

## Neston u3a Bulletin

March 2026

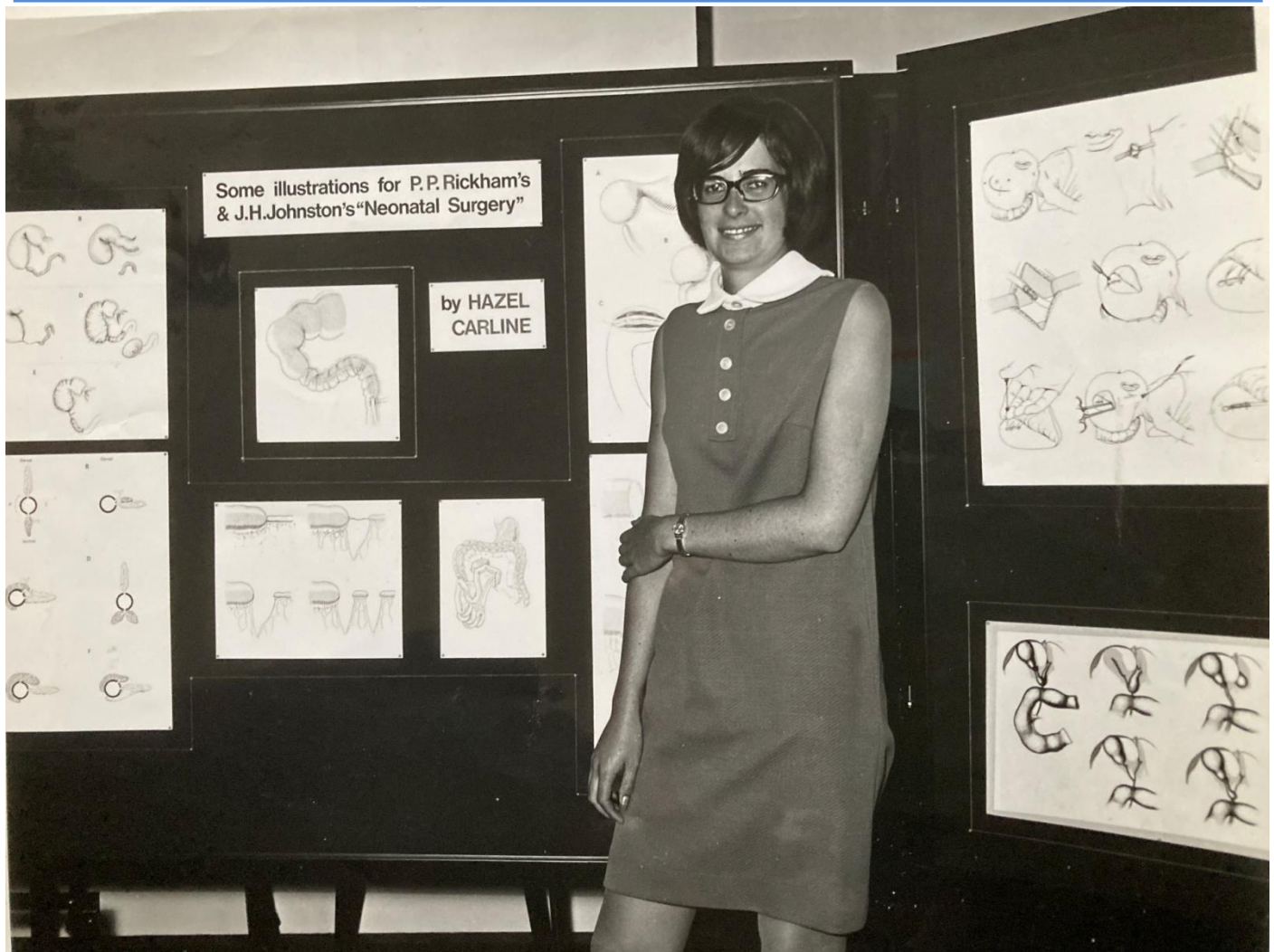
u3a learn,  
laugh,  
live

### What's happening in March and April 2026:

#### An Unusual Career

I had a rather unusual career as a Medical Artist at Alder Hey Hospital and the University of Liverpool Department of Anatomy. My job was to illustrate books and slides for medical students, which occasionally included sketching operations. After my children were born, I did occasional freelance work for surgeons I had come to know.

