



Poynton's Heritage Garden

In a unique collaboration involving a number of voluntary organisations in Poynton, a Heritage Garden is now taking shape in the neglected and somewhat barren area between Priorslegh Medical Centre and the Library. The Garden is there for all to enjoy - a colourful and tranquil haven in the centre of Poynton, serving also as a permanent reminder of Poynton's rich heritage. An impressive mural has been painted on the library shutter, and silhouettes representing Poynton's mining legacy, and three of Poynton's gateways, have been mounted on the walls. Four memorial benches and four large planters have also been installed on the site.

Subject to further funding being found, the remaining elements of the Heritage Garden are a large raised flower bed, bordered by timber sleepers, with an authentic period lamp post and hopefully an impressive centrepiece to remind us of our mining heritage, plus three more benches.

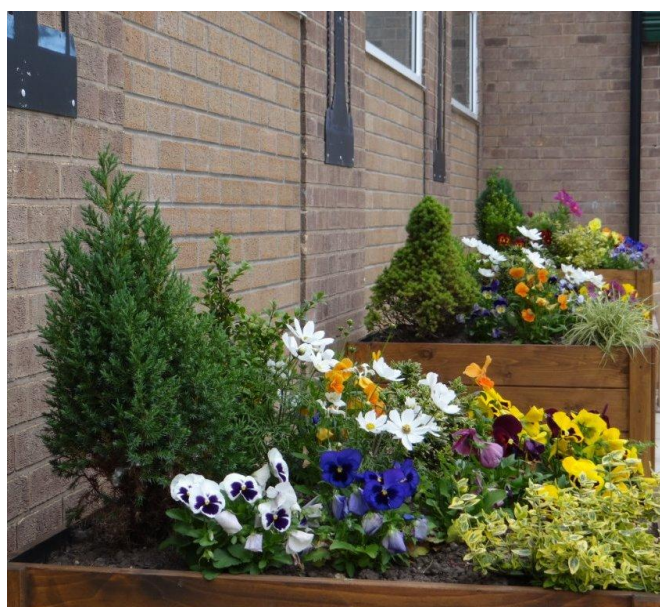


The Heritage Garden has been successful in being nominated under Tesco's 'Bags of Help' community funding scheme, and the result of this will be known at the end of June, when the Garden project receives either £4,000, £2,000 or £1,000, depending on how many blue plastic tokens are placed in the Heritage Garden bin at the Tesco Extra store at Altrincham - shoppers place these in one of three bins representing different charitable causes.



If Poynton residents and their friends also wish to help fund the completion of the Garden project that would be very much appreciated by the volunteers involved - there are collecting tins at the Civic Hall and Library.

Malcolm Adams and Diane Penny



Committee News

Chairman's Comments

When Peter Laslett hosted a conference in 1981 to discuss the possibility of bringing the idea of a U3A to Britain, he divided human life into three ages. The U3A is for the third age where work and family responsibility do not weigh as heavily. Since the conference the percentage of Britons of the third age has increased substantially.

In the last Newsletter I mentioned something of our early history. Our growth continues and there are now some 1,010 local U3As who have between them over 385,000 members - all this from an organisation which had only begun in 1983! For comparison, the Women's Institute, which was founded in 1915, has just under 220,000 members.

In the February 2016 edition of *Third Age Matters* three former National U3A chairmen put forward their views on how the U3A movement might go forward – a much tighter business model in which trusteeship through volunteers was separated from the executive function, the latter in the hands of a small centralised and salaried group. And so a debate on possible changes to the governance of the U3A movement is now ongoing. However, out of the discussions to date there does not seem to be any wish to change the basic structure of the organisation. Each of the regions has grown and that includes the North West. But this has simply meant that local groups of U3As have formed networks within those regions. We ourselves are part of a group of 6 U3As which cover north-east Cheshire. The regions have perhaps become unwieldy. And so, for many purposes, the local networks have taken their place. As is often the case when governance in large organisations is looked at, a very considerable amount of hot air is created over fairly lengthy periods of time but the result is only a series of minor changes. Certainly the consultative meeting which was held in Manchester in February was very firmly of that opinion. The notions which had been put forward in the February 2016 edition of *Third Age Matters* found no support. The strength of the U3A movement has been the autonomy of its local U3As which provide local members with programmes which they want. The need for our local organisation in Poynton is demonstrated by its continuing expansion, year on year.

