

HALTON NEWSLETTER

September 2026

Ducks walking on water at Spike Island



Photo courtesy of Chris Lewis

Message from the Chair - Pol Clark, Halton u3a

Firstly, I would like to start by thanking you all for placing your trust in me and providing me with the opportunity to be your Chair for the next three years, which I see as a privilege.

I joined Halton u3a in the spring of 2025, which, I have to acknowledge, was quite by accident, having come along to one of the monthly meetings with a close friend who had recently lost her husband and who had advised me that she was going to join 'The University of the Third Age'. My immediate response was *"I'm not letting you get involved with any type of cult! Goodness knows where that will lead. If you're going to a meeting, I'm coming with you to make sure that it's ok!"*

Well, I did come along and as well as obviously finding out that it wasn't some sort of cult organisation, I found a really friendly, welcoming group of people with lots of fun activities on offer to try. I personally have become a member of the Walking Group and the Family History Group, which I really enjoy. However, I know that we have lots of other group activities that members are involved in. Therefore, I think that it is important to also take this chance to acknowledge the work done by our Group Leaders and to thank them for their enthusiasm and commitment, which helps us, as members, embrace the u3a motto of *'Learn, Laugh, Live'*.

In addition, on behalf of all members, I would like to thank Chris and Jennifer for their work in helping to build Halton u3a into what it is today and for all for the hard work, professionalism and commitment they have shown in their roles as Chair and Secretary.

It was actually Chris who first invited me to join the u3a Committee. I attended my first meeting on 1st September last year and now look, here we are today, a year later and what a year. It really has been quite a whirlwind!

In terms of becoming more involved with the organisation generally, many of you will know that I volunteered to write a murder mystery play for last year's Christmas event, which was great fun and was generally well received by all who attended. In addition, I set up a Jigsaw Swap and Chat Group, which is held on a monthly basis at the Catalyst Museum and again seems to be going well.

However, the biggest challenge faced by the Committee during the year related to the governance of the organisation, as it became apparent that because the organisation's income had exceeded £5,000 there was a legal requirement, (for which all the Committee members, as Trustees of the organisation, were personally responsible) to register the organisation with the Charity Commission.

As a result, Halton u3a was subsequently registered as a charity on 3rd July 2026, which in turn imposed certain legal requirements, including the production of four mandatory policies, namely:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy

These policies have been written and ratified and are available to view on the Halton u3a website.

At the same time, we felt that it was necessary to refresh and modernise our leaflet which was produced along with generic business cards for members to distribute to any interested parties. Both include a QR code to enable people to gain direct access to our website.

As if that wasn't enough, our bank, which had been used for the last eleven years, decided to introduce charges, levied on an individual transaction basis. Therefore, there was a rush to open a new 'no charge' Community account before the commencement of the new membership year.

So, I think you can agree, it has been a very busy year. However, with most of the governance duties now in hand, I believe we now have a solid foundation to start our new year.

Looking ahead, my aim is simple, which is to build on what is already working well and to ensure that Halton u3a continues to be an active, friendly and welcoming organisation.

I have been researching other u3a's and noted that several across the country have developed the governance side of their organisation, for example by producing more policies and procedures, in some cases up to 18! However, I think that it is important that Halton u3a retains its charm and simplistic approach. After all, we are all now retired and looking for an easier life, so I don't think anyone would want to see the organisation become unnecessarily complicated.

With that in mind, I will be proposing to the new Committee that we stick with the four mandatory policies and add just one further discretionary policy regarding membership, purely to ensure all aspects are clarified.

I am really excited about what we can achieve together and would encourage you to come forward with new ideas or perhaps look to set up new interest groups. I know Chris is hoping to set up a Transport Group now that he has more time. For my sins, I have also agreed to write another murder mystery, probably for spring next year. So, watch this space, as around November time I will be asking for ~~victims~~, sorry, volunteers, who would like to take part in the production.

So, to conclude, thank you all once again. I really am looking forward to my role. Thank you.

