



Chester Times

May 2025

u3a learn,
laugh,
live
Chester

Greetings from the Chair

I had a nostalgic time a few weeks ago and returned to **Bradford**, where I went to university from 1979-1983, for a look around with my friend, Alison, who had the room next to me in Halls. I haven't been back for 42 years, but I was keen to return as Bradford is City of Culture this year. Most of the campus was unrecognisable and our favourite pub, cheap Italian restaurant, laundrette and Halls have now closed, but the International, a local curry house, was still open with a better menu than in my student days!



*The Alhambra, Bradford -
geograph.org.uk - 3234036" by
David Dixon CC BY-SA 2.0.*

We saw the David Hockney photos in the Science and Media Museum, the Extraordinary Portraits exhibition and an interesting immersive film experience about Bradford Mills in a basement in the City Centre. Bradford wasn't quite ready for the year ahead, but there are still lots of

things to see/do and cheap overnight accommodation, so if you fancy a train trip, now that there is a direct train from Chester, it is worth

a look around or even a stay with visit to the famous Alhambra theatre.

Your committee continue to work hard, planning events and collaborations with the Chester Heritage Festival, Storyhouse, and, hopefully, the Festival of Ideas. All these events require support, so if you don't want to be on the committee, but fancy helping us out, please let Sue, our speaker secretary, know. Help is always welcome! Caroline and Jeff are looking at how we should all be using the **Members Portal** throughout the year. It is the easiest way to renew your membership when the time comes. I also await with interest feedback from the new u3a Board/Council, to see how things might be changing for the organisation.

The **Chester Heritage Festival** starts later in May, so make sure you are checking out the website/newsletter for information about the activities. I am leading two free walks this year – one is a repeat of last year's 'Libraries and Literature' Walk (to tie in with the Storyhouse Literature Festival) and my other walk is 'Gone and Forgotten', looking at more things which have vanished from Chester's landscape. Recently I have been researching the markets of Chester from the first permanent market building in 1692, replaced in 1865 by the Victorian market, to the new Market today. We have a very long history of selling.

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Tuesday Monthly Meeting

Storyhouse Garret Theatre, Chester, 10.00 start

6th May - "First Take Your Owl": Insights from the World of Medieval Medicine: Nick Fry

Nick Fry will give an illustrated talk about the practice of medieval medicine, using examples from Chester and beyond. He will consider some of the concepts which lay behind diagnosis and treatment, touching on religion, superstition and fantasy. And of course, a look at some of the more outlandish remedies!

Nick has worked for many years at Chester Cathedral and is also a Green Badge guide for the City of Chester. As a member of Deva Victrix, Roman reenactors in Chester, he takes a leading role as the Emperor Domitian at the annual Saturnalia Parade and has recently been seen in the 2023 Mystery Plays in the Cathedral, appearing as God.

This special morning event in the Storyhouse Garret Theatre replaces our normal Tuesday afternoon meeting at Festival Church. Please note that pre-booking is essential – email speakersec@chesteru3a.org.uk for further information.



Thursday Monthly Meetings

St Columba's Church Hall, 10.00am for 10.30am start

15th May - Chester and its Silver Trade: Dennis Holman

Chester has a history of working with silver over two millennia, through mining, coinage and silverware, with its own skilled silversmiths, assay office and hallmarks. In this talk Chester u3a member, Dennis Holman, will take you through the phases of the silver trade, explaining how to read the hallmarks on silver and how to care for any silver items that you own. He'll also reveal the location of a museum in Chester that you (probably) didn't know existed!



Dates for your diaries

You can see the talks organised so far for 2025 on our [website](#). Have a look and make a note of anything that interests you, and if you have any suggestions to fill the gaps, please email speakersec@chesteru3a.org.uk.