Early this year your Committee had its annual meeting with Group Leaders. Interest groups have proved to be more important than our founders first realised

and our annual meeting gives us a chance to listen to the progress they have made as well as thanking them for their efforts. Each year numbers are growing and some groups, such as Science and Technology, have developed ambitious programmes. I never cease to be amazed as I listen to the variety and ingenuity of what is going on, whether in small or large groups and this year's AGM in March received a printed report on all of this which Joan and Liz had put together.

David Sewart

Coffee Mornings

Members continue to enjoy the Coffee Mornings at Wetherspoons (Poynton) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 10.30 am. The next dates are September 27th and October 25th. Note there are no Coffee Mornings in July and August.

Anne Wynn

Your Committee	
David Sewart	Chairman
Carol Gatenby	Vice-Chair & Speaker Organiser
Kay Dacey	Treasurer
Beryl Simpson	Secretary
Kate Marsham	Membership Secretary
Joan Stepto	Group Co-ordinator
Liz Markham	Asst Group Co-ordinator
Lynda Green	Events Co-ordinator
Anne Wynn	Welcome Co-ordinator
Dorothy Scale	Refreshment Organiser
Sandra Batchelor	Publicity Co-ordinator

Poynton U3A Newsletter Group

As you will see when reading the 22nd and 23rd issues of the newsletter we have received articles and photographs from a wide number of members in various interest groups. This is great, as it expands our range and may encourage others, even you, to write for the newsletters. Anyone can send in an article, pictures, or both. We are also open to new ideas; so if you would like to join the newsletter team please contact us. Each year we produce three issues of the Newsletter, holding two or three meetings to plan each issue.

If you are interested in joining us please contact me by phone or email.

Clive B Hill

Members Corner

Our Day Out

Not having been on a coach trip since my young days when the fight was on to sit on the wonderful back seat, this was a new experience for me. Iris gave us chapter and verse of times, places and plans for the day, then off we set.



Arriving at Ellesmere Boat Museum we were given a very comprehensive talk, with accompanying slides, on the history of the canals in this area, and about the museum itself, and we learned that the coming of railways had made many canals defunct. Next we travelled by boat for a short journey along the canal hearing the history of the area surrounding Ellesmere Port, which had been a great industrial hub. After we were able to wander round the site and see for ourselves some of the things we had seen during the lecture.



Norton Priory, an Augustinian establishment, proved to be a most fascinating place, close to the banks of the River Mersey and not far from Runcorn. Dating from the 12th to 16th century it had covered a huge area, although most of the remains are now only just visible above ground. The surviving taller sandstone walls, gateways and undercroft have, at great expense, been covered by a beautiful modern wooden and glass building and are now safely preserved.

We saw a large 14th century statue of St Christopher with a child on his shoulders which amazingly, despite being moved around numerous times over the years, is in perfect condition. Multiple artefacts have been discovered on site and are well displayed within the building.



Some of our party made their way to the two and a half acres of walled gardens which they found to be very impressive. From this very peaceful and tranquil environment we travelled back to the reality of a busy and traffic-clogged 21st century.

Helen J Stanley

The P1 Local Bus Service

Cheshire East is reviewing local bus services. This will affect Poynton in respect of P1 which runs from Hazel Grove Railway Station to the junction of Green Lane and Middlewood Road, right through the heart of Poynton. This service has been wonderful for areas which had no bus service for many years.

If you live on Woodford Road or Chester Road or any of the roads or estates off these roads, you may find yourself without a bus. People living to the east of London Road North and South will also be affected by the loss of this service, even though it has been mentioned that there may be an occasional diversion by one of the other buses. You, your friends, relations or neighbours may miss this service now or at some time in the future.

We have been asked to complete the questionnaire online at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/busreview or email bus.review@cheshireeast.gov.uk with our comments. The more of us who send our emails the more chance there is that we may keep this much needed service. This consultation closes on **Wednesday 26th July 2017.**

Members Corner

Buses, Bluebells and Birds – Three Bus Journeys

As the P1 bus service continues to operate, on 25th April we caught it on Dickens Lane, to the terminus at Middlewood. We walked the short distance along the road to the path leading down through Princes Wood, where bluebells were coming into flower. Song thrush, wren, blackcap, chiffchaff and robin were among the birds in full song. We continued down the incline as far as the exit onto Parklands Way. In the near future a new Italian coffee shop is due to open on School Lane having relocated from Brookside Garden Centre. This will make a convenient stopping place en route for home.