Message from the Ex- Chair - Chris Lewis, Halton u3a

I am writing this in advance of the AGM when Jennifer and I will relinquish the roles of Secretary and Chair of Halton u3a. Having done three years as Secretary and three years as Chair I cannot remain on the Committee but I am in favour of that rule. A change of Committee is necessary to bring in new ideas.

I know only a minority of the members will have been to the AGM. For those that have I maybe repeating what I will have said at the AGM. First of all I want to thank the various Committee members and others, who have supported Jennifer and me over the six years. I especially want to thank Pat James for her work as editor of our Newsletter and Anna Higgins as our webmaster. They took up these roles well before Jennifer and I started on the Committee and have continued throughout. We were very pleased to receive a "thank you card" signed by all the Committee with a present at our last Committee meeting. I

kept this to 44 minutes, a record I think. Also I thank Bob Roach for leading several groups and for arranging Zoom meetings to keep Halton u3a going during covid. We thank all the Group Leaders over the years and the members who have supported Halton u3a. Thank you to those who have personally thanked us. One of the major achievements was increasing membership over that six years by over 50%. In our last year members renewing and new members reached 175, a record for Halton u3a.

I have enjoyed being Chair normally. It has taken a lot of time. I found that just in July I received over 200 emails to my u3a email address and sent 140. None were spam I assume because I do not order things on this address. We were particularly pleased we celebrated ten years of Halton u3a last year with guests including Derek Twigg and Martha Lloyd Jones, Mayor of Halton. Paula Fox who started Halton u3a, and is member number one, arranged for a large choir to sing for us and she was one of the singers.

We are particularly pleased that we helped Halton u3a progress over the six years. Most members enjoy attending meetings, learning and making new friends. We certainly have met many people via Halton u3a including through the Pub Group and coffee afternoons. What are we going to do now? I have just closed my business which I started when I retired from Laporte 28 years ago. But it may not surprise you that I will continue to be Treasurer of the Locomotive Club of Great Britain. We have been abroad four times this year by the time you read this. We want to travel more while we still can. I get as much pleasure planning holidays as going on them and this saves a lot of money.

I have told the new Committee if they have any further questions we will try and answer them. Halton u3a will continue to improve we are sure and members will enjoy themselves and learn new things as they have in the past. Finally since I haven't put before the biggest thank you I give, of course, is to Jennifer.

General Meeting September

After six years of leading Halton u3a Chris and Jennifer Lewis opened the meeting. Chris wanted to thank everyone who had supported them in what are very time consuming roles. The Committee for this year were introduced.

Pol Clark, our new Chair thanked Chris and Jennifer. Pol explained the new policies which are now necessary and assured everyone that she hopes our u3a will continue and grow as a friendly place to find new interests.

David Bissenden then spoke about the life of Edith Cavell, an English nurse living in Belgium during WW1. She not only looked after anyone who was injured but also helped people escape from the Germans. Unfortunately she was executed, but her bravery has not been forgotten.

General Meeting speaker Jean Finley, May, 2026 - Pol Clark, Chair, Halton u3a

I have to admit, I was a little unsure when I heard that the speaker for the May General Meeting was going to be discussing nursery rhymes and wondered if the subject would be dry and boring. However, I needn't have worried and was actually very pleasantly surprised.

Jean Finney, an ex-Chair of Halton u3a, was an excellent speaker and provided a very entertaining story of the history of our traditional nursery rhymes, with copious amounts of humour thrown in for good measure.

Jean explained that whilst we think of the simple verses and songs purely as basic education and entertainment for children, that many of the original rhymes were not meant for children at all as they were often disguised political or satirical messages passed around as verses, which made them easier to remember and helped to avoid the message being distorted by 'Chinese whispers'.