Speaker Secretary's Report



At Festival Church this month, Andrew MacDonald and Frank Hogan made an engaging double act talking about the history of business branding and the psychology that underlies it. Branding is creating a unique name or image for a product to

make it stand out in the marketplace and leave a distinct impression in the minds of buyers. Whilst we might think of branding as a relatively modern idea, it dates back many thousands of years. In ancient civilisations, such as Egypt and Greece, artisans marked their goods with symbols to identify the creator and establish a sense of quality and authenticity. During the Middle Ages, guilds emerged, and branding became more formalized to ensure accountability among producers. The Industrial Revolution brought mass production and companies started using branding as a tool to create recognition and loyalty. With the rise of advertising in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, brands began to convey messages and emotions through marketing, and iconic slogans and logos were created. To illustrate this, Andrew made us look at some familiar logos in a new way. The FedEx logo has an "invisible" arrow in the background space, which subtly suggests speed and precision about the brand. The arrow in the Amazon logo extends from the letter "A" to the letter "Z" while curving to form a smile, representing customer satisfaction, endless product selection, and end-to-end service. And I don't think I was the only one who hadn't spotted the bear hidden in the Toblerone logo as a subtle reference to the city of Bern where Toblerone was originally manufactured!

Frank then explained the role of branding in establishing a bond of trust with potential customers. Fake branding can sometimes be fun, like the tribute bands "Amy Housewine" and "Proxy Music". More often there is a malicious intent, such as an invitation to click on an email link that looks like it comes from a trusted source but is a scam that exploits your trust to extract money or trick you into buying a fake product. The fact that Frank now owns a plastic necklace when he ordered a phone thermal imaging camera shows that it can happen to anyone!



At St Columba's, Egyptologist Claire Ollett gave us a fascinating insight into her hero, Howard Carter, who in 1922 discovered the tomb of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun. In 1914 Carter was able to pursue his dream to find the tomb of Tutankhamun when his benefactor, Lord Carnarvon, received the concession to dig in the Valley of the Kings. However, excavations were soon interrupted by the First World War and not resumed until late 1917. By 1922, Carnarvon had become dissatisfied with the lack of results and agreed with Carter that he would fund only one more season of work. Carter returned to the Valley of the Kings and investigated a line of huts that he had abandoned a few seasons earlier. On 4 November 1922, a worker uncovered a step in the rock while digging beneath the remains of the huts and further digging revealed the top of a doorway decorated with seals and hieroglyphics. Carter sent a telegram to Carnarvon, who arrived from England two and a half weeks later (what must have been an agonizing wait for Carter!) and the first steps towards uncovering the tomb were made. Behind the door lay a passage containing rubble which took two days to clear, and beyond that, another sealed door. On 26 November Carter peered through a small hole he made in the corner of the door and, using a candle for light, was amazed to see dazzling gold treasures glistening back at him - chariots, thrones, statues, and furniture inlaid with ivory and semi-precious stones – which he described as "wonderful things". This room was not even the burial chamber itself, but it contained so many precious artefacts that it took many weeks to remove and catalogue them. Not until 16 February 1923 could Carter open another sealed doorway guarded by two life-size figures of Tutankhamun that led from the antechamber into the burial chamber and lift the lid on the sarcophagus to reveal Tutankhamun's mummy

within a nest of three golden coffins like a set of Russian dolls. Throughout her talk, Claire stunned us with beautiful photographs that allowed us to appreciate the incredible detail of the artefacts. Equally impressive were her slides of Carter's record cards showing how he meticulously assessed and catalogued the thousands of objects in the tomb.

In a talk filled with fascinating facts, the one that stood out for me was that, despite the awe-inspiring craftsmanship, the outer coffin proved to be slightly too big and prevented the sarcophagus lid from closing. Carpenters were summoned to

trim the coffin and, over 3,000 years later, Carter would find the fragments lying in the base of the sarcophagus!

Claire concluded with a moving quote from the Wishing Cup of Tutankhamun, which appears as an apt dedication on Carter's gravestone:

"May your spirit live, may you spend millions of years, you who love Thebes, sitting with your face to the north wind, your eyes beholding happiness".

Sue Houghton

Social Events

Friday 20th June: Portmeirion

We travel to Portmeirion with a short coffee break on the way at Bala. Portmeirion is a unique village in a beautiful part of Wales. The architecture is based on Italian villages. The 1960's TV series, The Prisoner, was set here. It is certainly an enchanting place to visit on "Yellow Day", the happiest day of the year!

