



Chester Times

January 2026

u3a learn,
laugh,
live
Chester

Greetings from the Chair

Wishing everyone a happy and peaceful 2026

January is often about 'new starts' although I suspect that many a New Year resolution falls by the wayside by the end of the month. I do think it is important to keep challenging yourself to try new things. I always read a lot and try genres I wouldn't normally read. This year I am reading a book with a colour in the title every month e.g. The Colour Purple. I am also waiting for my annual library update about how much I have saved in 2025 by using the library. Last year was £3133.04! My latest new activity is trying to do something called Jigsawdoku in the I newspaper – harder than you think and it is a good job I have my pencil/rubber to hand!

At our recent **Chester u3a Local History Group** meeting we were talking about the agenda for 2026 and have decided to focus on leisure activities. These will cover a wide variety of areas including boating on the Dee, Mystery Plays, Marketing Chester as a tourist city, Chester libraries and cockfighting! We hope to have some presentations, but we also want to capture an oral history from the group members, remembering their past activities and memories of Chester. It should be really interesting.

I am also in the History group and we are starting the year with **Inventions**. I bought a small book on inventions to get some inspiration, and it is fascinating to find out how everyday items came about including bubble wrap, traffic lights, tattoos and Tippex!

Taking time to do things you enjoy in retirement is really important, and we hope that Chester u3a offers you some options. Come along to our **February Showcase at St Columba's** if you want more inspiration.

Included on our website from 2026 are St John Ambulance videos showing how to do [CPR](#) and how to [use a defibrillator](#). We have included them following my conversation with **Bazza Feldman** who is our **Member Remembers** this month. He had a successful career as a hospital consultant and we talked about how important it is to know how to do these procedures as it might save a life.

At our last committee meeting we discussed **plans for 2026**, and we are hoping to continue with brilliant talks as well as building partnerships with local groups, including Chester University and the Festival of Ideas. Watch the Chester u3a website for more details.

Contents

Monthly Meetings	2	Potential Technology Group	8
Recent Social Events	3	Monthly Quiz Answers	8
Events during January 2026	3	Photography	9
Chester Social and Quiz	4	Bridge	10
Walking	6	Take the Train	10
Chester u3a Monthly Quiz	6	Emergency Contacts	11
Industrial Heritage	7	Schoolreaders	11
Racketball	8	Schedule of Group Helpers	12
		Contacts	12



Tuesday 6th January Meeting
Chester Picturehouse, 2.00pm for 2.30pm start

Claire Chatterton: Tales from Chester Asylum

The County Lunatic Asylum for Cheshire opened in Chester in 1829 and was later to be known by a variety of names including Upton Mental Hospital, the Deva Hospital and West Cheshire Hospital. In this illustrated talk, Claire will tell the stories of some of the staff and patients who lived and worked within its walls in its first hundred years.



[Wellcome Collection, 166871](#)

Thursday 15th January Meeting
St Columba's Church Hall, 10.00am for 10.30am start

Alison Utting: Aggie - The Life and Adventures of Dame Agnes Hunt

Alison will present her one-woman show adapted from the memoirs of Dame Agnes Hunt, co-founder of the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital in Gobowen, near Oswestry. Crippled with multiple complex disabilities, "Aggie" refused to let limitations of health or gender define her. Seen as "too young, and much too lame" for the nursing profession, she was to go on to set up one of the most prestigious hospitals in the world and establish the practice of orthopaedic nursing. From Shropshire to Tasmania, from Aggie's indomitable mother to a boisterous escaped patient, follow Aggie's adventures as Alison brings this incredible story to vivid life. Scattered with enjoyable characters and almost-unbelievable events, both tragic and hilarious, this performance will be one to remember.



Alison Utting with Portrait of Agnes Hunt

Dates for your diaries

Our [website](#) now shows lots of exciting talks scheduled for 2026. Have a browse and make a note of anything that interests you. If you have any suggestions, please email speakersec@chesteru3a.org.uk.



Recent Chester u3a Social Events

In the last month, Sandra and Liz have arranged visits to **Blackpool** to see the lights and **Tatton Park** to see the mansion decorated for Christmas.

Despite the weather, everyone managed to have a good time in Blackpool and enjoyed the drive along the illuminated promenade.

The visit to Tatton was a huge success as the hall was beautifully decorated and the weather was kind enough to allow people to wander around the gardens.



