

**What's happening in June and July:**

**Chairman's Thoughts**

U3A is an important part of the social scene in Neston and it would leave a gap in the community if it folded. When you were having difficulty recruiting a chairman I was asked to step in. Volunteering has been in something of a decline in recent years and U3A will need to look at how we maintain an organisation that relies on volunteering. However, currently we are secure for the coming year so I hope you find something in our social offer that appeals to you and you can share with friends and fellow members.

Pat Kynaston

**U3A Future Programme**

**June 26<sup>th</sup>** Memories of the 60's by Grayham Loach

I'm sure we all have our own memories of the 60s so come & see what you remember and what may have passed us by. Historical moments of the 60's with illustrated highlights on screen.

**July 31<sup>st</sup>** Summer lunch at The Royal Oak, Little Neston. Limited numbers so get your tickets from Shelagh

**August 28<sup>th</sup>** The Owlman by John

John and his team are committed to fostering awareness and appreciation of these fascinating birds through an informative and entertaining presentation of stories and facts. Are owls the 'wise birds' of the flight kingdom? We may find out.

**September 25<sup>th</sup>** An open meeting.

This is an opportunity for you to ask questions and discuss what you might like U3A to offer. Group leaders will be talking about the various groups open to members and what they do. We can't promise everything is possible but it's good to discuss options.

Please remember your committee and organisers are all volunteers so some ideas are NOT possible

**October 30<sup>th</sup>** A varied life - Police Officer, Immigration Official and acting along the way - Tim Perrin  
The title says it all. Tim has seen life at its best and worst, enhanced with slides.

**November 27<sup>th</sup>** Liverpool's Overhead Railway by Gavin Hunter

Were you around the area when this was operating? Hear about the world's first electric elevated **railway**, built in 1893 to serve **Liverpool's** docks and cargo routes. Find out why it was closed in 1956 and how it was replaced by buses and trains. All illustrated by Gavin's excellent slides.

**December** - Christmas Lunch - details to be finalised

## Confessions of an ex-chairman

When, on Friday October 9th, 2020, I knocked on a door in Breezehill Road, Neston, and announced to the then chairman, Geoff Gibson, that I was offering to take over as chairman of our U3A, I had no idea what I was letting myself in for. I confess that, as a journalist and university lecturer, I had always avoided committee meetings like the plague and had certainly never chaired anything. But Geoff had made a plea for a replacement chairman to save our U3A from folding so there I was. I think Celia might have had something to do with it.

It was not a propitious time to take over as chairman. Because of Covid, we were running virtual meetings and, less than a month later, the second lockdown started on Thursday, November 5th. Nevertheless, I took over at a committee meeting on Monday 30th November 2020. Fortunately, I had a brilliant secretary in Ann Roochove who knew what she was doing – and also what I should be doing. Unfortunately, she had to retire as secretary which gave me my first experience of having to find replacements for essential committee roles. In one year, I recruited five secretaries, only for all of them to resign for a variety of reasons! I quickly learnt that you have to be very proactive in looking for volunteers which is why so many members have had their shoulders tapped by me.

Although the interest groups continued to flourish during my tenure, attendance at the monthly speaker meetings has never recovered to pre-Covid levels. And then we were hit with a bombshell: it was announced that the Civic Hall, our traditional venue, would close on March 31st unless the funds were found before then to fix the roof and install a new heating system. The committee decided that we could not wait to be homeless and voted to move down the road to the British Legion. This was not popular and, in the end, after much turmoil, it was announced that the Civic Hall would not be closing after all. At least not on March 31st. You couldn't make it up!

But my tenure as chairman would soon be up and, with no replacement in sight, I initiated merger talks with Heswall U3A's chairman but soon realised that they were not keen. A saviour in the shape of Pat Kynaston finally appeared. You know what they say: if you want a job done, find a busy person to do it. Well, Pat and her husband Bob are two of the busiest people I know but I'm sure they will both find the time to keep Neston U3A going for another 20 years.