On 28th April we caught the 392 bus to Stockport bus station, then the 384 circular (a good service with buses every 15 minutes, each journey takes about 30 minutes) going through Bredbury, Romiley, and Compstall. We got off at the entrance to Etherow Country Park. Opting for the riverside and lake walk, rather than up through the bluebell woods, we saw lots of colourful mandarin ducks and of particular interest, was a small flock of sand martins flying around a derelict mill where they were nesting. After refreshments sitting on the terrace of the cafe overlooking the lake, we returned to the same bus stop for the 384 which continues its circular route via Marple Bridge, Marple, Offerton and Stockport. If you miss the 392 from the bus station there is an option of getting the 192 (on the A6 by Mersey Square) to Hazel Grove and the P1 from Argyle Street.

During May, through the windows of the 392 going to Macclesfield, one can enjoy the view of a sloping carpet of bluebells beneath majestic beech trees at Pott Shrigley.

Richard and Vivienne Arnold.

Bus journey to Ashbourne - Saturday 22 April

(based on personal diary notes)

Another exciting and interesting "away day". Determined to make the most of the lovely weather and aware of the travelling time involved I made an early start.

I set off from home about 8-30 to ensure I was in good time for the 8-54 (199) to Buxton. Parked at Hazel Grove Park and Ride. I could possibly have caught the 9-24 but didn't want to risk missing the Ashbourne connection. As expected, I was early, arriving in Buxton at 9-53. The Ashbourne(442) bus left at 10-25 and takes a rather circuitous route but it was so pretty I didn't mind at all. The route passes through Earl Sterndale, Crowdecote, Longor, Hartington and

Tissington amongst others. Quite a few places would be worthy of a visit themselves. I could be busy next Spring/Summer. I will probably plan linear walks between some of these lovely little places. Ashbourne was very busy with traffic and I was glad I wasn't driving. There is a one way system in places but actually plenty of parking if you knew your way around the town. I thought it was better to remain on the bus until the bus station. That way I saw a little of the town and tried to get my bearings. Arrived about 11-40.

Despite a sign post pointing the wrong way I managed to find Tourist Information (down a little passage beside the Town Hall). The staff were helpful and I came out with a town trail guide. I decided it was time for an early lunch and to plan my afternoon. There are many places to eat and I chose one in the Market Place. The service was pleasant and the food was tasty. I decided to follow the trail from where I was. It was only supposed to take an hour and a half but I went off and added a couple of extras and spent time taking photos. I also sat in the park watching the ducks and swans. It was a lovely sunny afternoon. I enjoyed looking at the buildings and reading blue plaques. I had to speed up towards the end because I had been advised to visit St Oswald's church for some interesting tombs.

The Easter flower displays were beautiful. I didn't have time to check out the Antique shops or the start of the Tissington Trail so will definitely return. I enjoyed an ice cream waiting for the bus which left at 4-05 p.m. and arrived in Buxton about 5-20p.m. I was fortunate to catch the TP bus in Buxton at 5-28p.m. and arrived back at the Rising Sun Park and Ride just after six o'clock and by half past six was sat at home reflecting on a very pleasant day.

Evelyn Shepherd

Diary Dates	
Monthly General Meetings	
3rd Tuesday in month at 2pm - Poynton Civic Hall	
(Doors Open at 1.30pm)	
August 15 th	Geoff Keeling - Milestones in Forensic Science
September 19 th	Matthew Martin - Tax, Car and Toy Boys
October 17 th	Geoff Scargill - Sir Edward Watkin - The Last Laugh of the Railway King
November 21 st	Colin Samuel - Police Diving throughout the North West

Members Corner

Yorkshire Sculpture Park

On Friday 2 June the U3A Photography Group had its annual summer social and day out to visit the Yorkshire Sculpture Park near Wakefield. A few had previously visited the site but this was my first visit. I had never been interested in sculpture (The Turner Prize sprang to mind!) but went with an open mind to hopefully find some interesting subjects for photographing.