Blackpool Tower



Courtesy of Sally Clarke



Highlights from Tatton Park Christmas Decorations

Events during January 2026

Storyhouse

- **Family History Buddy** – want to find out more about how to research your family history? Storyhouse have someone available to help every Tuesday 10am – 12 noon. Free drop in - ask at the library desk.
- **Chester SciBar** – some of our science group already go to this, but if you fancy a talk about something scientific, check the Storyhouse website for up-coming free events/topics for 2026

Chester Cathedral

- **Places of Welcome** – one of over 600 locations in the UK where locals and visitors can drop-in on a weekly basis for a chat and a cup of tea. Every Monday, 10.30am

Grosvenor Museum

- **Café Crafts** – now every week in the History Hub. Bring along your own project or take part in the group activity. Thursday 2-4pm. Small charge for tea.
- **Object of the Month** – 8th January 1-1.30pm. Combine it with a look at the latest exhibition.

Chester University

- **Use of the Earth's Subsurface for the safe and sustainable extraction and storage of energy by Professor Chris Jackson.** School of Education, Parkgate Road. Tuesday 27th January 6-7pm – booking required.

Christmas Social and Quiz

We celebrated our last meeting of the year at St Columba's with a special festive coffee morning. Anticipating a large turnout based on recent meetings, we trialled a booking system this year that generally worked well. Several members told me how nice it was to be allocated into a team before they arrived, so they knew they would get a seat, and how they particularly enjoyed the chance to meet new people.



Sue and Dave seem to know one of the answers

We had a fantastic turnout of over 130 members, though sadly losing several others at the last minute to the inevitable coughs and colds at this time of year, usually caught from the selfless act of looking after grandchildren. There was a good showing of Christmas jumpers and plentiful mince pies, sweets and Christmas crackers.



Just some of the 16 teams that took part



Signing Silent Night

Sixteen teams competed for the coveted position of Chester u3a Quiz Champions 2025. In a very wide-ranging quiz, question-setter Jeff Howard tested our knowledge of science, travel, food & drink, history, film & TV, books, sport and music. We were then treated to a very special signed performance of *Silent Night* by the British Sign Language Group, before the hotly anticipated announcement of the results. In a closely fought contest, *The Myrrh the Merrier* team triumphed, with the shared booby prize being accepted with good grace by *Feliz Navidad* and *Christmas Lights*. It was a great morning with much laughter, and a big thank you to the members who made it possible by moving furniture, decorating tables and serving refreshments.



Three stalwarts in the kitchen - Annie, Lorna and Dianna

NB The report of Paul Hyde's talk on the Dee Bore will appear in the February issue.

A Member Remembers

Fran Reading in conversation with Bazza Feldman FDS RCS(Eng), Dip Orth RCS(Eng)

Sometimes you have a conversation with someone and it really makes you think about what you have done in life and your contribution. I spent a very pleasant hour with Bazza, and understood how important his work had been, and what a difference he made along the way. Having had a thirty year career as a dentist/orthodontist, his experience and expertise has changed many lives. He has faced some very tough situations, and some very long operations to support people in life-saving and life-changing operations, but he told me that the patients' delight and tears of joy when he was successful made it all worthwhile. It also made me go home and vow to look after my teeth better!

Bazza was born in Luton and grew up with lots of cousins, one of whom was Marty Feldman. After failing his 11-plus, he achieved success with his 13-plus which took him to Luton Grammar School. We spoke about career choices, and he told that when he was 11 he needed some teeth extracted and had to wait 10 minutes in the chair before he could have an anaesthetic. During this time he chatted to the dentist, looked at his instruments and he decided that he would make orthodontics his future career.

He completed his degree at the London Hospital Dental School in Whitechapel, where one of his mates treated a Kray twin! After becoming unemployed on decimalisation day in 1971, when patient's contribution for dentistry increased from £1.50 to £10, he eventually went on, through long hours of hospital work in Cambridge, St Albans and Glasgow, to being a hospital consultant in Merseyside. Wanting to increase his skills, he did a 3-month sabbatical in US/Canada. He taught graduates and post-grad students, and played a key part in teaching dental nurses for a new qualification. He has a long list of letters after his name, including Eng, standing for England. Unfortunately someone misinterpreted this thinking he was an engineer! Whilst in Glasgow he passed his Institute of Advanced Motoring

driving test and was able to teach others better driving skills.

Bazza's hospital stories included treating a stevedore who said he had a painful tooth – the only problem was that it wasn't in his mouth, but it was someone else's tooth stuck in his calf after a fight! There are many more, including some rather gory ones from treating serious facial injuries following a motorbike accident, but also uplifting ones from helping people with cleft-damage, all showing the breadth of his expertise. Unfortunately his career was cut short when, after collapsing at work in 1995, his ME meant that he could not commit to his role and had to leave the profession and teaching.