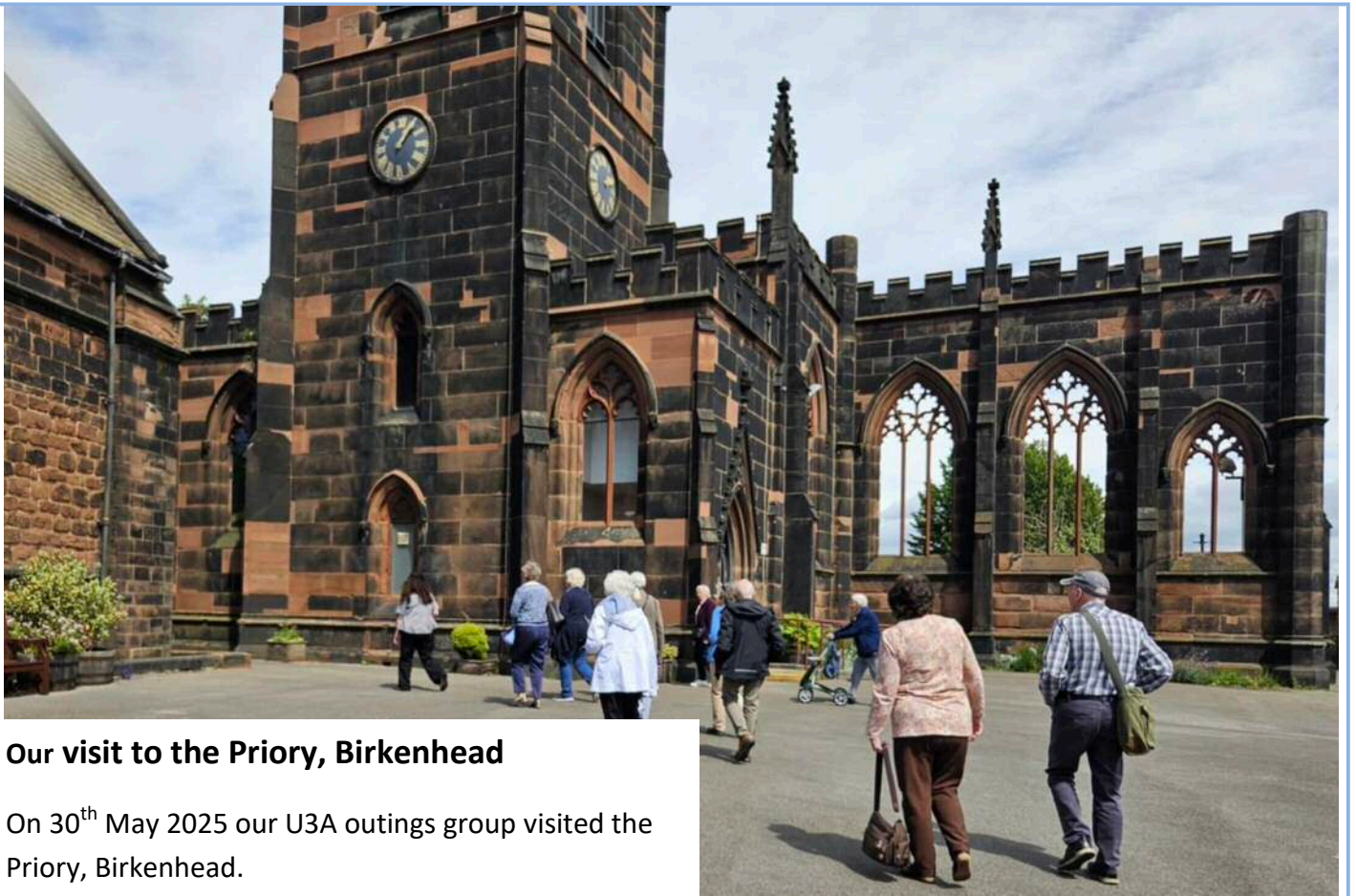
The other day a U3A member said to me, unprompted: 'There will never be another chairman like you.' Taking this as a complement – it might not have been – I thought this could have been said about all my predecessors in the job. We've all done it differently but at least we kept this show on the road so that it could be handed over to the next incumbent.

Michael Grumett

## Exploring Music

This group meets at 2pm on the second Monday of the month at our house in Little Neston from November-April. I choose a topic for each session and introduce the music with brief details of the type and construction of melody, the plan of the music and the instruments used. Topics are very varied: I have covered piano music, folk songs, composers such as J S Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven and others. In March I plan to cover British composers. Spaces are limited but we always try to fit people in.

Contact Celia Grumett 0151 336 547  
c.wg@hotmail.co.uk.



### **Our visit to the Priory, Birkenhead**

On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025 our U3A outings group visited the Priory, Birkenhead.

It turned out to be one of our best outings (and we have had some good ones). I don't think anyone was expecting this.