We were lucky with the weather which had been cool and drizzly as we left Poynton. By the time we arrived at the park it was dry but cloudy and warm. After a coffee in the spacious, light cafe which overlooks the country park, we set off either on our own or with a friend to explore the park. With over 80 sculptures in the open air as well as indoor exhibitions we had to prioritise. Our first stop was the formal gardens and terraces which gave superb views over the countryside through the various sculptures. Whichever way we went there seemed to be a surprise around every corner! Though still being a sceptic about sculpture I found that I had a definite preference for the more realistic, even quirky, rather than the twisted, amorphous objects.

We wandered through Barbara Hepworth's 'The Family of Man' group then came across a large, very colourful, Buddha covered in a mixture of broken mosaics, shiny colourful pebbles etc. I loved it!

Our next stop was the indoor exhibition which at the moment is exhibiting work by Tony Cragg and is entitled 'A Rare Category of Objects'. I have to admit to being impressed by his varied use of materials. I particularly liked the wooden sculptures for their smooth, flowing lines, especially one entitled 'Spring'. I would love to have run my fingers over them but, of course, there was a 'Do Not Touch' policy!



After a very tasty lunch in the cafe and catching up with the rest of the group, we set off across a meadow

studded with Henry Moore's 'Open Air Bronze Collection' and a flock of sheep to walk along the River Dearne and Lower Lake. Here we saw several herons and other wildfowl. We also had a good view of another sculpture which was on the far side of the lake. It was a 7 meters tall girl's head in cast iron by Jaume Plensa called 'Wilsis'. Another of my favourites.



Returning to the main centre we passed Antony Gormley's 'One and Other' sculpture which was so tall we had to crane our necks to view it! A little further on we came across ranks of identical metallic figures, eighty in all, set out in a grid formation. Called 'Black and Blue: The Invisible Man and One Masque of Blackness' by Zak Ové. Definitely not one of my favourites.

Further along we came to Bretton Hall the grounds of which now house the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. It was originally the home of the Wentworth family, then a college and is now being converted into a hotel. Unmissable was a circle of twelve animal heads on top of columns entitled 'Zodiac Heads' by Ai Weiwei. Nearby was another favourite sculpture depicted in galvanised wire, about 4 meters tall and entitled 'Sitting' by Sophie Ryder, it was a hybrid of a woman and a hare! Finally in front of the Orangery was a pleasing sculpture by Peter Randall-Page entitled 'Shape in the Clouds 111'. It had beautiful marbled effects in shades of green.

There would have been more to see had we had more time but it was time to go. For someone who thought I wouldn't like the sculptures, I had a very pleasant, interesting day and would certainly go back.

Kate Marsham

Science & Technology



What's in that Building?

Lots of us have driven out of Wilmslow towards the airport and wondered what happens in that big building with the massive car park. At the end of February, members from the Science & Technology Group visited the building and found the answer.

The building is the headquarters of the Waters Corporation who manufacture mass spectrometers. On our visit we had an introductory talk mainly about the purpose of mass spectrometers with a few technical details, followed by a guided tour of the building. This is very modern and almost cathedral like with a high roof over a central aisle with rooms on either side. In fact the structure resembles a mass spectrometer and the corridor down the middle is called the Ion Path. The rooms have glass walls so our tour took us along the central corridor as each room was explained. It is like looking into a goldfish bowl only the people inside do not go round in circles and can remember things for more than three seconds!

They have their own bat house because there was previously an old house on the site which became home to a colony of bats and they had to be re-housed before development could proceed.

They also have their own customs area where the delicate equipment is checked and sealed before being taken to the airport and sent on its way unopened.



Thanks to everybody at Waters for their hospitality, the refreshments, the informative talk and the excellent guides.

You want to know about mass spectrometers? You'll have to look on Wikipedia.

Derek Gatenby



Science & Technology

Shhh! Do you want to know a secret?

There's a secret nuclear bunker in the heart of Cheshire except it's not so secret any more. It was visited by members of the Science & Technology Group (Yes, us again!) at the end of April.

The bunker is situated near Nantwich in the middle of nowhere and as you approach you are directed by large brown signs which somewhat ruin the secrecy.

The site was a Second World War radar station that was converted into a nuclear bunker at the start of the Cold War. It was to be the seat of regional government in the event of a nuclear attack. Many of the rooms have been refitted with original equipment of the time. It has echoes of a bygone era from the NAAFI to the early warning equipment, from the radiation maps to the country wide communications system and even a BBC radio studio. (Television doesn't work with nuclear fallout.) Interestingly in a time when we have hot-desking, they had hot-bedding in the dormitories.

