

**Welcome** to March – which for us marks the beginning of Spring - I am sure that you are all pleased to hear that! The Spring Equinox (when day and night are of equal length) occurs this year on 20<sup>th</sup> March. You will already have noticed the nights getting shorter and the days longer, and this will continue. Not for ever, but for quite a few months to come. I won't tell you when the days start to get shorter, we'll just enjoy the long days for now! It signals the transition out of winter bringing warmer temperatures, and slightly less rain we hope! You have all I am sure heard the expression March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. This usually refers to March's extremely changeable weather, with it being stormy etc at the start but, hopefully, very pleasant at the end. I found another couple of sayings for you, which I think you will like ,



**So many mists in March you see, So many frosts in May will be.**

**A Peck of March Dust and a shower in May, Makes the corn green and the fields gay**



Togg is really looking forward to the spring and summer. She was born at the beginning of April and really is a spring/summer baby, she nearly pulled me over today trying to get home out of the rain! And trying to get her to go her to go out last thing at night, almost impossible. I have tried giving her a treat but that simply makes her run out and then run back in and stand at the pantry door. **AND** then she needs to go out at 3 or 4 in the morning!!!! I often pretend to be asleep so that Peter gets up! Only joking! Please don't tell him! He'll never make me a cup of tea again!! Hektor is quite happy to go out but tends to wait for Togg to ask, then he goes out

Togg enjoying the sunshine at Folkstone

We have some important dates coming up in March

The most important one, for a lot of us, is Mothers' Day/Mothering Sunday (also called Mid Lent Sunday or refreshment Sunday). It is held on 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, three weeks before Easter and as well as getting presents and being spoiled etc you can also break your Fast, so whatever you have given up for Lent you can eat or drink on Mothers' Day.



Last year Hektor and Togg paid for me to go to a tour of the Cat and Fiddle Gin Distillery. It was only a little tour as it is a small batch Gin Distillery, but there is a very interesting talk first about the history of the Cat and Fiddle Pub and the history of Gin. It is well worth going to visit. The person who gave the talk and tour was so good, he was like a Shakespearean actor in modern clothing. You really need to see him. Peter drove, as neither Hektor or Togg can drive. The drivers were given two miniatures to take home, but as Peter doesn't drink gin and neither do Hektor or Togg, I was able to have them. A word of warning if you do go though, make sure that you wrap up for the Arctic!, because the place is so high it is extremely cold. There is also a very strong wind which never sleeps. Although the car park is really only a few metres from the door, I turned into an iceberg on the

way and it took me ages to warm up (Above, me when we first arrived and on the right, a second later, me when I had turned into an iceberg!). Also, if you go, take gloves because it is so difficult holding a cold gin with freezing hands! I had to hold the gins with a wrap, which were laid out for people on the chairs and sofas!



There is so much information about Mothering Sunday, but I think I have gone on enough so I will save that for next year!

PS I forgot to mention that Kieran always buys me a lovely present. I always ask for something not expensive but then he always tops it up with something else! So he is so good. I wouldn't like him to read this and think I have forgotten him, but it is slightly easier for him to go shopping than for Hektor and Togg. You can imagine the looks/trouble /problems they get when they get on the number 84 bus alone to go into Chester!!!

**The next date** that you need to be aware of, and this is really important, is **Sunday March 29<sup>th</sup>** and the time you need to know is 1am! At this time the clocks will spring forward to 2am. It is the official start of



summertime! Yaaay!!! We will gain an extra hour of daylight every day, the downside is that for one night, one night only, we will lose an hours sleep! I hate that !!!!! Most modern internet connected devices, smart phones, smart watches etc change themselves, although sometimes I am never quite sure if they have changed so spend a few hours wondering what time it is!

The practice of daylight saving time (DST) originated from a campaign at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its original purpose was to maximise the use of natural daylight during the summer months. William Willet, the great great grandfather of Coldplay's Chris Martin was an early promoter of the change. The change was introduced during WW1 to conserve fuel and allow more working daylight hours. It takes place on early Sunday morning to avoid conflicts for businesses, schools etc! If you get it wrong and forget to change your clocks you could end up being an hour late for an appointment. A 5% increase in missed hospital appointments has been noted in the week after this change!