The cost of this trip will be £30. If you are interested, please contact [the social team](#) or via the Events page of Chester u3a website.

You can pay at one of the meetings or by bank transfer - the account name: Chester u3a Social Account Sort Code: 30 91 92 Account number: 63866868. Please put your name and Portmeirion as the reference.

Pick up times will be as usual. Hough Green 9.00am, Delamere Street 9.10 and Sainsbury's at 9.20

Thursday 10th July: Kinky Boots, the Musical

We have reserved 20 tickets (our favourite seats at the front of the circle) for a matinee performance at the Liverpool Empire. Tickets are £45.00. Make your own way by train or bus. Please contact [the social team](#) a.s.a.p. to reserve your place.

We look forward to you joining us during the coming months.

Liz and Sandra





A Member Remembers

Linda Manning in conversation with Fran Reading

It was fascinating to meet with Linda and to hear about both a life well-lived and her plans for the future. Her travels and stories took us all over the world including Lowestoft, New York, Rwanda, Jerusalem, St Helens and Chester.

She was born in Liverpool during wartime and, as a result, spent some of her baby years with an aunt in Abersoch. She later moved to Chester where her father was posted to a military hospital. At the end of the war the family moved to St Helens and her father returned to his job as a medical officer for Pilkington's before working in St Helens as a GP.

Linda told me she didn't like school much – she found it difficult to conform – which is surely a great start to a life campaigning and supporting others. Her summer holidays were spent in the country, and we talked about how country trades – including blacksmiths and carpenters - were dying ways of life.

After school she tried university but dropped out. Instead, she went to an aunt in Baltimore and then to New York to work for the National Council of Churches. She told me it was fascinating to be in New York in the 1960's, where, at the time, there were anti-discrimination demonstrations. Linda said she had a fabulous boss in Anna Hedgman, Coordinator of Special Events for the Commission of Religion and Race. Anna encouraged her to mix with a wide range of interesting people, who she probably wouldn't normally have encountered. She particularly enjoyed working with colleagues from Jamaica, and there seemed to be a bit of Commonwealth v U.S. rivalry!

Linda also went to the New York Metropolitan Opera, one of the great opera houses of the world. Going to see performances with the leading singers of the day was an opportunity second to none. As her flatmate worked there and could get "twofers", 2 for the price of 1 tickets, she took full advantage. She said that living in New York taught her not to be frightened of new experiences, which held her in good stead for her future adventures.

Having made the decision to move back to England, she went to Manchester to study Law and served her Articles in



Carlisle, leading on to becoming a solicitor. She worked in Lowestoft for 15 years, specialising in family law and crime. Later she moved to Chester to be nearer family, commuting to Winsford to do family law. A cousin of hers remarked that her job was in the same category as teachers and policemen – they should never work in the town where they lived - and after both living and working in Lowestoft, Linda thought she was right!

Some of her tutors, including Harry Street – a specialist in civil liberties - were merciless and tough. They required her to consider and analyse the detailed judgements of various Judges of Appeal in various cases. It was a slow process but important, as it helped her later to meet the demands of the legal profession. I think we all look back on key teachers/educators, who have changed our lives by their support and teaching methods.

Linda became involved with the Chester Mystery Plays in 1997. At one point she played one of four gods – she was the God of Destruction – threatening "serious harm to a child" within the meaning of the Children Act 1987. She said this was much to the amusement of her legal colleagues, as her whole life in family law was about the protection of children and their rights.

Linda made several short visits to Rwanda, and saw the work of her friend Meg, the Diocesan Training Officer in the Diocese of Byumba. Meg had been born there, as her parents and grandparents had been mission partners before her. Meg's mother, Elizabeth, had retired to England but, after her husband died, went back out there. Her aim was to support a widows' group for some of the 30,000 women widowed in the massacre. Linda said that old age is respected there, and Elizabeth felt she would



never be sidelined as some older people are in Europe.