The sky was grey when the coach picked us up but it improved and, by the time we arrived at our destination, the sun was shining.

We had the benefit of a Blue Badge Guide which helps so much to make these trips interesting. This place is the oldest standing building on Merseyside, once inhabited by the Benedictine monks. We visited the lovely Chapel (Chapter House) to listen to our well informed guide and to admire the stained glass windows.

I do recommend a visit to the Priory, I shall certainly go again. The whole experience was excellent. We ended our trip with afternoon tea at the Start Yard Cafe nearby.

Doreen Higgins (Trip organiser)  
Dorothy Blunt (Assistant)





Afternoon tea at the Start Yard Cafe

## The History Group

We meet on the last Monday in the month at 2pm in Neston Library. We are on a world historical tour and have arrived in the Far East in 1939. Members are invited to research a relevant country and give a short resume of their findings with reference to that particular period. There is no pressure to contribute. You can just come along and listen to some fascinating reports. And there is tea, coffee and biscuits.

Contact Michael Grumett 0151 336 5474 [m.grumett@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:m.grumett@hotmail.co.uk).

**[nestonu3a.org.uk](http://nestonu3a.org.uk)**

### **Important**

Please note that any change of personal details should be sent to your Membership Secretary, Vivian. [membershipsecretary@nestonu3a.org.uk](mailto:membershipsecretary@nestonu3a.org.uk)



### Long Walking Group

The U3A long walking group started earlier than usual this year in March.

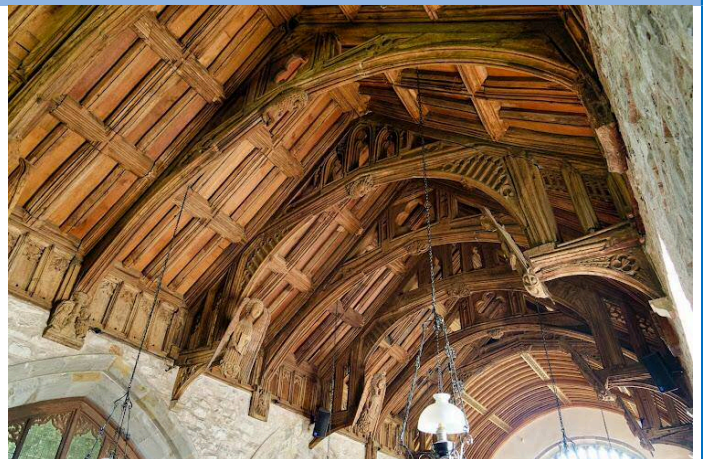
So far, we have enjoyed lovely weather and have walked at Thurstaston, Helsby Hills and Cilcain. A highlight was a visit to village church at Cilcain and seeing its unusual wooden roof complete with carved angels. There were swifts nesting in the church porch.

The long walks (6-8 miles) take place on the third Wednesday of the month during the better weather and usually take place in NE Wales or Cheshire.

We also run medium length walks of 3-5 miles on the Wirral and these take place throughout the year on the first Tuesday of the month.

If you would like to join us, please contact Rosemary or Hilary on [walking@nestonu3a.org.uk](mailto:walking@nestonu3a.org.uk). Please note you must be a member of Neston U3A to come on the walks.

Rosemary and Hilary





### **Earth and Beyond Group Visit to Greenfield Valley Heritage Park**

After experiencing such a sunny spring season, the Earth and Beyond Group were unlucky to visit the Greenfield Valley Heritage Park on what was perhaps the first really wet day in May – and did it rain! Fourteen of us arrived at the same time as the rain, but conversely we were given a very warm welcome by all members of staff that we met.

We met in the independent “Tearoom at Basingwerk” for a cuppa and a comfort break before visiting the Museum which was set up in the 1980s, and focuses on Greenfield’s farming and industrial past. Renovated in 2016 with up to date colourful displays and interactivities, the museum describes the surprising importance of Greenfield as a centre of industry.

After a pre-ordered lunch in the tearoom, we braved the weather on an escorted tour of the historical sites spread along the valley in the 70 acre site.

We started by sheltering under the trees at the Basingwerk Abbey which was founded in the 12th century and belonged to the Order of Cistercians. It maintained significant lands in the English county of Derbyshire. The abbey was abandoned and its assets were sold following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536. We were told that much of the building was removed and used to build some of the later buildings on site.

