



Poynton u3a News

poyntonu3a.org.uk

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Poynton u3a Update

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting was held on Tuesday 17th March. Guy Otten was confirmed as a committee member although he has been operating as a co-opted committee member for a few months. Tony Penny was accepted as a new committee member. It should be noted that we are going to have to do some sort of job-share of the Secretary's role for the forthcoming year although this cannot be a permanent solution. There were no resolutions.

Hester Ormiston continues as Chair. As before, some of the roles taken on by the Chair are being shared with other committee members.

Nigel Burin has decided to stand down from the committee after several years' invaluable service as Groups Co-ordinator. Kate Clarkson has taken on this role.

Breaking News: Following on from the AGM, Guy Otten has offered to take on the role of Secretary.

After the formal business of the AGM, Jenny Lippmann, the Town Council's Marketing and Events Coordinator, gave a talk which focused on the projects and events surrounding the Town Council's new Biodiversity Plan. Following Jenny's talk, Haf Barlow, the Clerk to the Town Council updated us on the much-discussed Poynton Pool Spillway Works and Adlington New Town. Thanks to both of them for their informative contributions.

Below are some of the salient points from Jenny's biodiversity talk which may be of interest to members.

The Town Council's Biodiversity Initiative

Poynton Town Council want to protect and promote biodiversity in Poynton. Residents will be encouraged to engage in nature throughout the year and beyond in different ways. We hope this will lead to a better understanding of what Poynton has in terms of biodiversity and what it is lacking. The plan includes using the new Biodiversity Bus Stop on London Road North as a hub, tracking wildlife on the iNaturalist app and attending free engaging events for adults and families.

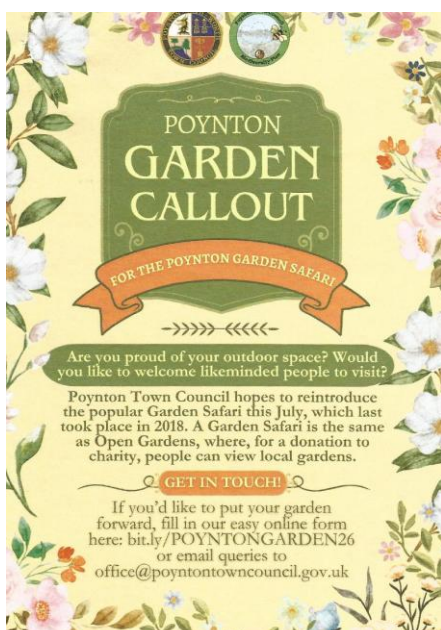
The Biodiversity Bus Stop is on London Road North (opposite the start of Park Avenue) and is a bus stop space that currently only serves the High School. Cheshire East Council own it and gave permission to have a mural painted. The mural was created by Alice at Cheshire Design Studios and shows Poynton's changing seasons, taking inspiration from places such as the crocus display in St George's churchyard. It will display news and info regarding the biodiversity project and serve as an accessible hub for events, information, how-tos and more. There is potential for pop-up events and free-for-all seed swaps.



The Town Council are encouraging residents to use the iNaturalist app to track what species of plants, trees, animals, fungi and other flora and fauna we have in the Town.

The idea is so it can be seen what we do and don't have, and work towards improving areas, habitat and biodiversity in Poynton.

The next of the Poynton Town Council nature sessions, which are free monthly activities for adults designed to get you closer to nature, is on Friday 17th April and is a talk entitled *Gardening alongside Nature*. For more information: <http://bit.ly/PTCBD>



The Town Council hopes to reintroduce the popular Garden Safari this July, which last took place in 2018. A Garden Safari is similar to *Open Gardens*, where, for a donation to charity, people can view local gardens.

If you'd like to put your garden forward, fill in our easy online form here: <http://bit.ly/POYNTONGARDEN26> or email queries to office@poyntontowncouncil.gov.uk

The leaflets pictured plus a couple of relevant others are available from the Civic Centre. (You may have to ask for them.)