Hazel Blundell



#### Singing for Fun

A few people, who haven't attended for a while, still have their song sheets. It would be much appreciated if you could return them as it takes time and money to run off new ones. You can bring them to a Speaker Meeting or give them to anybody else who attends the group.

## **A Thai Tale**

My husband was a university lecturer and he managed to get a two year leave of absence to work in Chiangmai university in the North of Thailand. He had worked in Thailand for 6 months before we were married and had been seduced by the country and its people. He particularly enjoyed the attentions of the women he worked with. They waited on him and generally spoiled him. For example, in the mango season they would peel, slice a mango and present it to him on a plate.

Here in England I read his letters and looked at the photos and resigned myself to his being a no show at the end of his contract. In any case I was not sure that I wanted him back. He had thoroughly enjoyed being waited upon and this was definitely not something I would be prepared to do. In the event Colin had to return when his 6 month contract ended. We did get married and devoted our energies to bringing up our two daughters. Thoughts of Thailand only surfaced when Colin saw an advert for a two year lectureship at Chiangmai university. It was not something that immediately appealed to me but those two years turned out to be the most interesting and happiest of our lives.

Next to our house a large mango tree was growing. It was almost twice as tall as the house. We loved that tree, not for its fruit which belonged to our landlady but for the shade it gave us in the hot season. It was the hot season now and I was sitting under the tree enjoying its shade.

Suddenly I heard a large thud. I turned round. In the middle of the lawn was a large bright- green conical heap of snake. It was at least twice the size of our three year old daughter who was now running towards our strange visitor. I, on the other hand, did not wish to make its further acquaintance. Fortunately the snake was a fast mover and, before we knew it, it had climbed back and was hidden in the leaves and branches of the tree.

However, the next day it repeated its performance, in fact it became a regular occurrence. We began to look forward to its visits. But there was a problem. On three mornings I used to run a playgroup in the shade of the mango tree. I had established that the snake was not venomous but I thought that it was not a good advert for the group. I decided that I would have to find it another home. Our house was opposite a large boy's school and the boys used to play outside our house. They were very easily persuaded to remove the snake with the aid of a v shaped stick. I decided that the snake's flying lessons were over. Flying snakes and pre-school children are not compatible.

Ann Taylor

## **Backgammon**

I am hoping to set up a small friendly Backgammon group. I asked for potential members at the end of last year but need a couple more members to join to make it a viable group. If you have ever played, or wanted to play, please contact me and we can meet up to decide how we would like a group to work. (I'll be away till the beginning of March.)

Backgammon is essentially a simple board game but the more you play the more you appreciate its subtlety.

Lesley Hobbs 07810 488673

## Pub Grub

Your intrepid reporter MICHAEL GRUMETT finds out the truth about claims that pubs are in danger of closing. I keep reading that landlords are shutting up shop because they can't make it pay any more. Even our beleaguered Government is promising to help them stay open. Nobody is going to the pub any more. Well, all I can say is: I don't believe a word of it. It certainly isn't the case round here.

We went to The Three Stags in Bebington for the monthly U3A meal. You could hardly get in the door. There were a dozen of us and we were put in a corner which was so crowded, you had to walk round two other tables to get to the bar. Every pensioner in Bebington was there for their lunch - plus a young family with a screaming brat. Natch.

I joined a long queue at the bar where just two members of staff were taking orders. Eventually, there was just one young woman in front of me. She seemed to be making a complicated order for at least a dozen people, many with allergies, but when she came to pay, neither her plastic bank debit card or her mobile phone enabled her to do so and, of course, she didn't have cash. In the end, she gave up. By this time I'd lost the will to live but somehow found the strength to order our drinks and carry them back to the table.

After a brief breathing space it was back to the bar again to join another long queue to order our meals. You ended up feeling quite sorry for the staff. There were only three of them taking orders and serving the lunches. In fact, our food seemed to come quite quickly, was reasonably priced and very acceptable after the long waits at the bar.

And this wasn't an isolated example. I'll have to stop promoting The Royal Oak at Little Neston. It's just getting to be too popular. We went there for a meal with friends one Saturday night, only to find the place was packed out. It seems it was some sort of belated funeral wake. I don't know if this is a Neston custom but it was uproarious. The noise levels were off the scale with entire families shouting their heads off. Celia and I took our hearing aids out to gain some relief. Some send-off!