Jean provided examples of several nursery rhymes and explained the hidden meanings, including the classic 'Three Blind Mice':

"Three blind mice, three blind mice
See how they run, see how they run
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife
Did you ever see such a thing in your life
As three blind mice"

Jean explained that Queen Mary I of England, also known as 'Bloody Mary', who retained her Catholic faith and persecuted Protestants during her reign (1516 - 1558). The 'three blind mice' were in fact three Protestant loyalists, often identified as the Oxford Martyrs, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley and Thomas Cranmer, who Queen Mary had executed for heresy

Another example Jean provided was 'Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary'

"Mary, Mary, quite contrary
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockle shells
And pretty maids all in a row"

Once again, this rhyme is said to be a reference to Queen Mary I with 'Contrary' describing her style of leadership and widespread persecution of Protestants. 'How does your garden grow', mocked her inability to produce children, whilst 'Pretty maids all in a row' refers to 'Maidens' – a beheading machine, similar to the guillotine.

The talk was both educational and entertaining and I for one am hoping that Jean is invited back to do one of her other talks

The Legacy is Settlement in the American Colonies (Author John Beacham) - forwarded by Alec Hough, Halton u3a member

Thirty years ago, based on the US Census, 61.3 million Americans (32%) self-reported themselves as having British ancestry. Most claimed English descent (26%) and a few Scottish (4%). These numbers will of course continue to decline over time, but back in 1700 about 80% of the population were of English extraction. The rest, apart from native Americans, being of African (11%), Dutch (4%) or Scottish (3%) origins.

The imprint of parts of British culture on early American society and values was considerable, as well as long-lasting. The regional and cultural differences between four major waves of immigration in the 17th and 18th centuries created distinct and separate identities in the different colonial settlements, which can still be detected today. These waves came from different parts of Britain, were each motivated by different issues, each had their own differing views of what America might become and each settled in a different area of the embryonic USA.

These immigrant waves can loosely be described as:

- The Puritans (1629-1641) to New England

- The Cavaliers and their servants (1642-1675) to Virginia and the South

- The Friends (1675-1725) to Pennsylvania and the Midwest

- The Borderers (1717-1775) to Appalachia

The Puritans (1629-1641)

The Puritans were English Protestants who sought to further purify the Church of England of Roman Catholic practices, maintaining that the Reformation of the previous century was not complete. They were not a formally defined religious group and today they would be described as religious fundamentalists.

About 21,000 migrated from East Anglia to the fledgling New England colonies during the period known as the *Eleven Years Tyranny* (when Charles I ruled without recourse to Parliament). Although this was not a large number, they had high birth and low death rates leading to more than 16 million descendants today.

These migrants followed the voyage of the *Mayflower* (1620) and gave America *Thanksgiving* and the self-image of "*City on a Hill*" (quoted by nearly every President to assert US moral superiority). Puritan society was "killjoy", rigid and repressive. However, it was also well ordered and run by town assemblies where everyone could have a say.

They also believed in education, a high degree of equality for women and the bettering of oneself through hard work. These characteristics can still be seen in New England today, particularly that it has some of the oldest and most prestigious colleges and universities in the country.

The Cavaliers and their Servants (1642-1675)

By the 1640s, the English Parliament had come to represent Puritanism, religiously, socially and economically and had become locked in a struggle for power with the King, which became the English Civil Wars (1642-1651).

Sir William Berkeley was a Royalist and a Cavalier and came from a cadet branch of the noble and landed Berkeley family. He saw the coming conflict and smartly purchased the office of Governor of the colony of Virginia, in 1641. He came from a hierarchical society where the accident of birth conveyed both fortune and authority. Together with his indentured servants, he created a very successful plantation, as well as running the colony

as a personal fiefdom. After the Civil War and the Restoration, he attracted many distressed English Cavaliers to settle in the colony. Some 10-12,000 Cavaliers accompanied by about 35,000 poor indentured servants came from the southern and midland counties, mostly between 1645 and 1665.

Berkeley and his like-minded aristocratic friends in his Council created a closed and largely despotic hereditary oligarchy with a large divinely ordered agrarian underclass. As the economy grew, indentured workers were replaced by African slaves as a new underclass. The plantation culture was thus founded and expanded southwards beyond Virginia. In 1660, every member of the Royal Council was related by blood or marriage and when it finished in 1775 every councillor was descended from at least one member of the 1660 Council.