General Meetings

The next General Meeting is on Tuesday 21st April when *Paul Atherton* will be telling us about *The Battle of Brunnanburgh*.

The May meeting is on Tuesday 19th May when *Julia Marwood* will be giving a talk entitled *Painting Manchester* in which she explores the history of the city as seen through the eyes of artists.

Short Walks Group

For our February walk, seven of us met at Nelson Pit Visitor Centre, Higher Poynton. The weather forecast was a bit mixed so we were equipped with clothing for all occasions including waterproofs and sun cream. As it happened, we were lucky to have no rain and the sun did shine on us from time to time. We went along the Middlewood Way in the direction of High Lane, passing Middlewood Station before taking a footpath to reach the A6 and the canal. We lingered as we passed a few interesting houses with quirky ornaments and amusing signs, and then proceeded to walk along the canal towpath. There is always plenty to see on the towpath; an abundance of narrow boats, wildlife and homes on the water's edge with a variety of ornaments.



Two new members to the u3a joined us and we were able to point out to them various items of interest that we take for granted, for example Prince's incline, Nelson Pit and the coalmining history of the area. The walk was just under three miles long and a very enjoyable and social way to keep fit!



Text by **Sandra Batchelor**

Pictures by **Janet Hughes**

The Dark Side of Winter

'We awoke to the sound of a howling wind, which had started during the night. By the morning it had turned into a force eight gale. The tree branches were being blown from side to side as if their limbs were waving in surrender. Some smaller branches, had broken off and were being scattered in all directions. Tiles were sliding off the roofs, like miniature missiles, only to be smashed onto the pavement. The Cockleshell Inn sign moved violently back and forth, like a demented swing. It tried, unsuccessfully, to escape the bolts holding it to the wall. Plastic bins and buckets, that had been neatly tucked away, had been blown over and were rolling down the road as though a large magnet was attracting them.

The low hanging deep grey clouds seemed threatening, as they travelled across the sky, like the steam of an old train.

As the first storm of the year subsided, it was replaced by heavy rain. When the black clouds arrived, they seemed to stop and hover over the village. The water was gushing down the road, filling up the nearby river catching residents and businesses unprepared for the devastation that it was going to cause.

Many of the villagers did their best to help one another, but most found it difficult to even stand up. Many people were bent double, like beggars under a blanket. Knock-kneed, they cursed their way through the sludge and the mud. There were people yelling out and stumbling, drunk with fatigue, as they fought against the wind and rain. Later, mum came in my room with a cup of tea. We talked about the mayhem going on outside and I begged her not to venture out of the house. As she closed the door, I turned to look out of my bedroom window. I witnessed a mountain of water pouring down the hillside, heading for the village. No-one could stop this deluge of water and it was about to make things worse for the village than they already were. I could do nothing to help, only sit and watch. The water washed away walls, cars, benches, trees. It thundered its way through the village, smashing through people's homes and shops. The water stole anything it could find and washed it all away, without mercy. Most people ran for cover, desperate to find safety away from the water, hoping it would soon subside.

There were visitors' cars which had been washed down from the car park above the village. They piled up under the bridge, until the 200-year-old bridge gave way. The stones, cars, caravans and even a fridge, were now free to carry on their journey towards the open sea. It was then I felt the first feelings of uncontrollable fear, as the situation unfolded before my eyes. As a wheelchair user, I knew I couldn't get away from this nightmare. It was then I heard my mum scream. I wheeled myself onto the landing and shouted down to her. She shouted back to me, that the water was coming in under the front door and even through the floor boards. She tried to stop it, all to no avail. It

wasn't long before the water was knee high. She tried to reach as many things as she could carry and bring them upstairs, including our pet bird, who was in his cage. As she began to climb the stairs, it didn't take long before the water completely covered the ground floor. As she got to the top of the stairs, she was soaking wet from the waist down. She handed over the bird. I put him down in a safe place in my room. Our house was over 150 years old. It was a three-storey terrace which was built of local stone and had faced many a storm in the past.