**St David's day, celebrated on 1<sup>st</sup> March** every year, honours the patron saint of Wales, marking the anniversary of his death. His final sermon advised his followers to 'do the little things in life'. He is the only British/Irish saint to be born in the country of which he is patron. Wales is not very far from us and I am sure many of us have enjoyed day trips and breaks there. It is a celebration of everything that makes Wales special. So why not celebrate it with Chicken and leek pie, Welsh cakes or Welsh Rarebit. I was actually born in Wales but we left there when I was three years old. It does mean however that for the 6 nations rugby I can support both England and Wales. Not at the same time, I am afraid I am very fickle and support whichever of the two is winning! Unfortunately Wales have not been playing too well so far this year.



**Whoops** I nearly forgot to include the answers to last month's competition! AND no they weren't from Narnia where it always snows but is never Christmas! The road was Cobblers Cross, I was walking up to the gym, it hasn't been that quiet for years! The mini forest, the one with the trees at either side of a path and Togg on the path, is a picture of the woods that go from the Park field to Forest road, and the field with Togg in is the one which runs from Cobblers Cross to Park Road. Who guessed correctly ?

## Committee News

People are still welcome to join the committee and if anyone is interested but, unsure of what it would entail, they can observe a meeting or ask any committee member.

## Interest Groups

These are at the heart of any branch of the u3a. The whole purpose of the u3a movement is to give opportunities to retired people to continue to learn and be active members of society. Interest groups are not intended to be teaching classes, indeed a recent ruling by HMRC actually prevents direct teaching if we wish to retain our charitable status.

Tarporley u3a currently has 33 active Interest groups which is a respectable number. However, many are full and cannot accept new members. Given a current membership of over 560 members, it really is not sufficient to fulfil the demand.

Sadly we are losing Interest Groups for various reasons. Stepping forward to become a Convenor is not an onerous task. A Convenor is just that, someone who convenes the group, is not a leader nor tutor. Obviously they need to have a personal interest in the subject of the group but the members of the group should provide the content and learn from each other. Good examples are the Book groups where the members choose a book in turn, which all the members read, and then have a discussion. Likewise the walking groups where members lead walks in turns. There are a number of areas where we really need new groups.

New members have asked about Mah-jong, Pilates, Keep Fit, Woodwork, Gardening and Bird watching. I'm sure many of you could add to the list.

Your u3a **needs you!** So please think about starting a new group. You will have full support from the Committee and me (Pat Tyson-Jones), as Interest Groups Coordinator. Financial support can be given to start up if required and assistance in finding an appropriate venue.

Tarporley u3a can only be as good as its members! We have an extensive membership and wonderful Convenors so let's keep improving what we can offer.

# MONTHLY MEETING

**TARPORLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Thursday March 26<sup>th</sup> 2026**

Doors open at **9.45 am** for refreshments.

The meeting begins about **10.15 am** with announcements.

The talk starts at **10.30 am**.

**Roger Browne**

**Anything goes**

Roger Browne is a raconteur, writer, director, and pianist. He has appeared on cruises, and in jazz clubs and jazz festivals in the UK, Republic of Ireland, Germany, Norway, The Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and across North America and Canada, and has provided piano accompaniment for many national and international legends such as Stephane Grappelli, Marion Montgomery, Wild Bill Davison, Scott Hamilton, Ray Nance, Bud Freeman, Humphrey Lyttleton, George Melly, George Chisholm, and many more.

Roger is President of Stockport Operatic Society, President of Manchester Athenaeum Dramatic Society and pianist with, and leader of, internationally renowned traditional jazz band, Manchester Jazz.

And his talk is

**Fats Waller – A Trailblazing Genius** - Thomas Fats Waller was a superb entertainer, bringing joy to so many with his fabulous piano playing, his wonderful songs and his larger-than-life personality. He was the first African American to write music for a Broadway show and his riotous life was peppered with fantastic stories. Some hilarious, some shocking, some Mafia related, some moving. Hear his story, and his awesome music.