Two hundred years later, the descendants of this culture would directly clash with and eventually lose to the descendants of Puritan New England over what kind of nation the USA was to become. It is possible to see reflections of the English Civil War here.

The Friends (1675-1725)

The Religious Society of Friends are evangelical Christians. They were founded in Lancashire by George Fox, in about 1650. They became informally known as *Quakers* as they were said to “tremble in the way of the Lord”. They were essentially religious liberals, believing that everyone was intrinsically good and they practised religious tolerance, pacifism and gender equality. They opposed the death penalty, slavery and cruelty to animals and children. They also eschewed ministers and religious rituals.

Because of their beliefs they were seen as dangerous to the existing order and were persecuted until James II's Declaration of Indulgence in 1687. About 23,000 Quakers escaped persecution by seeking freedom in the New World. In 1681, a Quaker called William Penn had founded Pennsylvania, based on a land grant from Charles II, as settlement of a debt. Most migrants settled in the Delaware Valley in Pennsylvania and a new city called Philadelphia (the city of brotherly love) grew up. Later, Quakers would spread westwards.

The Borderers (1717-1775)

The Border Reivers inhabited the English and Scottish border regions in the 16th century and lived a lawless life of robbery, extortion, murder, arson and cattle-rustling. Their end came in 1603 when James I became king of both countries. He pacified the Marches with executions, imprisonment and a great deal of banishment to his new Plantation in Ulster (1609). Those planted found it difficult to adjust to an agrarian life and then at the beginning of the 18th century they were particularly hit with economic hardship due to drought and an English block on their export of woollens. This led to the migration of about 250,000 of the descendants of these Borderers (ex Reivers) to the US.

Eastern Pennsylvania and the coastal plains of Virginia and the Carolinas were by now well populated so these settlers moved on to Western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. This area is centred on the southern ranges of the Appalachian Mountains (Appalachia). These settlers brought the Reiver values of clannishness, feuding, a dislike of authority and outsiders and an easy morality. However, they were well used to hardships in a violent frontier area and would carry these westwards. They were not much liked by other settler groups but would contribute significantly to the American Revolution and the opening up of the West.

Conclusions

I leave it to the reader to discern other echoes of these immigrants in the America of today, apart from the thought that their hopes and beliefs were undoubtedly reflected in the

grievances of the colonists that led inevitably to the American Revolution (1775-1783) and the establishment of an independent USA. Interestingly the loyalists in this conflict were as many as a third of the population and were most numerous in the south, New York and Pennsylvania.

On the Grapevine - George Mullen, Halton u3a member

We've all noticed how wine labels have become an interesting and important part of the wine business. The same is true of wine bottles which now often include decorative features to catch the eye of the shopper. They were around in Mesopotamia as long ago as 3500BC. At that time they were made of clay. Glass bottles date back to 1500BC. The standard size of 750 ml was influenced by trade between England and France in the 19th century. A 225 litre Bordeaux barrel, known as a barrique, will exactly fill 300 bottles sized 750ml. Another theory is that 750ml represented the maximum size that could be achieved by a glassblower.

Technology has moved on and now bottles are available in a variety of sizes.

A Split is 187.50 ml or a quarter bottle.

Demie is 375 ml or a half.

Seldom seen is a 500ml or two thirds of a standard bottle and known as a Jennifer.

Magnum is 2 bottles.

Jeroboam is 6 bottles

Methuselah is 8 bottles

Salmanazar is 12 bottles

Balthazar is 16 bottles

Nebuchadnezzar is 20 bottles but I've never seen one in Morrisons.