This gave me some comfort, hoping it would continue to stand during and after the flood. Mum handed over the rest of the things she'd managed to collect. She then climbed to the next floor to her own bedroom, to change out of her wet clothes. I looked down the stairs, only to see the water was now beginning to wash over the steps. The stair lift was of no use now, as the water had ruined the electrics. There was no way out for me that way. I just prayed the water wouldn't get any higher. We had the option of climbing to the next floor, if need be, even if it meant I would have to crawl up the stairs.

I will never forget the sound of an avalanche of water, as it roared its way through the village, flooding the whole area. How were we going to get out of this? As I looked out of the window I could see and hear the sound of helicopters above, surveying the area. The first hope of a rescue. They started to evacuate people who had managed to climb onto the rooftops.

Even if I could climb up to the top floor, I know I wouldn't have the strength to get onto the roof. A thought, that I'd pushed to the back of my mind. The black clouds eventually moved away and the wind began to subside. I heard the sound of voices, people shouting for help. Then mercifully, in the distance, was the sound of the emergency services, ambulances and the fire brigade. Mum and I tried to stay as calm as we could under the circumstances, wondering if anyone would come to help us.

There was no electricity, no fresh water, no heating. Everything in the house had failed. The things we had were what mum had managed to snatch before coming up the stairs. Biscuits, chocolate, some bottled water and a couple of blankets.

It was sometime later that we heard banging and shouting from the front of the house. As I looked down, I could see rescue workers doing their best to help people to safety. I waved out of the window for attention. At least they knew now, we were trapped inside the house. Eventually we were rescued by three burly firemen, who had smashed their way into the house and up the stairs. The firemen carried us over their shoulders to the safety of a rescue boat. In the mayhem we had forgotten about our pet bird, till one fireman volunteered to go back for him. Without rescue, the bird too, would have been trapped in his cage, unable to escape the water and fly to safety.'

Susan J Pyett.

Travels in Southern Ireland - Part 4

We now move on to the west coast with a brief diversion for a bit of Irish folklore.

Fionn mac Cumhaill

Fionn mac Cumhaill, sometimes anglicised to Finn McCool, is a hero of Irish mythology. We had encountered him before as he is said to be responsible for the Giant's Causeway. This time we found him immortalised during a brief stop in Cahir on the river Suir. Fionn travelled all over Ireland on hunting expeditions and it is said he often rested on the banks of the Suir as his hounds took a refreshing drink from the river. Here he is found stretched out in a large wooden sculpture with his two dogs alongside.



Foynes Flying Boat Museum

Foynes situated on the west coast of Ireland became the centre of the aviation world from 1937-45. Foynes Flying Boat & Maritime Museum, housed in the original terminal building, recalls that nostalgic era.

For various reasons, in the mid-1930s flying boats were seen as the way forward for long distance passenger travel. Flying boats could land on any clear stretch of flat water, so they could be bigger and heavier than land planes and much more luxurious. Also, good landing strips were rare before World War II. People naively believed that flying boats could land on the sea in an emergency.



Foynes was selected as the easterly end for the transatlantic route. The western end was initially a town called Botwood, in north-central Newfoundland, which is positioned on a natural deep-water harbour. They obviously wanted to land (if that is the correct expression for a flying boat) as soon as possible after crossing the Atlantic.



The view from the Foynes Control Tower today showing the landing area



On 9th July 1939, Pan Am's luxury flying boat the 'Yankee Clipper' landed at Foynes to become the first commercial passenger flight on a direct route from USA to Europe.

However, the North Atlantic was recognised as a very hazardous route. "The North Atlantic is technically the most difficult operation of any major aerial route" said Juan Trippe, President of Pan Am Airways.

There was a point of *No Return*. This was the point after which the flying boat would not have enough fuel to turn back-and flying boats often had to return to Foynes. On one occasion an aircraft returned to Foynes after flying for 12 hours. One of the passengers, who had slept for the whole flight, saw the BOAC traffic officer and said: "Good Heavens, there was a chap who looked exactly like you who saw us off".