I am sure that you will all enjoy it! I am certainly looking forward to it

## Midway Walkers (part 1)

On Monday 2nd February, the Midway walkers circumnavigated the north-east corner of Delamere Forest in search of a dry footpath. Mostly successful, the mud situation was under control as we walked around Hatchmere and Beaverland (not a Beaver in sight), past Flaxmere (a rare quaking bog) and on towards Norley, before heading back via the Delamere Forest visitors' centre café. Just short of 6 miles, it was well attended with 14 all-weather walkers.

Isn't this a really beautiful and atmospheric photograph? I thought at first I had the wrong group!



## Midway Walkers (part 2)

*In the style of Bridgerton...*

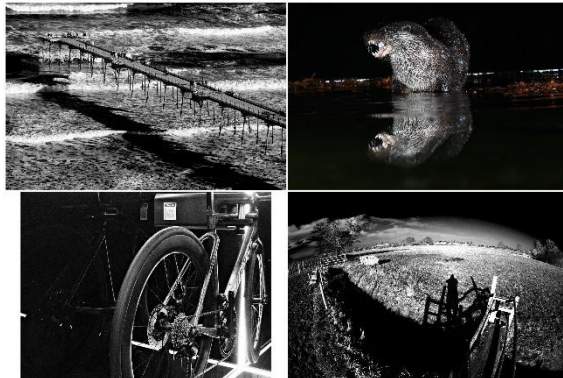
Dearest Gentle Reader, I have news from the ton. Lady Downton and Lord Ryder led a group of enthusiastic ladies and gentlemen scholars on a perambulation along the Pipes of Plumley on this 19<sup>th</sup> day of February. With permissive rights from the great landowner Ineos we explored the brine pumping stations around Holford Moss, magnificent in their robust girth and determination to transport their foaming brew to the great chemical works of Northwich.

We also saw the decaying remnants of the once great Octel factory that manufactured tetraethyl lead as an anti-knock agent for aircraft engines from 1939, hidden amongst the trees and known innocently as 'The Jam Factory'. Nowhere has the English countryside looked more beautiful.



**u3a Digital Photography**

Despite the obvious lack of sunny days in January, the group picked the theme of 'Reflections and shadows' for this month's photographs, resorting to torches indoors where necessary. We had a good selection of both colour and monochrome photos, featuring architectural, still-life and nature subjects. We also caught up with the latest developments in 'text to video' A.I. although the free-level access meant your Hollywood zero-budget movie was limited to 8 seconds and water-marked. Even so, compared to what you could achieve a year ago with 'text to picture', the technological progress is staggering. The A.I bubble has not burst yet.



**Nature**

The Nature Group enjoyed an informal session discussing 'How Animals survive winter'.

After a brief introduction looking at how daylight varies between the equator (constant 12 hours a day), Tarporley (dark winters but bright summers) and the polar regions (total night in winter but total daylight in summer), we explored the strategies animals use to survive the cold dark periods when there isn't much food around.



**SURVIVAL STRATEGIES**

- Migrate**
- Shelter**      Caves, holes, underground, huddle
- Protection**    Fur, feathers, camouflage
- Storage**        Body fat, seeds, meat
- Lifestyle change, diapause**
- Hibernate
- Brumation
- Antifreeze etc
- Selective survival**

*Herald Moth overwintering in the Queen's Parlour cave on Peckforton Hills*

We then looked at animals using these different strategies. One fascinating example was the butterfly as most UK butterflies over-winter as caterpillars, some as chrysalises, some as eggs, and a few species also survive as adults (eg Red Admirals) either by migrating or by finding somewhere safe to hibernate. Although we are familiar with migrating birds (remember cuckoos), it is almost incredible to imagine a butterfly, weighing less than a gram, travelling 100s of miles. Other examples we discussed were ladybirds who find quiet places, often tucked away in our houses, re-appearing in Spring, also hibernating hedgehogs, and earthworms as they can dig down some 6ft to avoid the very cold weather.

Whatever approach animals adopt, and there are some amazing examples such as those using 'anti-freeze', it usually works; the species continues. There were some concerns raised in our meeting, however, as to the impact of climate change on hibernating animals. Will they be tempted out from their 'sleep' by a warming environment before their food sources are re-established?

## Digital World

The Digital World Group took a step back in time when John Daines came and gave us a talk on "LEO the world's first business computer".