The maximum size for a Champagne bottle is a Magnum because the pressure inside can reach 90 psi the same as a tyre on a double decker bus. For this reason sparkling wine bottles are made of very thick glass and have a special closure arrangement. The capsule is the first part to remove. This is a plastic sleeve covering the neck of the bottle and the cork. It was originally designed to protect the cork from being damaged by rodents or insects when the wine is being stored for long periods in cellars. It also prevents oxygen entering the bottle through the cork. Next is the wire cage securing the cork. This is called a muselet from the French word museler meaning 'to muzzle'. Traditionally it takes 6.5 twists to uncoil the wire and remove from the bottle. Finally the cork itself. The best way to remove it is to hold the cork and twist the bottle. It's a good idea to hold the bottle at an angle of 45% and reduce the pressure on the cork. Another good idea is to point it carefully and not at your best china.

Recently I had a bottle of Garda DOC Spumante Brut. Made mainly from the Garganega grape in Soave in north east Italy it's described as a brilliant alternative to Prosecco. It was much better than that. As I removed the capsule and wire cage there was a noise sounding close to a gunshot and the cork flew out of the bottle and hit the ceiling with force. For cost and logistical reasons some wine is sold in paper bottles. But not bubbly.

Becoming very popular as an alternative to bottles are bag in box wines known as BIB. Originally they were viewed as cheap and low quality but today they are stocked by major

retailers in the UK including The Wine Society which is highly respected and noted for supplying good quality wine. After opening, a bottle of wine will stay fresh for 3-5 days but a BIB can last a month. As the wine is poured the bag collapses preventing oxygen entering.

An interesting variation on all this is a Pot Lyonnais. This is a glass decanter with a capacity of 460ml. In the 19th century employers in the French silk industry based in Lyon were obliged to supply their workers with wine. The workers were unhappy that the original size of 500 ml was reduced so that a litre bottle of wine would fill two pots leaving the employers with a small amount for themselves. More workers meant extra pots and so more wine for the employers.

Blue is the Colour - George Mullen, Halton u3a member

Sounds familiar? It's the anthem of Chelsea Football Club. In 1951 I saw Everton playing in blue shirts in my very first game. Their fans are known as 'True Blues'. Studies analysing the English Premier League show that blue is the most widely used primary colour in team kits. But it's not just in football, the colour is everywhere.

Blue Lagoon is the name of an iconic thermal spa in Iceland and there are at least a dozen other popular locations around the world with the same name.

The Blue Boy is a famous oil painting by Thomas Gainsborough. He wanted to demonstrate that Sir Joshua Reynolds was wrong to contend that a 'cool colour' such as blue couldn't be used as the central tone of a painting. Vincent Van Gogh painted six individual portraits of his friend Joseph Roulin posing as a postman wearing a dark blue uniform.

Little Boy Blue is a nursery rhyme we all remember from childhood. But what does it mean? Boy Blue's job was to look after the cows and sheep. He was called a Hayward and he used a horn to warn if the cattle were in the corn. The origin of the rhyme is complicated and uncertain. It was first seen in print in 1744 but some theories say it could date back to the 16th century as a political satire aimed at Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. He was the son of an Ipswich butcher and allegedly looked after the cattle just like a Hayward. Wolsey was regarded as arrogant and known for his bragging. Like Little Boy Blue he liked to blow his own horn.

The Beggar's Opera was a ballad opera first produced in London in 1728. Sir Robert Walpole was the main target of its political satire. This led to the Licensing Act of 1737 which meant that all new plays had to be approved by the government before being performed. Scripts had to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain's office to be checked by a team of 'readers' who amended or deleted unacceptable words or phrases by marking them with a blue pencil. The Theatres Act 1968 eventually abolished state censorship of the British theatre and brought an end to the system mockingly known as 'The Blue Pencil'.

In 1961 the song Blue Moon was a No.1 hit on both sides of the Atlantic for The Marcells. And you couldn't forget Bell Bottom Blues sung by Alma Cogan in 1954.

The colour also appeared in a notorious incident in 1983. Able Archer was a NATO exercise simulating conflict between Warsaw Pact countries referred to as Orange forces and NATO countries labelled Blue. Moscow mistakenly thought it signalled preparations for a real military attack. Experts believe this brought the world closest to nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

Some people are said to have blue blood in their veins but not in my house. Although I can Bluetooth my phone. The colour just keeps cropping up. Out of the blue!