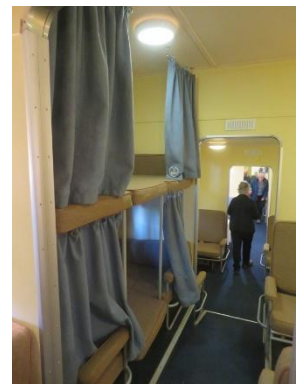
- Today, modern jet aircraft can fly above the weather and, except for take-off and landing, are mostly unaffected by bad weather. But flying boats often had to fly through or around storm clouds.
- Ice, forming on the wings or engines of a Flying Boat, could be disastrous. It often completely blocked the windscreen and jammed radio equipment.
- It might often rain for a whole trip across the North Atlantic. Although it is difficult to fly in cloud, the ceiling was often so low that to fly under it would have been a danger to shipping.
- There is an almost constant westerly wind on the North Atlantic. The speed of a Flying Boat from Foynes to Botwood could be reduced by half by the wind. Flights were often forced to turn back.
- Except for very short distances, radio contact was all by Morse Code. Long distance voice communication was not possible until nearly 1950.
- Navigators used smoke floats, dropped into the sea, to measure the effects of cross winds.

Boeing 314 Clipper

In July 1936, Pan Am signed a contract with Boeing for the first transatlantic passenger aircraft - the B314 Flying Boat. This plane became the most well-known of the flying boats. One of the largest aircraft of the time, 12 were built for Pan American World Airways; three of these were sold to BOAC in 1941 before delivery. No original B314s remain but the museum has the world's only full-size replica finished in faithful and accurate detail.



Clipper replica (left) and poster (right)



The interior of the replica B314

Maureen O'Hara

The museum houses an exhibition which celebrates the life of Maureen O'Hara. She was born on August 17, 1920, in Ranelagh, Dublin and began her acting career in the 1930s. She quickly gained recognition in Hollywood for her stunning looks and strong on-screen presence.

Maureen starred in numerous classic films, often playing strong-willed and independent women. She is best remembered for her collaborations with director John Ford - including several epic westerns - and particularly for her role in a movie set in Ireland in the 1920s, *The Quiet Man* (1952) opposite John Wayne. Beyond her remarkable acting talent, Maureen O'Hara also had a reputation for her no-nonsense attitude and

determination to challenge the status quo. She broke barriers in Hollywood, demanding equal pay and better roles for women.



She made 55 movies for the big screen and was called "The Queen of Technicolour" in the 1940s and 1950s because her natural colouring showed up well in the new medium. She received critical acclaim for her acting skills and was awarded an Honorary Academy Award (Oscar) in 2014 in recognition of her contributions to the film industry.

In 1968, Maureen O'Hara married famed aviator Brigadier General Charles Blair. He had distinguished careers in the U.S. Air Force, as a senior pilot for Pan American and as a seaplane pilot for Antilles Airboats. He set multiple aviation records, including the first solo crossing of the North Pole in a single engine, single seat P51 Fighter. He commanded the first ever non-stop passenger flight from Foynes to New York and the last scheduled passenger flying boat out of Foynes in October 1945 for American Export Airlines.



Blair died tragically in a plane crash in 1978 but his widow always remained strongly connected to his legacy. Just a little more than a decade after her husband's untimely death, O'Hara cut the ribbon at the opening of the Foynes Flying Boat & Maritime Museum on 8th July 1989.

O'Hara would remain a dedicated patron of the museum up until her own death in 2015, attending all our major functions and celebrating her birthday with us every year. Maureen O'Hara's grandson donated an extensive collection of the Hollywood legend's personal belongings to create the exhibition.

The Origin of Irish Coffee

Foynes and flying boats are closely connected to Irish coffee, playing a significant role in the invention of this favourite Irish treat. Of course, as with anything in Ireland, the weather played a role, too.

In 1943, Brendan O'Regan opened a restaurant and coffee shop in the Foynes terminal building. It quickly became regarded as one of the best restaurants in Ireland. Chef Joe Sheridan, originally from Castlederg, County Tyrone, had been recruited by O'Regan to run the kitchen.