The story of LEO is an extraordinary one. The world's very first business computer was designed and manufactured, not by one of the electronics giants such as IBM, but by J Lyons & Co, better known for its Teashops and Corner House Restaurants, its Swiss Rolls and Fruit Pies.

John explained how, in the aftermath of the Second World War, Lyons, recognising the need for more efficient business systems, decided to develop their own computer. After just 2 years' work, Lyons produced an operational product in 1951, naming it LEO, aptly standing for Lyons Electronic Office. This led to the formation of LEO Computers Ltd and development of further versions of LEO for the J Lyons company, but also resulting in purchases by many major industrial companies and government departments.

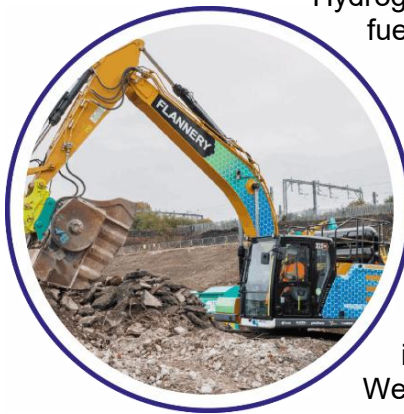
Leo Computers was sold to English Electric in 1964, and absorbed into ICT (later ICL) in 1968 through a merger between several British computing companies. The last of the LEOs, which were owned by the Post Office and calculated telephone bills, came out of service in 1981—the same year, poignantly, that the last of the Lyons teashops closed its doors.



## Science Group

The group enjoyed a fascinating talk on the exciting possibilities of using hydrogen as an alternative fuel source to help achieve zero carbon targets. Amanda Lyne is the M.D of ULEMCo, a Liverpool based company at the cutting edge of the hydrogen fuel industry. ULEMCo specialises in the application of this new technology in the heavy transport sector.

While there has been an increase in the sale of electric vehicles in the private car market, there are significant challenges applying this technology to the heavy lorry/utility vehicle sector. While petrol and diesel are easily stored and widely available, changing to electricity as an alternative is not straightforward. Charging large vehicles, especially if part of a large fleet, makes a considerable demand of both space and time to completely top up the large batteries. Charging points are not well distributed and their unavailability over wide areas can limit the range and flexibility of vehicles that must work hard to be profitable. Increasing the range by adding more batteries simply increases the weight of the vehicle and limits the payload.



Hydrogen can be an economic alternative, providing a zero-carbon fuel that is both energy dense, transportable and safe. In vehicles, it can provide all the power from an on-board hydrogen fuel cell, or can be used in conjunction with a diesel engine, providing the motive power for the ancillary equipment the vehicle carries. Providing a wide range of these dual-fuel and fuel cell solutions to large vehicles is the core of ULEMCo's business.

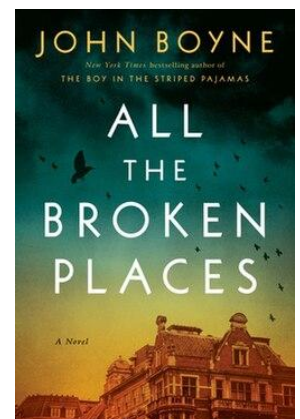
Game-changing though these technologies can be, there are significant problems to overcome. The network that can produce, store and distribute hydrogen is patchy and very much incomplete and fragmented. Integrated infrastructure investment, like that proposed in the Hynet project in the North West, have proved difficult to coordinate and fund. There is a lot of great research and development moving the technology forward, but a transition to new technologies needs to be at scale to create the cost parameters that would encourage both national governments and private companies to invest. Hydrogen could be brought to a wide range of industrial and domestic consumers users using the current gas distribution pipelines. However, the disruption and cost of conversion would be high, though no more than the conversion from town to natural gas between 1967 and 1977.

The technologies are developing, safety standards are improving and demand is growing, all that is needed now is long-term strategy and the necessary political will. ULEMCo is well positioned to be at the forefront of this change.

## Book Club 1

Irish writer **John Boyne** is a prolific author of both adult and young-adult fiction. He gained world-wide fame with his 2006 novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. The group read his 2022 sequel **All the Broken Places** in February.

