



Poynton u3a News

poyntonu3a.org.uk

Issue 45-2

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Poynton u3a Update

General Meetings

On Tuesday 19th November, we have *Louise Bentley* of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust telling us about *The Plight of the Humble Bee*.

On Tuesday 17th December, we have the Christmas Meeting when the entertainment will be provided by our very own Acoustic Band. Entry is by ticket only. If you are unable to attend the November General Meeting to obtain a ticket, you may be able to get a ticket if you contact the Membership Secretary (membership@poyntonu3a.org.uk) before 1st December.

The first meeting of 2025 is on Tuesday 21st January when James Cretney will be talking to us about *Blood Bikes*. ('Blood bikes' is the colloquial name for the motorcycles which deliver emergency supplies to hospitals.)

Membership Renewal

Applications for renewal of your Poynton u3a membership for 2025 will be accepted throughout January. This year there is an additional method of payment. Be sure to read December's newsletter where there will be details of how to renew. The cost of renewal continues to be £10.

Diners' Club

I have booked our next lunch on Thursday 28th November at 12.30pm at Panache, London Road, Poynton. The restaurant have not requested a deposit and at this point they do not require us to pre-order. Please reply via email if you would like to attend. Also, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Barbara Tankard

Contributions to the Newsletter

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

Members' Contributions

My solo trip to Minnesota, September 2024 – Part 1

Aug 29: I have a vague plan for the next two weeks, following the scenic route where possible, but it's open to change on a daily basis, apart from the first two nights already booked in Minneapolis!

Sept 02:

Day one. Woohoo, I've made it across the pond, in an almost empty plane, bliss! They even brought round ice cream while most passengers were asleep. That'll learn 'em, as my grandmother used to say. And I was the highest scorer on the plane in the trivia quiz (no prize, sadly).

A few hours later I was congratulating myself on navigating across the city to my Airbnb. Hmm - pride comes etc etc. I couldn't get into the property with the code given. Following messages exchanged with my patient host, it turns out I'd put the wrong house number into Google maps and was at the wrong door. Not the best introduction to my host. I put it down to jet lag.

Day two. Ready to start exploring. Here goes! Glorious sunshine and a pleasant breeze for my walk along the banks of the mighty Mississippi River to the Minnehaha Falls. Few people around apart from joggers and dog walkers - all on leads. The dogs, I mean. Although arguably the people are technically at the end of a lead too?



Byway alongside the Mississippi



Minnehaha Falls, Minneapolis



Hiawatha Lake, my number 2 of 10,000 in Minnesota

The last three miles were through the leafy suburbs. Wide roads and pavements, all detached houses, a lot of them with “Harris Walz” boards outside, ready for the election. Tim Walz is Minnesota’s well-respected governor.

Rewarding myself with a Jambalaya lunch, I had a nice chat with a local lady. Everyone I’ve met has been friendly, even if it’s just a smile as we pass by.

After visiting my first two lakes (two down, 9,998 to go!) I searched for ice cream and found it at Tom’s Popcorn Shop. A whole shop dedicated to popcorn and ice cream. The aroma was fabulous!

Two bus rides (\$1 total fare) back to my Airbnb. I’m getting the hang of the public transport here just as I’m about to move on...

Day three. Goodbye for now, Minneapolis. Picking up my rental car was stressful because they made me choose it! I have enough decisions to make. There were Kias which would have been familiar but that would be BORING so I chose the prettiest and smallest, a Mitsubishi.

I set off to drive alongside the St Croix River, stopping at Stillwater (not still at all) for lunch and a circular walk across the river to Wisconsin. A waitress admired my book stand and asked where I got it. My reply “Stockport Waterstones” didn’t help her.

Then on to St Croix Falls (no falls in sight though) and a “kitty kitty bang bang” ice cream. Best one so far.

My stop for two nights is Turtle Lake, a little town whose main attraction is apparently the casino. I was offered a ride there in the shuttle but declined. I won \$20 in Las Vegas many years ago so I’m resting on my laurels.

Lovely en suite hotel room with microwave and fridge and a handy McDonald’s opposite.



Day four. Fortified by my hotel pancake breakfast - an experience in itself: a wonderful machine which, on pressing a button, drops two dollops of batter onto a rolling hotplate, depositing two perfect pancakes onto your plate at the end. Luckily, I spotted a guy working this, who demonstrated it to me!