We then visited the sites and remains of the factories, most of which were built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were run by water power which came from the Holywell Stream. Most factories had eventually closed down by the 1960s and included:

- The Battery Works which employed local people to shape pots and pans from brass sheets.
- Meadow Mill, built in 1787, and which produced rolled copper sheets for Thomas Williams' companies.
- The Lower Cotton Mill, where John Smalley of Preston introduced cotton manufacturing to the Greenfield Valley in 1777 by constructing the three-storey Old or Yellow Cotton Mill.
- Abbey Wire Mill where copper and brass wire was made.

The industrial history at this fascinating valley also includes cotton, snuff, red lead, paper making, cement, dyes, wool, corn, soap, flour, mineral water and various chemicals. Most, if not all, depending for power on the reliable river from the Holywell Stream.

The guided tour lasted almost 2 hours (by which time much of the rain had abated), and we do recommend other members of the Neston U3A to consider a visit. We especially recommend taking a guided tour to get the most out of the visit.

Derick Cotton

### **Lesley Sutherland has sent us the last email she sent to her writing group.**

Hello everyone, what a very dull day this Good Friday is. No gardening for me today and the heating's on. Got a good jigsaw puzzle to do and book to read but first some emails!

Last meeting we had a full house - marvellous. Well done everyone it was really good to catch up with you all and to be able to give you news of our dear Marion. We had a lovely day together in the Dorset sunshine and she sends you all her love.

One thing we were all agreed on was how fantastic was this topic. Thank you Liz for suggesting it and thanks to you all for finding such perfect poems.

We began with Pauline who read, with her usual fluency, The Seven Ages of Man speech from Shakespeare's 'As You Like It'. It was particularly interesting how she explained that this was said by Jaques, a rather morose character who is known as Mr Melancholy by others in the play. It's a good point to bear in mind that many of Shakespeare's lines, which are often quoted, are the words of characters and not those of Shakespeare himself.

We went in the order of the speech, so next up was Belinda who was in charge of "the infant/Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms". She read: 'Infant Doing Assembly About Time' by Allan Ahlberg and 'Learning to Read' by Roger McGough, two of our favourite poets for poems associated with childhood. Then Liz continued with "the whining school-boy" and another of Allan Ahlberg's poems, 'Please Mrs Butler' (and you don't have to be a teacher to appreciate how the teacher was feeling). There was also 'Spring Song' by Delia Graham which is what I have written down, but when I came to Google it to remind me I can't find it. Why is that Liz, have I got it written down incorrectly?

Next up was Sue with "the lover/Sighing like a furnace" and in this section you can really see Jacques' mockery. Sue chose, 'Valentine' by Wendy Cope; 'When I Was One and Twenty' by A E Housman, and 'Recuerdo' by Edna St Vincent Millay. Oh to be young again ... maybe not!

Diane had a hard job with the soldier "full of strange oaths and bearded like the \*bard". It's not always easy to find uplifting poems and this section of 'The Seven Ages' does not lend itself to that. However, Diane chose the very suitable 'The Soldier's Cigarette Oct 1915' by Robert Harold Beckh (1894-1916). I must admit, I have never heard of this poet and we speculated that with the spelling of his name, he might have been German. But no, after some searching I found that he was one of the 'Cambridge' poets of the First WW and the year of his death tells its own story.

Wise Val had the section on “justice ... in fair round belly ... full of wise saws”. She focused on ‘Wise saws’ which means wise sayings. I like the fact that she picked ‘Ozymandias’ by Percy Bysshe Shelley. It was certainly in keeping with Jacques’ tone as poor old Ozymandias - full of self importance and wise words but after many years ‘nothing beside remains’ apart from a few broken bits of statue. Let that be a lesson to us all! Further words of wisdom came from W H Auden with “Leap Before You Look’ and ‘If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking’ by Emily Dickinson.

Vicky had to contend with the sixth age with the “lean and slipper’d pantaloons ... spectacles on nose and his shrunk shank”. Another possible area for sadness but instead we were moved by the story of ‘Bill and Joe’ by Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) about two old comrades remembering the old days and being remembered in their turn by this poem. It was particularly apt that Vicky found it in her poetry book entitled: ‘The Seven Ages of Poetry’ - perfect with our topic.

I had the last age “that ends this strange eventful history” and was anxious not to have us all going home feeling miserable and was astonished at how many poems I found that were quite uplifting in their way, considering the subject matter. I didn’t read them all, just two of them but have listed the ones I found here in case anyone wanted to look them up.