One wet afternoon we decided to call in at the Nag's Head in Willaston for a cup of tea. The car park was completely full! Not a parking space to be found at 3pm on a midweek afternoon! It transpired that there was a roomful of retired people there playing a strange game called mah-jong.

Then we were at The Hinderton Arms on Valentine's Night and all the tables in our room were full with couples dining out. So the next time you read some story in the paper purporting to sign the death knell of the local pub, just trot down to your local and you'll find it's still doing a roaring trade.

## Spanish Conversation

New member Gina is wondering if anyone would be interested in forming a Spanish conversation group? If there is sufficient interest I will try and bring folk together.

*Don't forget, if there is a subject of interest to you for which we don't currently have a group, I can try to support members to start up a new group or help publicise an existing group if they have vacancies.*

*Tina Fox*



Lunch Club having a jolly good time at the January Lunch in the Royal Oak in Little Neston



## Lunch Club

The next lunch club will be on Wednesday March 4<sup>th</sup> at the Nag's Head in Willaston. Please book your place by Friday February 27<sup>th</sup>. They've asked us to pre-order so those who show interest will be forwarded a menu. It's a nuisance but they looked after us very well last time we were there so it's worth the effort.

It was going to be the Red Fox but they messed us about with the bill last time. Kenny has been trying to phone them for 2 days to ask if they could issue separate bills but she couldn't get a person, just an answer machine. Then she tried the Boathouse but they're closing for a 6 week refurbishment. I think they're opening up the top floor.

Please email Shelagh if you want to come. It's important we get the numbers right or it all goes to hell. [shelaghnugent45@gmail.com](mailto:shelaghnugent45@gmail.com).

Speaking of answer machines – the last lunch club at the Three Stags was booked for 10 people. Then another 2 wanted to come so I phoned to alter the booking. I tried several times and kept getting a very irritating and stupid robot, which didn't seem able to connect me to a person. In the end, I told it to go away in no uncertain terms and changed the booking on-line. They didn't receive the message so 12 of us turned up for a table for 10. Fortunately, because we're all nice people, we had a jolly time anyway. See Michael's *Pub Grub*.

## Poetry, Prose and Plays Group 3

Hello Neston u3a. In case you're interested, this is what Poetry, Prose and Plays Group 3 will be getting up to this year.

All Meetings at 3 Keel Hey, Willaston (unless otherwise stated) on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 10.30am.

Programme for 2026 Poetry, Prose and Plays Group 3:

- 8th January: PLAY
- 12th February: WELSH POETS
- 12th March: EMOTIONS
- 9th April: A reading from our "go-to" book
- 14th May: BRITISH TOWNS
- 11th June: The 5 (or is it 6?) SENSES
- 9th July: LIMERICKS/writing workshop and lunch at Lesley's
- 10th September: HOBBIES
- 8th October: Lady Lever Art Gallery Visit
- 12th November: COMING OF AGE
- 10th December: POETRY morning and Christmas Lunch

Our group is currently full, but if you would like to see what goes on you would be very welcome to come to a meeting as a guest. Just get in touch with the Group Coordinator (me). If you like the format, I am always happy to help anyone set up a new group for themselves.

Lesley Sutherland

## Future Speakers

**February 26<sup>th</sup>**: Laughter is the best medicine. Presented by Sue Holden. Because we all like to laugh, discover how laughter is a real medicinal tonic

**March 26<sup>th</sup>**: Should I stay or should I go? Presented by Roger Blaxall. The Liverpool evacuees' story.

**April 30<sup>th</sup>**: How a child gambler wins his life back. Presented by Paul Isherwood. A 10 year old schoolboy lured by the magnetic pull of a four year gambling addiction has a light bulb moment and seeks help. Now well into his fifties hasn't gambled ever since.

**May 28<sup>th</sup>**: A conscientious objector drives an ambulance on the front line in WWI. Presented by Tim Coltman. My GreatGrandfather's story. (also **AGM**)

## Art Exhibition at the Floral Pavilion

I am a member of Heswall u3a and, in particular, a member of our Management Committee. I am also a member of Wallasey Rotary Club.

Every year my Club arranges an Art Exhibition at the Floral Pavilion in New Brighton. This year's exhibition is to run from Tuesday 11th August to Saturday 15th August. There is no charge to members of the public to enter the Floral Pavilion to view the exhibits.