What a Pantomime - George Mullen, Halton u3a member

As the earwig said when it fell off the cliff for a second time 'ere we go again. Yes, once more it's near the time when the media start to pester us about all things Christmas. Tree, presents, turkey, pudding and crackers with terrible jokes. But it wouldn't be the same without a pantomime, a genre of theatre developed in the 18th century in which the audience is encouraged to participate. Some male characters, such as the principal boy, are played by females while the Dame is usually a man. Traditionally the Dame was the only character who spoke to the audience. The stories were originally based on fairy tales and each pantomime had its own set of comic routines which were well known to everyone in the business.

We're all familiar with the classic story of Cinderella and the ball in the Royal Palace. Today more contemporary issues are included and scripts are written to accommodate comedians and other popular celebrities who are likely to attract a large audience. Storylines and the characters involved are sometimes interchanged. Perhaps the following could be a short extract from a typical script when the traditional Ugly Sisters are replaced by the Beverley Sisters.

JOY. Who is that fellow Dandini?

BABS. He's Prince Charming's valet. He's a mischief. I wouldn't trust him. The other day he was seen lurking in a remote part of the meadow with a shotgun and little else. Little Else is a nice girl who lives down the road.

TEDDY. And he was seen stealing paint from the storeroom.

JOY. Are you sure it was him?

TEDDY. Definitely. He was caught red handed.

JOY. Did you know Himpty Dumpty has had a fall?

BABS. Yes and I wouldn't be surprised if Dandini pushed him.

JOY. Humpty was badly shaken. The King's lot couldn't help him so I contacted Dr Doolittle but he can't come today because he's ill.

TEDDY. What's wrong with him?

JOY. Alice.

TEDDY. What's Alice?

JOY. It's what Christopher Robin went down with. Who's that man standing over there?

BABS. His name is Joe Penny.

JOY. Who's the young man with him?

BABS. His stepson Simon Halfpenny.

JOY. On the table here there's some writing on a piece of paper.

TEDDY. What does it say?

JOY. It looks like a phone number.

TEDDY. Do you recognise it?

JOY. It certainly rings a bell. Hang on I'll try it. It's a recorded message. It says we've qualified for a smart meter. I'm sorry our story doesn't have a happy ending but it could mean cheap electricity. (APPLAUSE)

Group Reports

- **iPad Group (Group Leader, Paula Fox)** - Meetings are twice monthly on Thursdays. First Thursday of the month 11.30am at the Apple Shop, Liverpool One. Third Thursday of the month 11.00am at Cronton Methodist Chapel Hall, Chapel Lane, WA8 4NT. Free car parking is opposite the chapel. Beginners are very welcome and we aim to learn just one new thing each session. A small charge for room hire is needed at Cronton Methodist Chapel Hall. Come along for a try out.
- **Crown Green Bowling Group (Group Leader, Paula Fox)** - Meetings at the bowling green are 10.00am every Tuesday from 7th April 2026. It's the perfect thing for a bit of gentle exercise and friendly banter. The crown on the green, in combination with the bias of the bowls, create forces which make for exciting tactics and learned skills. Of course, luck plays its part too. Don't be put off if you have never played before as you will receive a warm welcome and plenty of support and encouragement. There are bowls to borrow in various sizes and gorgeous colours, and professional coaching sessions are available. All you need are flat shoes and 50p for a cuppa in the clubhouse. No experience necessary, just a sense of humour. The bowling green is in Hough Green Park, Mayfield Avenue, Widnes, WA8 8PW.
- **Bridge Group (Group Leader, David Burrows)** - The group meets every Thursday at 10.00am in Ditton Community Centre, Dundalk Road, Widnes WA8 8DF. We are a friendly group with all levels of bridge skills and welcome members new to bridge but familiar with whist. We have a library of tuition books free to borrow to get new players familiar with bidding and techniques.
- **Reading Group - (Group Coordinator, Anna Higgins)** - We continue to meet on the third Wednesday of the month on the ground floor of Widnes Library. Our latest reading has included 'Fahrenheit 451', a dystopian novel by Ray Bradbury which got a lukewarm reception from the group. Book talk fell by the wayside at our August meeting, when we enjoyed a most tasty lunch and the pleasure of good company at Pesto in Widnes. The group is currently full but we are keeping a waiting list. Please contact the Reading Group Coordinator via the Halton u3a website if you would like your name to go on to the waiting list.
- **Photography Group - (Group Leader, Maurice Clay)** - We have had several different visits over the last couple of months. In July we went to Port Sunlight with a visit to the Lady Lever Museum and a walk around the village trust's gallery. Some of us ventured into the soap workers cottages and some went to the church, with most of us taking in the gardens. We ended up in the cafe for lunch. August saw us return to the Anglican Cathedral where we had been in May for the Threads through the Bible exhibition. This time we were just taking photos of architecture around the cathedral. Some of us ventured up to the roof for the stunning vista views and photo opportunities. A couple of pubs were visited before lunch was taken. We are visiting the Boat

