk cancelled due to very inclement weather!

7th November - the 4.5 mile walk was the cancelled October walk. The group met, on another sunny day, at the Wirral Way car park in Caldy and walked towards West Kirby to pick up and walk the length of the promenade. We then turned away from the coast and, following various streets and paths, made our way up to the War Memorial and on to the Column where we had a refreshment break. The route then took us along Caldy Hill before we headed down and back to the starting point. Due to the rain in the days before the walk the route was very wet, with some large puddles impeding the paths and requiring great ingenuity to navigate! The photo shows the group at the Column about to start the final leg of the walk.



### ***Beginners' Italian Group***

Cheryl Armitage is looking for new members for her beginners' Italian group. No previous knowledge required. Phone Cheryl for further information: 0151 336 8660

The group will meet on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Wednesday morning each month for up to an hour, studying "Coffee Break Italian".

## The Davy Notebooks Project – call for help.

From Dr Andrew Lacey, Senior Research Associate in the Department of English Literature and Creative Writing at Lancaster University, who contacted Hilary Eaude with the following:

The Davy Notebooks Project

([wp.lancs.ac.uk/davynotebooks](http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/davynotebooks)) is currently doing some exciting research, with the help of the public. We and an international community of over 1400 volunteer transcribers are currently transcribing, using the people-powered research platform Zooniverse, Sir Humphry Davy's (1778-1829) handwritten notebooks (around 70 in all), many of which have never been transcribed before. Davy was the leading chemist of the early nineteenth century, but also a poet, moving in the same circles as Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth. His notebooks contain not only chemical notes and poetry, but also material encompassing philosophy, medicine, geology, mathematics, astronomy, and more. Anyone interested in any of these topics, or science or history more generally, will surely find that much of the material we're making freely available - in most cases for the first time - stimulating.

Our Zooniverse project page is here:

<https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/humphrydavy/davy-notebooks-pr> Contributing transcriptions to our project is entirely free and no prior experience is necessary - we provide full guidance on the transcription process on our Zooniverse page, and the project team is on hand through the Talk forum feature to answer any queries.

With many thanks, and best wishes,

Dr Andrew Lacey, on behalf of the Davy Notebooks Project team

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/news/volunteer-transcribers-needed-for-humphry-davys-notebooks>



Sample double-page from one of Davy's notebooks, which gives a good flavour of the materials we're working with.

Image credit: Front endpaper and p. 1 of Davy notebook RI MS HD/15/F (c. 1805), courtesy of the Royal Institution of Great Britain.

### The editor's bit

As mentioned by our esteemed Chairman, we'd like to celebrate Neston u3a's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in February by producing a special souvenir newsletter. So, as well as news of what's coming up and what the various groups have been up to, we'd like some personal stories from members. Have a look at the piece from the Poetry and Prose Group 3 and see Lesley's bit at the end. We'd like to know how you came across the u3a, why you joined, what you like about it and if there are any improvements you'd like to see. Ideas are always welcome. You can send your words directly to my inbox or, if you don't have the technology, just write your piece on paper (remember that?) and post it to me or drop it through the letterbox. Better include your phone number in case I can't read your handwriting but I'm sure it'll be fine.

Apologies if those without computers don't receive this until after Christmas. It's very short notice for the printer but he'll do his best.

Have a lovely festive Christmas (if possible!) and here's to an optimistic New Year.

With very best wishes from Shelagh

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