The story recounts the post war life of Gretel, the daughter of the Auschwitz commandant. Now 91 and living in a large Mayfair flat in London, she has kept the details of her earlier life from most people, including her late husband and son. Gretel narrates three key times in her life that have influenced her decision to remain silent - a scarring denunciation and public humiliation in Paris by those she thought were neighbours - an encounter with a former subordinate officer of her father's in Australia, where she has fled to escape - and a love affair with David in London, to whom she does confess her story after seeing a film about the Holocaust. David, a Jew, is horrified and abandons her and their unborn child.



The arrival of a new family in the flat beneath her threatens the calm of her life; the father is abusive to his wife and young son, and Gretel feels she must intervene. The man discovers Gretel's secret and threatens to expose her, potentially ruining the life of her son, his new wife and their unborn son. Gretel's decides to murder him as a solution to the threat.

The book raises several important themes about guilt and personal responsibility. While Gretel could have no responsibility as a child for her father's action, at what point as an adult could she have, should she have, added her knowledge to the revelations of the horror of the Holocaust? What degree of courage was needed to expose the Nazi regime, and should Gretel have done so? Would any of us in the same situation have that courage.

The group felt that the novel was well written and well-constructed. But it was also felt that the 'set pieces' of the plot were sometimes contrived so that the author could illustrate a particular point of view. It is also worth noting that critics have been divided about both is book and its prequel, with some sharpest criticism coming from Jewish organisations.

## Art Appreciation Group

February's art group were treated to a presentation and demonstration on felt by Pam.

There is archaeological evidence of domesticated sheep - Mouflon – around 9000 years ago. It is the oldest known textile and it existed before weaving and knitting.

Many believe that felt was actually made by accident - when wool was used to protect the feet of travellers. It may have been the Patron Saint of Felt, Saint Clement and he was travelling with a Saint Christopher! Movement, pressure and moisture (perspiration) creating a matted fabric, which was the felt!

Wool is used worldwide including Turkey, Tibet, Iran, Mongolia and Russia.

It was used and still is to make yurts, carpets, prayer and burial mats, bedding, clothing, saddles, footwear, gifts, rope and ribbons and probably lots more!



The quality of the wool/felt varies with breed, health and climate. Most common is Merino with 40% of global production. It is a non-woven fabric; fibres are not organised. It is heat, cold, fire, water and sound resistant! Wet felting allows the fibres to hook together as there are scales on the fibre and with heat, movement and moisture this opens the scales up.

For the demonstration ,Pam showed and discussed the many fibres that can be used, even snippets of fabric can be embedded. Pam also spoke about using semi-felted fibres, known as pre-felt, and how they are cut to obtain straighter edges. The finished felt image can be machine stitched when dry. Pam uses an iron on stabiliser to reduce fibres falling into the machine and to make it easier to move the work when stitching. The feltwork can be hand embroidered and

embellished with a whole range of beads and bugles. They can also be framed and hung on the wall. There is so much more to this fascinating craft that there just wasn't room to fit it all in!

## **Other News**

### **History Matters.**

I feel I must mention the History Matters talk given in February by Neil Gatt, the owner of the Manor House. It was such an interesting talk and so well presented. I don't think that I have spoken to anyone who did not enjoy it. So thank you to the Convenor Liz Carter for organising and to Neil Gatt for taking the time to come and give the talk. Absolutely fascinating!

## **North West Region Events and News**

Please see below for the link to the North West Newsletter.

While the link to the newsletter is below it can also be downloaded from the North West Region u3a website

Please do take a moment to read it as it is always interesting to see what is going on in the wider U3A

<https://northwestregion.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/u3a-North-West-Events-and-News-February-2026.pdf>

## **Tarporley Together**

I am not sure how many of you are aware of the Tarporley together project. It is led by Tarporley Police Beat Management Team and supported by Lets Talk and Healthbox, who aim to empower our community to make good choices and reduce isolation. Please take a moment to click on the link and read about it. You can't have too many friends can you? I went to one many months ago which was about scamming and how to be safe from it, and it was really very interesting and I learnt a lot of things there

<https://www.livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/Services/5938>

## Tarporley Future Attractions

### Tarporley Amateur Dramatic Society

It is that time of year again when the Amateur Dramatic Society put on their play. They put one on twice a year, and as I have said before, they are really very good. This March they are putting on 'Spirit Level'. I have googled to see what the story is and it looks like it is going to be a really fun one, with plenty of laughs.