Forced retirement hasn't stopped him. He took on a childcare role initially and then was chair of Frodsham u3a for just over 2 years. In order to do this role he credits the invaluable help, advice and support he received from Jenny Carley. He is now a keen participant in Chester u3a activities, and participates in Science, History, Earth Sciences and Photography.

We spoke about chance, and the fact that he met his wife, Caroline, initially in Leeds, where Bazza found out that he had taught her brother. Nothing came of it then, but many years later, he met her again at a dental meeting, and never looked back. He has just celebrated 35 years of marriage.

He loves music and used to go to jazz clubs in Soho in his youth, and continues to find pleasure in learning new things and meeting new people. He is a collector of fountain pens and continues to use one of his 13-strong collection every day! He had a very fulfilling career, even if cut short, and I am sure Bazza will continue to regale us with fascinating stories of his life for many years to come.



Walking, by Janet Money

If the weather's a bit rough but you feel like a sheltered walk with very little road walking, you could do worse than follow the route that Liz led us in mid-September. It starts at Meadow Lea Farm café on Station Road in Mickle Trafford (CH2 4EH). Park at the café, then turn right down Station Road for a hundred metres or so until you reach the access path to the Millenium Greenway. Walk along the Greenway for about 3.5km until you reach Bren Bikes. There are tables and chairs here where you can take a break – there's no café so take your own supplies.

Now return along the Greenway and under the A55 until you meet a right-hand path signed to Guilden Sutton. Follow the path until you reach a railway bridge. Shortly after the bridge, and just before you reach the road, take the bridleway to the left. This will bring you back to Station Lane where you turn left back to the café. The walk should take about 2 hours, all level walking on good surfaces. The café has a good range of offerings, so reward yourselves with coffee, cake or one of their all-day breakfasts.

Nick will lead our ever popular New Year walk from the Ring O'Bells in Christleton on Friday January 2nd. This is a gentle stroll along the canal into Chester, stopping on the way for coffee and ending with lunch at the Ring O'Bells. If you would like to join us (with no obligation to join the Group) please email Nick at nick.titlow@outlook.com.



Eleven of us joined Liz for the mid-September walk. Here we are on a very windy day with Bren Bikes in the background

Photo: Janet Money

Chester u3a Monthly Quiz

2025 has been an up and down kind of year.

Which of these are now up or down in relation to their position a year ago?

1. The amount of water in British reservoirs
2. The poll ratings of The Green Party, Reform, Labour
3. Interest rates
4. Percentage of natural births rather than caesarean
5. Overall immigration rates to UK.
6. Cost of your Christmas turkey dinner
7. Entries for A level French and German in UK
8. Chester u3a membership
9. Membership of a gym in UK.
10. Use of coal as a world-wide source of electricity



Industrial Heritage, by Margaret Hodson and Ian Lawrence

Visit to the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum at Widnes

The visit started with a PowerPoint presentation by Dr. Diana Leitch. We learned about the history of soap making and how it grew into an industry on the banks of the River Mersey with access to the necessary raw materials. Runcorn and Widnes grew from rural hamlets to towns as many people were attracted to working in the factories. Some of the work was dangerous such as shovelling alkali into barrels with no protective clothing. All the employees could do was to use rags and paper to cover their nose and mouth and seal gaps in their clothing.



The Industrial Heritage Group at the Catalyst Museum



Shovelling Alkali into Barrels



Runcorn Bridge from the Observatory Tower

At the top of the tower is the Observatory Gallery which affords panoramic views of the River Mersey and The Manchester Ship Canal with the two bridges and Spike Island. The interactive gallery is a great favourite with children and adults alike. An important aim of the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre is to develop an interest in science so that children will become the scientists of the future.



Fiddlers Ferry Power Station from the Observatory Tower

Racketball, by Katharine Nell

If your New Year resolution might be to meet new people, or try a new sport, or get fitter - why not do all three and give racketball a try? Dave Gipson has established and runs a great Chester u3a racketball group.

Racketball is played on a squash court with a bigger, softer ball, bigger racket and slightly different rules to squash, making it eminently suitable for the older age group. We genuinely are a friendly group (though I know that everyone says that about their own group!). We try to ensure that new members feel welcomed, and we have the occasional meal out or drinks together for those who are interested. The better players in the group adapt their game and encourage the less experienced players.