Late one night in the winter of 1943, a flight left Foynes for New York. After flying for several hours in bad weather, the captain decided to return to Foynes to wait for safer conditions. A Morse code message was sent to the Foynes control tower to inform them of the return. Staff were called back in and the passengers were brought to the restaurant upon landing for food and drink.

When Joe was asked to prepare something warm for the passengers, he decided to put some Irish Whiskey into their coffees. The story goes that there was a hushed silence as people drank it for the first time. One of the passengers approached the Chef and thanked him for the wonderful coffee. He asked Joe if he used Brazilian Coffee; Joe jokingly answered, "no, that was Irish Coffee!".

A few weeks later, Sheridan knocked on Brendan O'Regan's office door. He showed Brendan this new drink in a stemmed glass and asked him "How about that for eye appeal?". Brendan answered, "genius chef!" and so began Irish Coffee. Irish Coffee continued to be served at Foynes to all passengers and is still served to this day to all dignitaries arriving at Shannon Airport.



Derek Gatenby

News just received

Diners' Club

Our next lunch will be on Thursday 30th April at The Aviator, Woodford, at 12.30pm. If anyone would like a lift, I will arrange it for you.

Barbara Tankard

Things to Do

Sudoku No 68

	3			7		4		
						3	8	
4				1		6		
							3	
	2				8		7	
	6	8	5					
6		2		4				
				2	1	8	5	
			3	8	7			

Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9

Below is the solution to No 67

4	6	3	7	1	2	8	9	5
7	2	8	5	6	9	4	3	1
9	1	5	4	8	3	2	6	7
1	5	2	8	9	6	3	7	4
8	9	4	3	7	1	5	2	6
3	7	6	2	4	5	1	8	9
6	4	1	9	3	8	7	5	2
5	3	9	1	2	7	6	4	8
2	8	7	6	5	4	9	1	3

Wilmslow u3a Croquet Group

Peter Highfield leads the Croquet group in Wilmslow and this year the group will be open to members of the NECN u3as. To publicise the fact that they are open to new participants from Poynton he has provided the following article which appeared in the Wilmslow newsletter. If you have any questions, get in touch with Peter using chairman@wilmslowu3a.org.uk

Any One For Croquet?

Who has the most Wimbledon titles? Martina Navratilova? She does have 9 Women's Singles titles beating even the great Roger Federer with 'only' 8 Men's titles? Obvious but wrong. The answer is Professor Bernard Neal who won 37 Wimbledon singles titles between 1963 and 2002. "Why haven't I heard of him?" Almost certainly because you don't follow croquet.

Did you know Wimbledon's full name is the All-England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club and started in 1868 as the All-England Croquet Club? Tennis rapidly took over. However, since the early Sixties there has been an annual championship but only open to club members which attracts close to zero press interest.

Want to give the game a try? Come and join the Wilmslow u3a Croquet Group and experience the fun for yourself. Everyone is welcome and having little to no experience

of playing is not a hinderance. While we aim to play to the best of our abilities and treat the game with respect, we are not competitive and want everyone to enjoy themselves.

We provide the equipment and will also spend time to help newbies pick up the essentials of the game. We play both the Golf and Association versions depending upon the tastes of whoever is playing. So, we can accommodate outright beginners up to those with some experience of the game.

What are the attractions of playing croquet with the Wilmslow u3a group? It's a gentle outdoor exercise during the better months of the year with a friendly group of people. Overall, a gentle physical and mental challenge in good company – what's not to like?

We meet at the Wilmslow Phoenix Sports Club, Styal Road Styal SK9 4HP every Monday from 2pm to 4pm starting 20th April and running until the end of September, or possibly later depending upon the weather. There is plenty of parking at the club.

Contributions to the Newsletter

The timing and length of the newsletter is dependent to a large extent on the contributions submitted by our members. If you would like to write an article or provide some pictures, please send your contribution to news@poyntonu3a.org.uk