The group emerged from the bunker in a quiet mood. I'm not sure about the Science and Technology content of the visit but it was certainly thought-provoking.

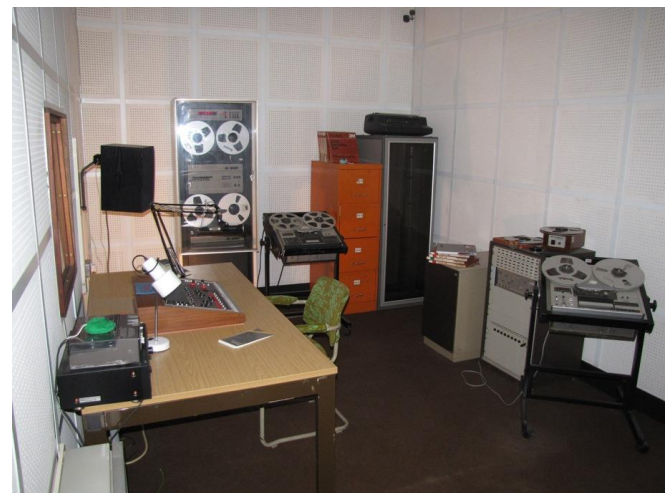
Derek Gatenby



Early Warning Data Room



Science Group before entering the bunker



BBC Radio Studio



British Nuclear Missile



Communications Room

Groups List

Group	Organiser	Meeting
Acoustic Folk/Rock Band	Geoff Brindle	Contact Organiser
Art	David Williams	1.45-3.45pm Mondays at the Civic Hall
Art Appreciation	Kath Bell Carol Gatenby	Monthly. Contact Organiser
Ballet Appreciation	Meg Humphries	1 st Thursday or 4 th Wednesday each month
Bird Watching	Peter Owen	Monthly. Contact Organiser (Programme on web site)
Bridge	Dorothy Rowland	2.00pm alternate Mondays at the Civic Hall
Bus Pass Explorer	Vivienne Arnold Evelyn Shepherd	Contact Organiser
Cake Decorating	Ann Tofield	Contact Organiser
Creative Writing	Veronica O'Connor Ann Walker	2.00pm 2 nd & 4 th Mondays in month Davenport Golf Club
Crosswords	Ed Milius	By arrangement with the organiser
Day Trips	Iris & Gerry Neale	Information at General Meetings & on website
Diners' Club	Gerard Miller	
Discussion	Les Simpson	
D.I.Y.	Sue Badger	Contact Organiser
Embroidery	Barbara Davies	1.45-3.45pm 4 th Thursday in month at the Civic Hall
Family History	Moyna Barrott	2.00pm 1 st Wednesday in month at the Civic Hall
Film Discussion Group	Maggie Eagland	2.00pm 3 rd Wednesday in month
French Conversation	Sandra & Keith Batchelor	Monthly. Contact Organiser
Geology	Peter Bennett	Monthly. Contact Organiser
German Conversation	Peter Owen	Monthly
History	Wendy Fermor Dorothy Bayman	2.00pm 4 th Tuesday in month
Music Appreciation	Liz Markham	2.00pm 1 st Thursday in month
Newsletter	Clive Hill	Contact Organiser
Photography	Peter Bennett & Hilary Tivey John Jurics	Monthly. Contact Organisers
Play Reading	Catherine Owen	2.15pm 1 st Tuesday in month
Reading Group 1	Iris Neale	2 nd Tuesday in month
Reading Group 2	Glenys Parry-Jones	Last Monday of the month 10.30am at Wetherspoons
Science & Technology	Carol & Derek Gatenby	Contact Organisers
Scrabble	Dorothy Bayman	2.00pm 2 nd Monday in month
Short Walks	Joan Stepto	2 nd & 4 th Tuesdays in month
Spanish	Paul Freeborn	Mondays 10-11.30
Table Tennis	Janet Gill	Every Wednesday 2.00-4.00pm and every Thursday 1.30-4.00pm at Poynton Sports Club
Walking	Marilyn Westbrook	1 st Thursday in month