A short drive took me to Cumberland and a walk by Beaver Dam Lake. This doesn’t count against my tally of lakes, as I’m in Wisconsin, not Minnesota.



Next stop Rice Lake. A passer-by and I admired the sculpture trail. I'm making an effort to interact with the locals (I'm a Londoner you know, and it ain't natural!) and it's definitely rewarding.

Apparently, the Native Americans used to harvest wild rice in the lake, hence the name.

Lakeside sculpture, Rice Lake

I picnicked by the lake then had another walk which took me by a residential area. In Minneapolis all the election posters were Harris+Walz. Here in Wisconsin so far, they are Trump+Vance. It will be interesting when I explore the more rural areas of Minnesota. Will the posters still be Democrat?

An ice cream served by two friendly ladies - when I corrected myself from "holiday" to "vacation" one laughed and said she had seen enough British tv to know what I meant by "holiday"!

Moving on tomorrow. I've booked my next two nights' accommodation. North-westward back into Minnesota.

Day five. Back in Minnesota, beside a lake that's so big it should count way more than one on my tally! Lake Superior has a 917-mile shoreline. Maybe I won't try walking all of it tomorrow.

20.125 Avenue! A quirky sign along the way



I drove 119 miles from Turtle Lake along the St. Cloud Scenic Drive, enjoying the surroundings - very flat, fields of corn, but not nearly as high as an elephant's eye - and the empty roads; no other vehicle in sight most of the way. I was quite surprised when my Google Maps lady announced "Welcome to Minnesota".

In Duluth I had lunch at the base of Spirit Mountain, watching cyclists go up on the ski lift and reappear down a tortuous path.

Spirit Mountain, Duluth



I then drove to the sea, no, sorry, LAKE shore. So strange to see massive ships on a lake. But Lake Superior is vast...

Aerial Lift Bridge spanning the Duluth Shipping Canal leading to Lake Superior

At the ice cream shop, I resisted a “signature creation”, which would have fed the 5,000. A hike is called for tomorrow.

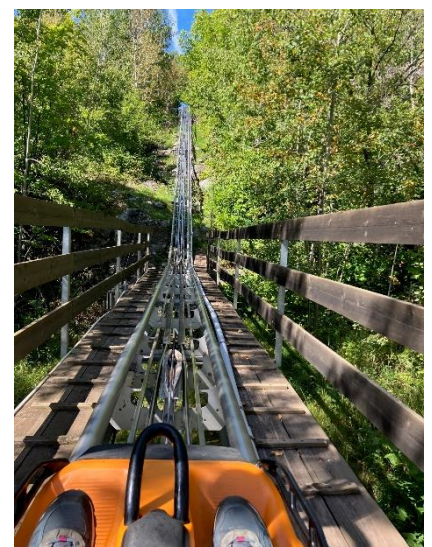


Day six. I had a fabulous hike to Spirit Mountain. It's not a great height, but so beautiful- my ideal walk by rocky streams. Only got lost once! Yes, I took lots of water and spare battery power for my phone.

Rocky hike up Spirit Mountain

At the top, amongst all the bike trails I came across the Timber Twister Alpine Coaster. Woah, such fun! As I shot around a bend my cap flew off (the one I bought on Xian city walls in 2014 - it's getting tatty but I love it). But in the end, I found it had lodged between my neck and the back rest, phew!

Timber Twister Alpine Coaster



Back by Lake Superior I decided to walk the trail along an isthmus to the Minnesota Point lighthouse where I would sit, have a drink and admire the view. I walked straight past it at first; it was disappointing. Blocked by thick bushes, very tumbledown. But I enjoyed the walk through the pine forest.

My lunch was very American - pot pie and sugar-coated cornbread with sweetened butter. Moving on tomorrow. Looking at my map, I may have to shorten my vague route - there's no point in missing things because I'm in a rush! I can always come back?

Cecilia Storr-Best

(More from Cecilia's Diaries in the next issue)

A Bit of Trouble

There's been a bit of trouble,
this spooky night, down Elm Street.
Someone broke a window, then ran
off, before owning up to a trick or treat.