We provide an opportunity for local artists to exhibit their work and to offer them for sale. Currently we have about a hundred artists exhibiting every year.

Any of your members who might be interested in possibly entering paintings for the Exhibition should e-mail me. I will then arrange that fuller information, including an invitation e-mail, is sent out to all who show interest.

The Exhibition is arranged by my Club to raise money for local and other charities and therefore presents an opportunity which might be mutually beneficial to your members and various charities.

Kind regards,

Ray Allan

[annandray.allan@btopenworld.com](mailto:annandray.allan@btopenworld.com)

## For Music Lovers

If you happen to be in Neston on a Saturday late morning, take yourself to the bus stop in Brook Street. In one of the houses across the road, a brilliant guitarist is practicing. Last Saturday, when I was waiting for the bus, he was playing fabulous blues. I mean, really good, Brian May standard. (I'm not being sexist, I know it's a man because one of his neighbours told me.) He spoke to all the neighbours and they agreed his practice times so they weren't disturbed. A rare gentleman! I hope he's discovered by somebody other than me!

Shelagh



## Art Group

The Watercolour and Drawing Art Group is up and running at Neston Library. We are meeting every 1st and 3rd Thursday afternoon at 2.00pm. There is no charge for the sessions and drinks can be bought at the library. The group is open to new or returning artists and participants will need to supply their own paint and paper. I can supply these for the first session people attend if anyone is totally new to art. I can also provide a list of materials they may wish to buy.

I've enclosed a photograph of the group painting at the library.

Liz Ledsham

## Editor's bit

It's coming up Spring, and it can't come soon enough for me, so there should be plenty of activity in the outdoor pursuits department. Please remember to send photos and descriptions of what you've been up to.

Because most of us are old farts, Pat's idea of relating post war memories has got my juices flowing but I don't want to hog the space so come on, send in some of your stories (if you're old enough, of course). What about previous jobs? That's an interesting one from Hazel Blundell – and a photo of the young Hazel. Not a bingo wing to be seen! How about interesting photos of members when they were young? They always have them on 'order of service' things at funerals but how about some while we're still alive?

When you're sending items for the newsletter, please don't hit the 'reply' button on the Beacon generated email because all the messages get scrambled for some reason. Send any emails to me: [shelagh Nugent45@gmail.com](mailto:shelagh Nugent45@gmail.com) I leave you with the hope that the weather dries up a bit and those of us who suffer from arthritis can enjoy a bit of relief from the aching joints!

Best wishes from Shelagh

## Post war memories

Most soldiers were demobbed in 1946, do you remember what was it like having Dad home (anyone over 85 may have these memories) and how did rationing impact you? Even I remember this as some items were still on ration until 1953 - sweets and some clothing.

Pat Kynaston



My Nan's brother, Uncle John, used to work for a fruit and veg wholesaler and part of his job was picking up imported produce from the Liverpool docks. I used to go with him sometimes and was let loose to wander around while he loaded his lorry. I remember the rough-tough dockers looking out for me: 'Watch out, Queen, don't go near the edge.' They were very kind. What would Health and Safety make of it these days? As a consequence of these trips, our sideboard cupboard was always well stocked with bags of sugar, dried fruit and other such exotic goodies. If anyone in the street was making a birthday cake, they knew which door to knock on.

I also remember the bomb sites. We were forbidden to play on them but I loved them because they were the only local source of wild flowers. But we did have Rose Bay Willow Herb growing on the roof of the outside toilet – later referred to as Roofo Boglia.

Shelagh Nugent

*Anybody else got post war memories? Rationing? Bomb sites? Returning Daddies? Non-returning Daddies? Tough women keeping the home fires burning?*



My only memory of rationing is of my mother complaining on frequent occasions about having to queue for nappies with my clothing coupons.

I was nearly four by the time sugar rationing ended and, never having had it as a child (it was always saved for the grown-ups), I do not have a strong taste for sweet things. I'm more of a savoury person, I was told I was given bacon rind to chew on when I was teething.

I still have my ID card and ration book somewhere.

We had no bomb sites. Even though we were only a couple of miles from the largest garrison in the country (Aldershot) only one bomb was dropped on Windmill Hill behind my future primary school.

Treasurer Kim