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# U3A Holiday in North Wales. 15th -19th July 2019,

### Day 1

Monday 15th July saw thirty U3A members heading towards the Beaufort Park Hotel for a four night stay to explore the attractions of the Wirral peninsula and North Wales.

En route we visited Bolsover Castle in Derbyshire. This imposing property set high on a hill above the M1 was originally built in the 12th century. After changing hands several times it was bought by Bess of Hardwick's son, Sir Charles Cavendish in 1608, who set about rebuilding it for elegant living rather than for defence. His son William continued the restoration, established a riding school and developed new techniques for training horses. Today the castle is a mix of ruins, a horse show arena and the fascinating 'Little Castle' with wooden panelled rooms, a wall walk and an attractive walled garden. After a second and welcome stop at a garden centre near



Stockport we reached our hotel in Mold, which proved to be a very good base for our planned excursions.

### **DAY 2**

After a hearty breakfast, we boarded the coach taking us to the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port. The short visit began with introductory talks by our guides who then left us to wander around the site, which is set on the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal. We took in the landscape of Victorian buildings, docks, locks and stables, together

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with the Museum's historic collection of canal boats. Of particular interest, was the atmospheric Porters Row of cottages showing how life would have been for the families who worked around the docks.



From here we continued to Liverpool, with the Three Graces just visible in the distance before we entered the Birkenhead Tunnel. We were left at Albert Dock, which has seen much re-generation and is now a vibrant, bustling and exciting area. We found lunch amongst the many eateries and some of us were tempted into the various “Beatles”

emporiums! The huge and impressive Queen Mary 2 happened to be docked along the World Heritage Site waterfront (to coincide with our visit??).

We left Liverpool on board the famous Mersey Ferry and learned more about its history during a commentary throughout the trip. No doubt some of us were recalling the Gerry and the Pacemakers hit of the sixties as we sailed along! Back on land at Birkenhead our trusty driver, Dave, was waiting to transfer us to Port Sunlight, the 19<sup>th</sup> century village created solely for Sunlight Soap Factory workers by William Hesketh Lever. The museum was our starting point, but there was so much more to see and explore. Members of our party could be found in the Edwardian Worker's Cottage, set out as in 1913, seeking a bit of culture in the Lady Lever Art Gallery, meandering round the beautifully laid out gardens or just finding a spot to relax and soak up the atmosphere of this

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charming village. A most enjoyable day!

### Day 3

On Wednesday we had the opportunity to go to Llandudno all day or visit Bodnant Gardens, a National Trust property overlooking the Conwy valley in the morning then on to Llandudno for the afternoon. I went to Bodnant which I think



it is probably the finest NT garden I have ever visited. The Garden covers about 80 acres and is built on a hillside with steep paths through woodland planting down into the dell. As you walk down you

have the sound of water running down into the valley, it was magical. There was a little café at the bottom too, a lovely place to sit for a drink and maybe a cake!

Nearer the entrance there is a flatter area with a series of terraces and pathways where the borders are full of a stunning collection of herbaceous plants, all clearly labelled. Further down there were lily ponds and rose beds or arches. A really wonderful garden.

We were then picked up and taken on to Llandudno where after a bit of lunch we sat by the sea, some of the group took the tram up the Great Orme and I'm told the views from the top were excellent.

### DAY 4

Our first stop was at another World Heritage Site. The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is a mighty 18 arched stone and cast iron structure which carries the Llangollen Canal

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across the River Dee. We boarded the narrowboat, run by “Jones the Boats”, for a 45 minute return trip. It was a scenic, historic and exciting experience, especially for those able to take turns in sitting outside on the front (bow) deck!



Having gained our land legs, the small town of Llangollen was waiting for us to explore, with its unique range of locally owned shops and cafes. It is set on the River Dee, surrounded by spectacular scenery and has an attractive Steam Railway. After a relaxing couple of hours we were on our way to Chirk Castle for a free flow visit. We learned the history of the area



and the Castle from when it was built by Sir Roger Mortimer of Chirk, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, until 1981 when the National Trust took ownership, together with 480 acres of estate. After a tour of the Castle, a stroll in the gardens and refreshments in the tea room, our party was on its final journey back to our Mold hotel.

After our evening meal, we were treated to a performance by a visiting Welsh Male Voice Choir. Our driver Dave surprised us by accepting an invitation (or was persuaded) to join the choir for one of the songs! A happy ending to another enjoyable day.

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Chester  
cathedral

### Day 5

On the day of our homeward journey we woke to find it was raining ‘cats and dogs’ and our planned four hour stop in Chester was not an attractive prospect. After agreeing to reduce this to three hours we all scattered to do our own thing. Some met relatives, some took the open top bus tour, but most headed towards the city centre. As a roof tour guide at Lincoln Cathedral I chose to visit the cathedral and take their tower tour. This took me up 221 steps into the hidden

interior spaces before emerging out on top of the centre tower for a 360 degree view of the city.

Eventually, after a slightly tedious four hour drive east on busy roads, we arrived home, tired but happy after a great week of shared experiences and companionship.

**Prue Chadderton**  
**Barbara Jones**  
**Jenny Porter**