‘On Aging’ Maya Angelou

‘The Folks Inside’ Shel Silverstein

‘Woodland Burial’ Pay Ayres (having this one at my woodland burial)

‘Not for me a young man’s death’ Roger McGough

‘I Sit Beside the Fire and Think’ (Bilbo Baggins) J R R Tolkien

It occurs to me that we often find more poems than we have time for and so, if you would like me to, I could include them with these emails if you let me have the titles and poets.

From Lesley x

*\*The word here was ‘pard’ and I assumed it must be ‘bard’ so I changed it. Very sorry, Lesley, if I did wrong. But at least you know I read everything! Bardon me if I made a mistake. Ho ho. Ed.*

## September Social

Members may be aware that the September meeting will be a social event with, hopefully, most of our groups showcasing what they have to offer. Entrance will be free and it is a chance to get to know other members, groups available and maybe even suggest new ones and recruit for them. We are also going to invite members of the public to increase our membership and show the folk of Neston what is on offer so if you know anyone who might be interested, encourage them to come. Finally a plea – if any of you out there are bakers we would love some homemade cakes to give to those attending!

Best wishes,

Tina Fox, Groups Co-ordinator.

## Message from Kenny Bird

Kenny would like to thank all of you who attended Ron’s funeral. She’s been very touched by all the care and concern people have shown her at this awful time. The after service collection raised £354.45 for the Wirral Hospice St John’s and they were very grateful.

*The hospice doesn’t receive enough government support and relies on donations to keep doing its valuable work. Ed.*

## Lunch Club

The lunch club has been run for some time by Lesley Pearce but she hasn't been well so Kenny and Shelagh have taken it over for the time being.

Our recent gathering was at the Boathouse in Parkgate. Mixed reviews. A few people were disappointed with the slow service. It was a tad tardy. The place was quite busy and I did see some tables being served before ours – but it was busy and there were 13 of us. I didn't care to be honest. The sun was shining, I had a drink and good company and was enjoying a gab and a laugh. What more can you ask for? Oh – food. OK.

The next lunch club will not be till September as July is the Summer Lunch at the Royal Oak in Little Neston and in August people are usually busy with grandchildren and holidays. Details will be available on-line or at the August Speaker Meeting.



## Singing for Fun

If you enjoy singing and want to get out and meet new and old friends, the Singing for Fun group could be just what you're looking for. We are a friendly group, singing both old favourites and some new songs. It is not a choir as such but a group who sing for fun with keyboard accompaniment. We meet on Friday afternoons 2-4pm every fortnight, breaking in the summer and at Christmas, at the URC hall on Parkgate Road. There is a small charge to cover expenses.

Contact Celia Grumett 0151 336 5474 c.wg@hotmail.co.uk.

**There are a few tickets left for the Summer Lunch. They'll be on sale at the Speaker Meeting on Thursday. Please bring the RIGHT MONEY IN CASH or a cheque payable to 'Neston u3a'. I can't save tickets without payment so please don't ask. The price is £17.**



### **April Speaker Meeting with the snakes and creepy crawlies.**

Mixed reactions. Some people couldn't be doing with it and had to leave. Others loved seeing all the creatures (count me in) and found them fascinating and beautiful. But I wouldn't want to keep them as pets! We've included a few photos so you'll have to look away if they give you the willies.

If anybody would like to comment on any of the speaker meetings, it would be much appreciated. Just send them to me and I'll put them on file.

Shelagh  
Newslettersecretary@nestonu3a.org.uk



[nestonu3a.org.uk](http://nestonu3a.org.uk)

If you know of any members who are unwell or in hospital,  
please let Doreen Higgins know on 336 5108 and she'll send them a card.

## Editor's bit

Here we go with round two. This blankety blank computer keeps crashing and, during the last disaster, the entire Word file disappeared into a black hole, never to be retrieved, despite Kim's best efforts. Praise be to the techno angels that the emails were intact and we were able to re-collect all the info from them. But what a tedious chore to re-do the whole caboodle when I'd already done it once. Think yourselves lucky that I didn't slit my wrists.