Groups List

Other Poynton Groups open to our U3A Members

Group	Organiser	Meeting
Hallé Concert Visits	Yvonne Sharma	Information at General Meetings & on web site
PHS-PTA Theatre Trips	Elaine Roe	Information at General Meetings & on web site
PHS-PTA Minibreaks	Elaine Roe	Information at General Meetings & on web site

NEC Network U3A Open Groups

Group	Organiser	Telephone	Meeting
Badminton (Bramhall)	Douglas Moore	Contact Bramhall U3A	2.00-4.00 Tuesdays
Creative Writing (Bramhall)	Pat George	Contact Bramhall U3A	2.00 2 nd Wednesday in month
Cycling (Wilmslow)	Richard Thomas	Contact Wilmslow U3A	Weekly – Contact Organiser
Embroidery (Bramhall)	Dorothy Chesterman	Contact Bramhall U3A	10.00 alternate Wednesdays
Line Dancing (Bramhall)	Chris Chapman	Contact Bramhall U3A	1.30 -3.30 Wednesdays
Personal Image (Bramhall)	Catherine Jones	Contact Bramhall U3A	6-week courses, Thursdays 10.00-12.00
Scottish country Dancing (Bramhall)	Sheila Bruce-Smith	Contact Bramhall U3A	1.30-3.00 Fortnightly, Fridays
Wine Tasting (Bramhall)	Jenny Richmond	Contact Bramhall U3A	Bi-monthly

Please be sure to let us have any news items and photographs from your group's activities for our Website and Notice Board, via your Group Organiser.

If you are interested in joining any groups, contact the group organiser, or if you are interested in forming a new group, speak to Joan at General Meetings or email groups@poyntonu3a.org.uk .

Thanks to everybody who has contributed to the current newsletter. If you would like to submit articles or photographs for a future newsletter, please email your contribution to newsletter@poyntonu3a.org.uk or give it to a member of the Newsletter Group. The next copy date for the Poynton U3A Newsletter is October 8th 2017.

Message to all Group Organisers: *When you email your group members about arrangements, please send a copy to webmaster@poyntonu3a.org.uk so that we can keep the website up to date. Thank you.*

Our thanks go to Jack Taylor for his sterling work with the Laptop & Internet Group. Many of us are grateful for his guidance and patience whilst helping us to understand our laptops and getting us to use them successfully. His last meeting will be on Thursday 13th July.

As he says,
"I have always maintained that, if this group was successful and member's skills improved to the point where they were satisfied that they could meet their own needs then, it would be the architect of its own demise."

Thank you Jack.

Views from the Groups

Water Rail and Heron



The Water Rail sighting was enjoyed because it is a shy and retiring bird, hence rarely seen. The Heron is such a majestic bird which appears particularly impressive in flight. The photos were taken on a trip to Pennington Flash on 10 March.