**Doors & Bar Open 6:45pm Performance Starts 7:30pm**

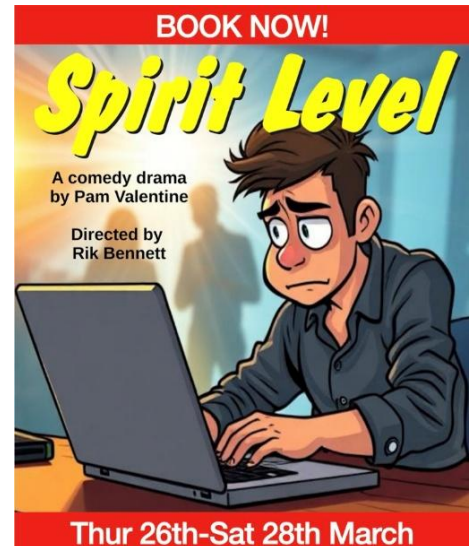
Tickets available on-line <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/tarporley-amateur-dramatic-society/spirit-level/e-grjdev>

and from our box office in

The Hair Academy,  
High Street, Tarporley.

Tickets Cost £10.00\* and include a programme. Complimentary tea & coffee will be served during the interval. A licensed bar selling beer, wine & soft drinks will be open before the performance and also during the interval. We have our tickets already! We are going on the Friday. See you there!

If you go, get there early if you want a choice of seat.



**And Almost** finally, thank you to William Harrison, friend of Hektor and Togg for the below funnies. I must admit I do rely on him every month for these and he never lets me down.

### Too good to not share 🥰

1. When one door closes and another door opens, you are probably in prison.
  2. To me, "drink responsibly" means don't spill it.
  3. Age 60 might be the new 40, but 9:00 pm is the new midnight.
  4. It's the start of a brand new day, and I'm off like a herd of turtles.
  5. The older I get, the earlier it gets late.
  6. When I say, "The other day," I could be referring to any time between yesterday and 15 years ago.
  7. I remember being able to get up without making sound effects.
  8. I had my patience tested. I'm negative.
  9. Remember, if you lose a sock in the dryer, it comes back as a Tupperware lid that doesn't fit any of your containers.
  10. If you're sitting in public and a stranger takes the seat next to you, just stare straight ahead and say, "Did you bring the money?"
  11. When you ask me what I am doing today, and I say "nothing," it does not mean I am free. It means I am doing nothing.
  12. I finally got eight hours of sleep. It took me three days, but whatever.
  13. I run like the winded.
  14. I hate when a couple argues in public, and I missed the beginning and don't know whose side I'm on.
  15. When someone asks what I did over the weekend, I squint and ask, "Why, what did you hear?"
  16. When you do squats, are your knees supposed to sound like a goat chewing on an aluminum can stuffed with celery?
  17. I don't mean to interrupt people. I just randomly remember things and get really excited.
  18. When I ask for directions, please don't use words like "east."
  19. Don't bother walking a mile in my shoes. That would be boring. Spend 30 seconds in my head. That'll freak you right out.
  20. Sometimes, someone unexpected comes into your life out of nowhere, makes your heart race, and changes you forever. We call those people cops.
  21. My luck is like a bald guy who just won a comb.
- Which one is YOUR favorite?
-

And finally.....

Just a brief word about any images of members in the Newsletter. They are sent with the participants agreement but are intended for inclusion in the Newsletter only. Please do not send images of u3a individuals in the Newsletter to other public, digital spaces.

To respond, or contact any Committee member, please get in touch with the Secretary, Angela Wilson by email at [Tarporleyu3a@outlook.com](mailto:Tarporleyu3a@outlook.com)

For contributions about your group's activities, please get in touch with the editor at [Angiegreen1961@sky.com](mailto:Angiegreen1961@sky.com)

For wider information on the activities of Tarporley and District u3a go to <https://tarporleyanddistrict.u3asite.uk/>

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