Linda now helps with the Blacon food bank, sings in both the church choir and the Chester Music Society choir, is a lay reader at St Mary's in Handbridge, works with the Night Church at St Peters and has been a street pastor. She has many a tale to tell from her time, including that of a policeman busking with a young man, who was torturing the public with his guitar and song rendition when he couldn't play the guitar for toffee!

Her experiences of travel, meeting and working with such a wide range of people, many often in troubled situations, have given her empathy with the people of varying ages and circumstances whom she now meets. With a true legal mind, she is able to see both sides of a person's situation and not jump to conclusions.

A few years ago, Linda was encouraged by a friend to join Chester u3a and she now enjoys bird-watching with our group. She is also an active member of the u3a Latin group alongside lots of other things in her busy diary.

Chester u3a Monthly Quiz

Everything in the quiz below happened in April. How many can you remember?

1. Which former Minister for Education was awarded a peerage by Rishi Sunak in his resignation honours list?
2. Which English city has been called "The Big Stink"?
3. Which premier league football team does Prince William support?
4. Which computer game won The Game of the Year Award at the 2025 Bafta Games Awards?
5. Where in Chester is there a food and craft market on the second Saturday of the month?
6. Who celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary in Italy?
7. In which English county will a Universal theme park be built?
8. Who won the Masters Golf Championship and who was second?
9. In Sudan, a civil war is being fought between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and...?
10. Name the rap musical about the American founding fathers now at The Empire, Liverpool?



Science, by Sue Foy and Jeff Howard

Following our winter season, we are looking forward to the following:

On May 8th we have a talk from Dr Theo Papadopoulos, of the University of Chester, on Organic Solar Cells. These are emerging as a promising technology for harvesting clean energy from the sun. They can be integrated into unconventional surfaces such as windows, vehicles, and clothes. What is the working principle? What are the benefits? How soon are we likely to see them in use? Insights from computational modelling - no maths required.

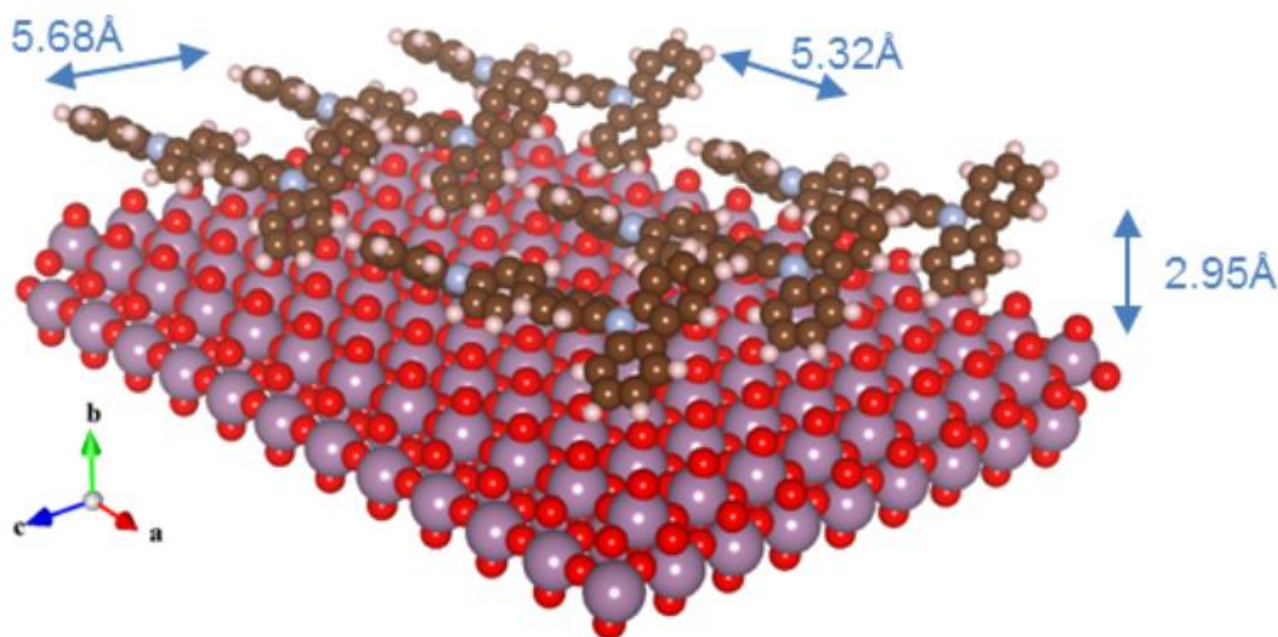
12th June brings us two talks by Bob Ashton, Refrigeration and Heat Pumps: A Cautionary Tale in Technology Development and Biofuels: Sustainable or Greenwash?