David Hammond

DIY Group - Fitting an Awning



Walking Group – Bollington, Rainow and back

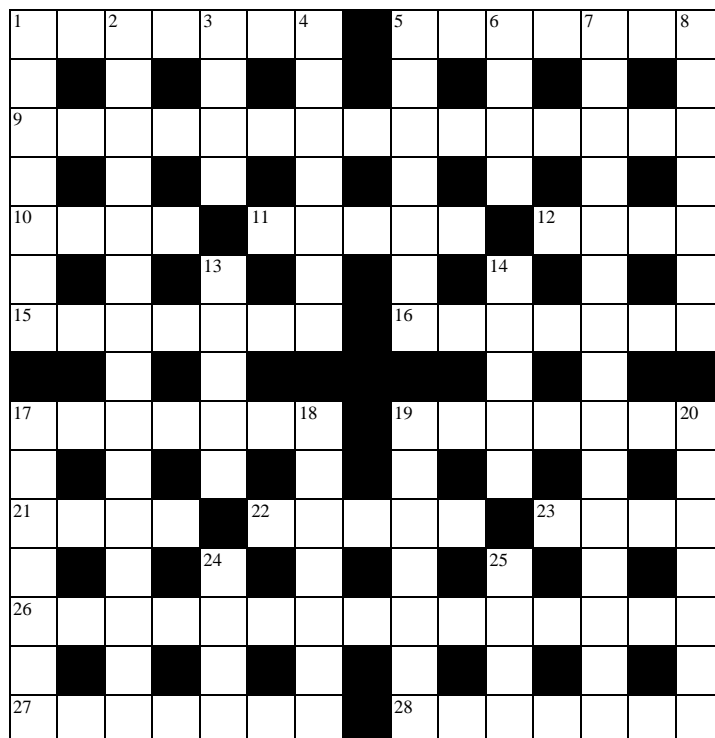


Members' Corner

POYNTON U3A CROSSWORD PUZZLE No.20

ACROSS

- 1 What may be chic to a drunk could also be dishevelled. (7)
 5 Confused rebel clutching old disc sets off the alarm. (7)
 9 Love the appreciative audience, but run off very quickly. (4,3,8)
 10 In a way revered solidly, but not sly. (4)
 11 Prickle due to getting pines back-to-front. (5)
 12 Employs ruse to deceive. (4)
 15 American girl heading east on an old sailing ship. (7)
 16 Short break in East Anglia region of England for picking up words. (7)
 17 Stiff man in road transport. (7)
 19 We hear he is in good condition – that'll be nice! (7)
 21 Mope around in rhythmic style maybe. (4)
 22 Something precious may be found in an opening (5)
 23 Stuff brandy back. (4)
 26 George for example. (3,6,6)
 27 Mammal held by extremes of loyalty in a game of chance. (7)
 28 Smell of sodium is a sign you are chemically reactive. (7)



DOWN

- 1 Local linguist hides his chosen career. (7)
 2 Woke gentleman with compact disc and stirred to recognition. (15)
 3 Gallery found in every stately home. (4)
 4 Tossing up ha'pence will give away the answer. (7)
 5 Canal flowing in the extremes of Bute maintaining equilibrium. (7)
 6 Catch sight of from a Scottish river. (4)
 7 Squash a pear? It may result in an official announcement. (5,10)
 8 Take the top of the jam and keep for another day. (7)
 13 Searching for fifty five in a river. (5)
 14 Direction is to initially turn right to the finish. (5)
 17 London wealth. (7)
 18 Light railway running round appropriately. (7)
 19 Britten's variations on a water bird theme. (7)
 20 What a storm over one of Shakespeare's plays! (7)
 24 One fewer, without hesitation - involved in a partnership. (4)
 25 Arise sir Ian to embrace your flower. (4)

Crossword Puzzle No.19 Solution



Compiled by Ed Milius and Ian Berresford of
 the Poynton U3A Crossword Group.
 If you would like to join us, contact Ed

Minibreak

Cardiff, Castles & Historic Towns

On a Saturday at the beginning of April we set off on our spring mini break. Our first stop was Tewkesbury with its beautiful 12th century Abbey and fine half-timbered buildings. Some people were lucky enough to see the Peregrine falcons perched up on the Abbey near their nest. Then it was on to the attractive market town of Monmouth, with its unique stone gated medieval bridge and claims to fame as the birth place of Henry V and the home of Charles Rolls one of the founders of Rolls Royce.



On Sunday we had the whole day in Cardiff, starting off in the city in the morning. We chose to visit the Castle first and found it fascinating with its mixture of buildings, the ancient keep, the Victorian interiors in the house and the wartime bomb shelters. We climbed the keep, over 100 steep stairs, but it was worth it for the view over the city. Then it was on to the National Museum where we admired the Impressionist paintings particularly the Monet Water Lilies. After lunch we headed down to the bay area where we had a lovely walk in glorious sunshine and then visited the strikingly modern Senedd building which houses the Welsh National Assembly.



On our final day we travelled the short distance to Castell Coch, (the Red Castle), which has the appearance of a medieval Welsh chieftain's stronghold but is actually a Victorian folly built in the 1870s for the 3rd Marquess of Bute. It has wonderfully ornate interiors but you have to negotiate lots of steep narrow staircases to see them.

Then it was on to Ludlow for our lunch stop. It was market day in this lovely town and several purchases were made. I can recommend the Bara Brith in the Castle Tea Rooms, it was absolutely delicious! Our final stop was at Stokesay Castle, the finest and best-preserved fortified medieval manor house in England. Where Castell Coch was all pretence, this was the real deal with its Great Hall, unchanged for more than 700 years. The fine timber roof and staircase with treads cut from whole tree trunks, all show the same carpenters' mark from 1291. There were lots more staircases here and although some of us made it to the top of the tower others preferred to view it from the tearoom!

Elaine Roe