Museum on Friday, 11th September 2026. Photos are reviewed at our monthly meetings on the second Thursday of the month at 10.30am in Widnes Library.



- **History** - The group is not meeting at the moment. Hopefully a new Group Leader will be appointed very soon.
- **Science is for Everyone/Advanced Science Group** - The Science for Everyone Group now meets at 10.30am at the Catalyst Museum on the third Friday of the month.

Bob Roach, as some of you know, has given up leading the Science is for Everyone Group but I am pleased to say our member, Marie Pickstock, will take on the role. She will be supported by Bob and Chris Lewis. Here is her plan:

Science is for Everyone will be a monthly group meeting which, as its name suggests, examines various areas of Science at a level which is accessible for all. We will look at the big ideas in Science, the ethics of Science and how Science is portrayed in the media. We will do this by group discussions, presentations by group members and others and where possible arranged visits to local scientific sites. A science background or an understanding of mathematics is not needed, just an inquiring mind and a sense of fun.

The first meeting of the reformed group will be at 10.30am at the Catalyst Museum on Friday, 16th October 2026 led by Marie Pickstock who will be the Group Leader. This meeting is primarily to listen to what members want. Twelve members have shown interest up to now.

- **Family History Group (Group Leader, Alec Hough)** - The group meets on the third Monday of each month - so our next meeting will be held on Monday, 21st September 2026. We meet from 2.00 pm to 3.30 pm in Room 11 of Widnes Library. You are all welcome to join us, it doesn't matter if you're an expert or if you haven't yet started tracing your family's history. Members pay £2 per session to cover the cost of hiring the room - but there is no charge for anyone making their first visit. If any of you would like help in starting your research, we offer one-to-one tutorials at the library computers to show you how to start tracing your family's story.

- **Gardening Group - (Group Leaders, Chris and Colin McConnell)** - We meet at Rivendell Garden Centre, Widnes, WA8 3UL at 10.30am on the third Monday of the month. There was no meeting in August due to holidays. The next meeting will be on Monday, 21st September 2026 at Rivendell Garden Centre. See below Southport u3a's stand at the Southport Flower Show where they were awarded a gold medal.



- **Cinema Group - (Group Leaders, Judith Byrne and Hazel Landon)** - We meet on a Tuesday afternoon at the Reel Cinema in Widnes when suitable films are available. Most tickets are £9.99 but there are often some Movie Magic films for £4.99. The Movie Magic films are normally screened before 1pm. Additionally they also host special screenings - Live Theatre, Royal Ballet and Opera. These are normally £15 or £12.50 if senior. The day and times vary.
- **Ten Pin Bowling Group (Group Leader, David Bissenden)** - The group meets at 10.00am each Wednesday at Widnes Super Bowl, apart from during school holidays. There is now a different price structure which oddly is cheaper. Typically two games of bowling for £6.00, then coffee and bacon sandwich are half price. Participants are responsible for their own fitness and ability to take part and should supply emergency contact details. Members interested can contact me through the website or just turn up.
- **Visits to Interesting Pubs (Group Leader, Chris Lewis)** - The group now has 33 members. We have had two recent meetings, one at the Society and one at the Crown, a new venue, with seventeen attending and much liked. The meeting in September will be at the Norton Arms and in October at the Unicorn with a probable extra meeting in Llandudno.
- **Walking Group (Group Leader, Rob James)** - July saw walks to Barnton Tunnel and the Crosby Coastal Path from Altcar to Crosby. August saw walks to Delamere taking on the ascent up to Old Pale with panoramic views at the summit of seven counties. The final walk of the summer was around Beeston Castle following a section of The Sandstone Trail. Our Christmas Meal is already booked for the Leigh Arm's at Acton Bridge on Monday, 14th December 2026.