[UKRacketball](#)

We can play at Chester University on Sundays and Tuesdays, £2 per session and we usually enjoy coffee together afterwards.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch via the [Uu3a website](#) if you would like any more information or if you would like to come along for a free trial session. We could especially do with some more women players: we are feeling a bit outnumbered! Come and join us in January for the 250th session of the Chester u3a racketball group.

Potential Technology Group

We've been approached by a member with a keen interest in computing at a practical level e.g. making the most of Raspberry Pi gadgets and building devices for fun or to meet a need. We hope this reflects the idea fairly. If you are interested in building a new u3a group, based on this topic, please contact the Group Coordinators on groups@chesteru3a.org.uk and we'll take it from there.



Answers to Quiz

1. Water in British reservoirs - down (despite recent heavy rain)
2. Green – up, Reform – up, Labour – down (yougov. voting intentions)
3. Interest rates – down. From 4.5% in January to 3.75% in December.
4. Percentage of natural births – down. 44% compared with 45% C-sections
5. Overall immigration rates – down, although irregular immigration in small boats increased
6. Cost of your Christmas turkey dinner– up. About £32.45, a rise of £1.24 or nearly 4% on last year.
7. A level entries for French and German – down French 7544 to 6858 German 2431 to 2224
8. Chester u3a membership – up. From 1032 to 1150
9. Membership of gyms in UK – up. 2024 was high but the trend continues upwards.
10. Use of coal for electricity - down. It's been overtaken by renewables.



Photography, from Anne Murray

Among the themes explored recently by the photography group were Action and Black and White. Here are just a few examples.





Bridge, by Liz Flanagan

The Bridge group celebrated the festive season with a Christmas lunch at Vicars Cross Golf Club.



Take the Train in Europe

Tuesday, 10th February 14.30

As a follow on to their talk in October Michael Ross and Stuart Murray are arranging a session about taking the train in Europe at St Mary's Centre, Handbridge on Tuesday 10 February at 14:30. It is open to all u3a members. There will be a brief re-cap of how the Interrail pass works and then snippets about using the trains in Europe and how to cross the Channel from people who have done it. If you would like to learn how you can include train travel in your European holiday, whether you fly there or take the Eurostar then we (and others in the room) will try to answer your question. We would also like to include some other short talks of five to ten minutes from people who have experience of train travel in Europe – if you can help please get in touch through interrail@chesteru3a.org.uk





Emergency Contacts

The easiest way of knowing who to contact in case of an emergency is if someone has an ‘In Case of Emergency’ (I.C.E) card. The card can be kept in your purse/wallet. **Initially** we would like to support members who are in walking/active groups or out on social trips, but longer-term hope to provide the I.C.E. cards to all members if requested. To do this, we need to ensure members details are up-to-date on the [Chester u3a Portal](#), which you can access here or via the website. Most of our members used the Portal to renew their membership. We would request that you **access the Portal by the end of January** and ensure your details are correct. We can then print off and distribute the relevant cards. We know that a small number of our members are unable to access the Portal. In these cases, please email your emergency contact details to Jeff, our business secretary, or Liz, our Membership Secretary, in the following format.

Name of contact Mobile number Relationship to Member.





One in four children leave primary school unable to read to the expected standard.

This will have a negative impact on their secondary education and future life chances.

Children's literacy charity Schoolreaders is recruiting volunteers in Chester to listen to children read in primary schools.

If you have some time to spare, a good grasp of written English, and if you enjoy spending time with children, you could become a Schoolreader.

Volunteers are asked to listen to children read once a week in term time and to commit to a full academic year, though of course holidays and weeks off on occasion are no issue.

You can find out more on our website, or by giving us a call on 01234 924111.

If you can spare just an hour a week to listen to children read, you can help to change their life-story.

To find out more about Schoolreaders please visit www.schoolreaders.org

Schoolreaders CIO Registered Charity Number: 1159157. Registered in England and Wales



Schedule for Groups to Help at Monthly Meetings

We 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.

Chester Picturehouse at 2.00pm		St Columba's at 10.00am	
January	Tuesday 6th	Thursday 15th	
	Painting 2 Philosophy	Photography	
Chester Picturehouse at 2.00pm		St Columba's at 10.00am	
February	Tuesday 3rd	Thursday 19th	
	Pickle Ball	Racketball	

The cut-off date for the next Chester Times is Tuesday 20th January 2026.

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

Contacts

Chair: Fran Reading: chair@chesteru3a.org.uk

Membership: Liz Eccleston: members@chesteru3a.org.uk

Website: www.chesteru3a.u3asite.uk

Postal address: PO Box 167 Chester CH1 9FB.

Reg. Charity 1048416