On 10th July Sue Foy will be talking about 'Memory – how do we make memories? Why do we need them? How can we better keep what we have? Come along and find out how your brain works.

There will be no meeting in August, but we have organised two visits to the Toyota plant on Deeside. They will take us round all areas (Regrind, Production Control, Maintenance & Innovation Street, Machining, Dispatch, Quality Assurance and Assembly) except Casting and Office. We will get to see as much as they can possibly show us, in a trip lasting 3 to 3.5 hours! Only one space left, but we are operating a waiting list.

We also have a couple of short talks to sprinkle in there somewhere.

Science group numbers have increased significantly recently, but we still have room for more! Cost is £12 for the year, an absolute bargain at £1 per meeting. Currently we have 55 paid up members, but the room we hire can hold up to 100. Meetings are at 2pm on every second Thursday of the month, at St Mary's Handbridge Centre. You can get in touch with us via science@chesteru3a.org.uk



The anode in an organic solar cell at the molecular level, courtesy of Theo Papadopoulos

Answers to Chester u3a Quiz

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Michael Gove | 6. King Charles and Queen Camilla |
| 2 Birmingham | 7 Bedfordshire |
| 3. Aston Villa | 8 Rory McIlroy and Justin Rose |
| 4 Astro Bot | 9 Rapid Support Forces (RSF) |
| 5 Carriage Shed, Chester Station | 10 Hamilton |



French Conversation 3, by Peter Goodhew

Bienvenue à français trois ! A group of half a dozen or so reasonably fluent French speakers meets weekly for half an hour of conversation. Three times each month we meet over Zoom and the fourth we get together for lunch in one of our favoured cafés in Chester – the picture shows three of us in Salt House in March.

We add a bit of informal structure to our conversations, so that we never run out of things to say: Each person brings along three words or phrases which might not be familiar to the others, so we usually expand our vocabulary each time we meet. We also choose – a week in advance – a topic associated with France and ask each-other three questions about it (thank goodness for Wikipedia and ChatGPT!). Topics have ranged from Brigitte Bardot to Emmanuel Macron, from the Olympic Games to the Tour de France and from Marseille to Normandy. This usually takes us all the time available on a free zoom session (40 minutes) so we end by hurriedly choosing the topic for our next meeting.

Several of our members are essentially fluent in French and chat without difficulty; some – including this writer – are less fluent but are helped along by the others (thank you!). We all enjoy our weekly refresher. If you might like to join us, please email Barbara on frenchconversation3@chesteru3a.org.uk. We need to keep the group reasonably small to ensure that everyone gets a good chance to speak but we could probably include one or two new members or even help you to set up French Conversation 4.



Dance for Older People

Cheshire Dance facilitate dance sessions with older people across Cheshire West and Chester. Sessions are open to all older adults, with no previous dance experience needed. Classes offer people the chance to meet others, get active and have fun in friendly classes for all abilities. Sessions are expertly led by our experienced dance artists, who develop sessions in response to the needs of those present. Seated options will be given throughout so that anyone can join in. For more information you can visit our website – https://www.cheshiredance.org/groups_and_projects/dance-and-older-people/

A group meets at Storyhouse <https://www.storyhouse.com/whats-on/keep-on-dancing/> but if there is sufficient interest, it might be possible to set up a group for Chester u3a members. Contact Dianna at [groups coordinator](#) to let her know if you would like to be involved.