- **Lunches and Outings Group (Group Leader, Patricia Quarton) -**

Coffee Mornings - We meet on the second Tuesday of the month at Ma & Ja's, Albert Square, Widnes at 11.00am.

Sunday lunch is usually on the third Sunday of the month. This sometimes changes to accommodate Mother's/Father's day.

The brunch at Parklands is proving to be a popular event, so I'll keep it going. We meet on the last Friday of the month.

If you would like to join an event please provide your mobile number and I will add you to the Lunches and Outings whats app group. I post polls asking people to vote if they are coming then I can make a reservation. Everyone is very welcome but please don't just show up as the venue may not be able to accommodate extra diners.

- **Jigsaw Swap and Chat Group (Group Leader, Pol Clark) -** Despite depleted numbers due to holidays, the group continued to meet during the summer period.

Although the group members tend to do less jigsaws at this time, we still had plenty available for swaps and I feel that it is testament to the success of the group, that those members who hadn't managed to do any jigsaws due to other commitments, still came along to enjoy socialising with the group.

The meetings, which are held at the café in the Catalyst Museum, Widnes, commence at 10am and run for about an hour and half. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 22nd September 2026 - please feel free to come along and join the group if you are able.

It should be noted that the jigsaws, whilst swapped at the meeting, are taken home to be completed by the members in their own homes, not at the venue. In addition, there is no pressure to complete jigsaws within a certain timeframe. It is a friendly, flexible group and members are able to complete the jigsaws in their own timeframe in line with their personal requirements.

For further information please contact the Group Leader, Pol Clark via the contact page on the website.

- **Board Game Group (Group Leader, Hilary Clay)** - We have a steady turn out for the monthly meetings with anything from 4 to 10 people. Some love playing Rummikub and this has become one of the favourite games. Cluedo was a revelation to some who had never played before. We have introduced a new card game '5 Crowns' and this is proving very popular. One of our members, Eric, made a new and difficult game with rings and pegs on a stand, thanks to him from everyone. The library has made us very welcome and offers us tea and coffee during our session. We are at Widnes Library on the second Friday of every month at 10.30am until 12.30pm. All are welcome.
- **Proposed Transport Group** - So far seven members have shown an interest.

If you are interested in any of our groups and would like further information, Leaders can be contacted through the contact page on the Halton u3a website, or you can contact our Secretary.

Next General Meeting and Coffee Catch-up

The September Coffee Catch-up meeting will be at 2.00pm on Thursday, 24th September 2026 at Rivendell Garden Centre, Widnes.

The Runcorn Coffee Catch-up is mainly for members who live in Runcorn but open to others. These will continue to be held on the first Thursday of the month. Please contact David Bissenden via the website for details.

The October General Meeting will be at 1.30pm on Thursday, 8th October 2026. The speaker will be Bill Cooper, Settling in a New Land, a German POW Story.

If members would like to give a presentation at a future event, or would like to contribute a short article to the newsletter, please contact our Secretary or send articles to the newsletter editor through the contact page on the Halton u3a website.

Please note the last date for contributions to the newsletter is the 10th of every other month, with publication a few days later. The Newsletter is published every two months. The next Newsletter will be published in November 2026.

Further information and contact details can be found on the Halton u3a website