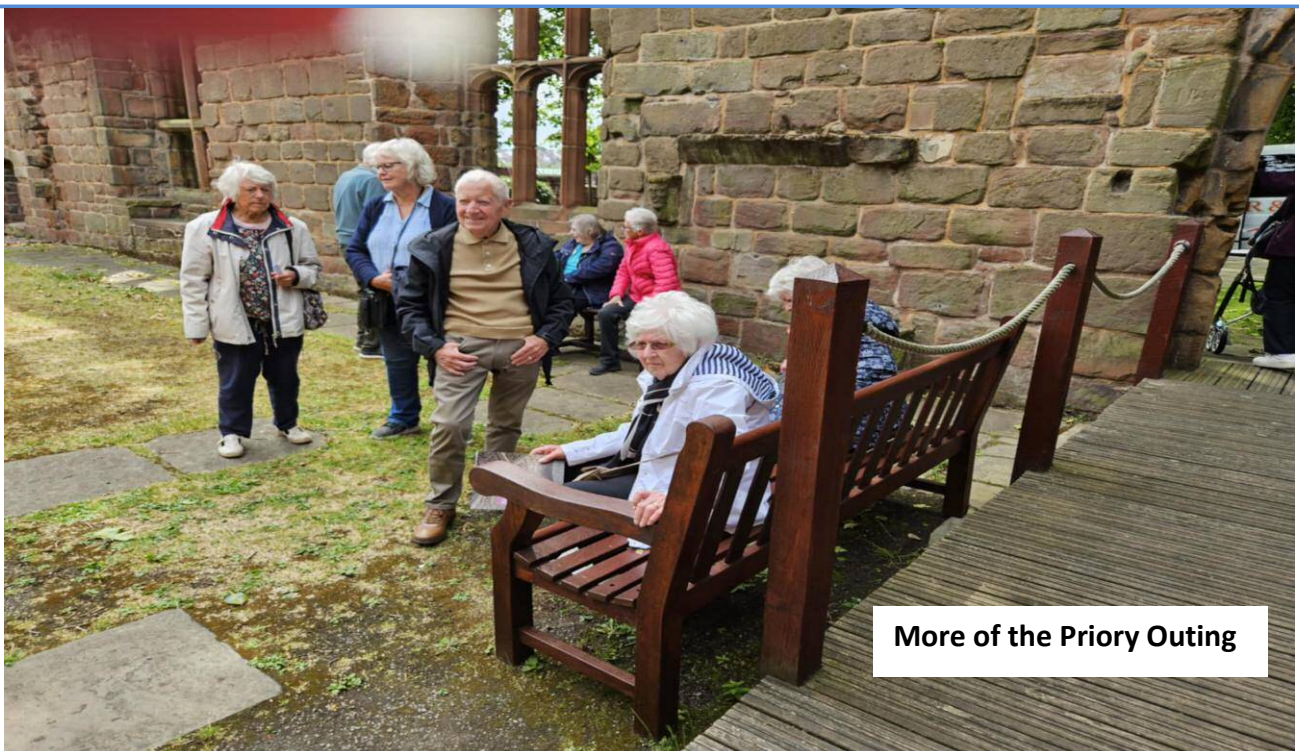
We've had some juicy words and photos from various groups (many thanks) but not much from other members. We want to hear from you. Don't be shy. You might be inspired by the June Speaker with his Memories of the Sixties. Come on – you must have something to relate unless you were in a coma at the time! (Or too young – in which case, read and learn from the rest of us.) I'll kick you off with two of my memories, the first two that sprang to mind. There are many more but I won't reveal the more intimate or embarrassing ones.

Memory one: We'd paid good money to see Gerry and the Pacemakers at The Cavern. But they didn't turn up and we had The Beatles instead. I was the delegated one to go the band room and complain. I banged on the door, which was opened by John Lennon. I opened my gob to complain loudly, indignant hands on hips, bolshy attitude on display, and he merely picked me up by the elbows, deposited me several feet away and shut the door in my face. How rude! We never got a refund.

Memory two: I'd been to Southport on the back of Rod the Sod's motorbike. When we got back, well past my curfew time, I made him stop at the top of our street and there was my dad, standing there in his slippers, pipe in mouth, face like a smacked bottom. Mortification! Marched home in silence to be confronted by hysterical mother, who wanted to know if he'd 'touched me'. Honest to God, they were obsessed with girls losing their virginity in those days. How different it is now. But if there aren't any boundaries or rules to break, where's the fun? Comments appreciated for next time.

So tarra for now. I'm going to get this securely saved before it buggers off again.

Best wishes from nostalgic Shelagh    [newslettersecretary@nestonu3a.org.uk](mailto:newslettersecretary@nestonu3a.org.uk)



More of the Priory Outing