We're on the move! by Sue Houghton and Fran Reading

One of the things I look forward to as a Speaker Secretary is the email I get a couple of days after each meeting telling me how many people attended. It has been exciting over the past 18 months to see the numbers steadily rise, with audiences at both of our venues now regularly over 100. This reflects an overall increase in our membership numbers (we have around 150 more members than this time last year) and, I would like to think, is also an endorsement of the quality of the speakers I have been able to attract to speak at our meetings.

However, there is a sting in the tail. We moved to Festival Church during the Covid lockdown so that we could use the streaming facilities to run hybrid meetings, and it has served us well over the past few years. However, it has become quite "snug" in recent months, and this will only become more of a problem as our membership numbers continue to increase. In other words, we have become a victim of our own success.

With this in mind, the Committee decided a couple of months ago that we needed to start looking seriously at an alternative venue. We wanted to keep the arrangement of having one venue in the city centre and a second one out-of-town, as we feel this gives members maximum opportunities to attend at least one of the monthly meetings. We agreed that the perfect new venue would not only accommodate comfortably all members who wish to attend but also have ample free parking, good public transport links, space for social interaction and be accessible for our members with mobility challenges. If you know of such a venue, please let me know!

We may not have found the perfect venue, but we have found one that we think ticks a lot of the boxes – Northgate Church, located on Upper Northgate Street by Fountains Roundabout. With a capacity of around 200 people, the main hall is a light, airy and welcoming space. It is on a single level, with an area for serving refreshments and mingling at the back of the hall. A feature we particularly like is that it is set out in a 'Cafe-Style' with chairs around low tables to encourage chatting and a building of community. Like Festival Church, it has no parking, but Delamere Street and the New Market car parks are a short walk away (Garden Lane Car Park is nearer but tends to get full). Parking in Tesco is still an option (750 metre walk) for members who currently take advantage of the free parking for shoppers. There are bus stops right by the church for buses coming from Upton, Blacon and Saughall, and for other services, the Bus Station is 500 metres away. The Upton (Zoo) Park and Ride (PR3) stops in Delamere Street at the pick-up-point for our social trips, and from there it is only a 200 metre walk to the Church.



Our first meeting at Northgate Church will be on 1st July. Before then we will be providing members with detailed instructions about how to get there so that we can make the transition as seamless as possible. We hope that you will support us in this new venture so that the Chester u3a can continue to go from strength to strength.



Free events during May 2025

Chester Heritage Festival – 24th May to 8th June. Lots of free (as well as paid) activities – keep checking out the Heritage Festival website for details and booking

Storyhouse Elders- monthly event on 5th May, 10.30-12 noon. Join Laura Jones from Age UK Cheshire who will be presenting information about scams to be aware of and how best to keep yourself protected. There will be information to take away and the opportunity to book further 1:1 advice. Book if you can, to make sure there’s enough tea/coffee!

Grosvenor Museum from 24th May - Royal Watercolour Society of Wales exhibition promoting the art of watercolour painting in its many different guises from their members

Grosvenor Park – 20th May - Training Dig Open Afternoon 2-4pm – What lies under the grass? Come and see what the archaeologists have been finding on this year’s excavation in Grosvenor Park, Chester. There will be site tours and a finds display.

Schedule for Groups to Help at Monthly Meetings

We would hope that groups will cooperate in providing help to the volunteers who are already working hard to facilitate our two monthly meetings. However, in an emergency, please email committee@chesteru3a.org.uk so that all members of the committee are aware of the need to provide additional cover.

You are very welcome to use these sessions as an opportunity to seek new members or promote your activities by bringing along flyers or photographs, setting up a stand or even asking if you can take a few minutes to talk to the whole group.

	Festival Church at 2.00pm	St Columba’s at 10.00am
May	Tuesday 6th French Conversation French Film	Thursday 15th French Conversation 3 Friday Walking
June	Tuesday 3rd Friday Writers Monday Writers	Thursday 19th Gardening German Conversation

The cut-off date for the next Chester Times is Tuesday 20th May 2025.

Please send contributions to: chestertimes@chesteru3a.org.uk or: PO Box 167 Chester CH1 9FB.

This month’s editor: Gwen Goodhew

Next month’s editor: Joyce Carrington

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