Halloween is here again,
with its ghostly goings on.
Unearthly sounds and screams are heard,
as people are startled by a phantom.

For me it's exciting to stalk the streets at
night,
wondering what's going to happen next?
And it's hard for me to see in the dark,
especially when I forgot my specs.

Everything looks a little blurred to me,
making me nervous and scared.
I walked down a dark alleyway and met
a skeleton, for which I was unprepared.

He was carrying a Jack-o-Lantern,
it made an unnatural glow in the dark.
I ran past him as fast as I could,
he just laughed, to him it was all a lark.

I walked on, passing homes on the way. I
looked through a window, to see what I could
see.

There was a Halloween party in full swing. A
witch
appeared at the window and screamed at
me!

I hurried on, my nerves a little strained,
when I bumped into a Vampire, hunting for
blood.

I said I couldn't help him with his quest,
but I knew plenty of people who could.

It's been a terrifying and spine-chilling night,
some things I've seen were truly shocking.
So, I made my way back to the churchyard
and
settled back into my comfortable coffin.

Susan J Pyett

The History of the Lion Salt Works

Salt-Making in Cheshire

Salt-making in Cheshire dates back over 2000 years, when the salt towns of Cheshire were first established by the Romans. Originally salt was extracted from the ground by a series of natural brine pits. In the 17th century the first of a series of mines were begun in the Northwich region but were exhausted around 1850. The exhaustion of the mined rock salt supplies resulted in a change to wild brine pumping.

The Thompson Family and the Creation of the Lion Salt Works

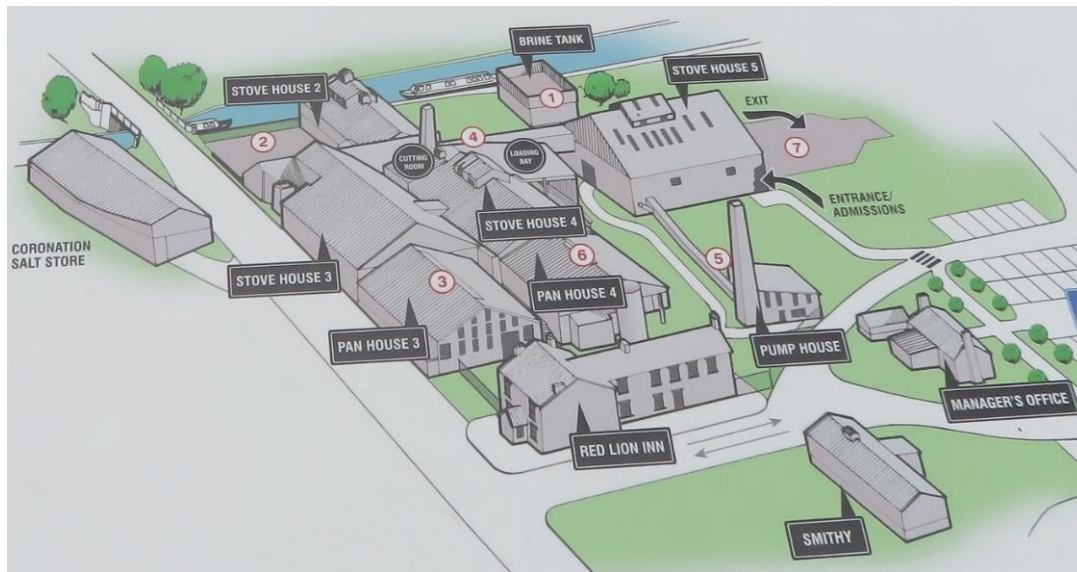
Many generations of the Thompson family were involved with the salt industry near Northwich. John Thompson Senior, originally a joiner, timber merchant and brickyard owner, entered the salt trade in 1842 when he started a shipping business along the River Weaver to the ports in Liverpool and Birkenhead. Initially this was in partnership with other salt proprietors but by 1846 he had entered a partnership with his son John Thompson Junior, called Thompson and Son that operated until 1889. The combination of a shipping business and a salt-extraction business was what we would nowadays call “a good fit” as the salt once extracted needed to be moved to a nearby port for distribution around the world.

They began to sink salt mines and start salt works north-west of Northwich. This continued for over forty years. After the death of John Thompson Senior in 1867, the business was split between John Thompson Junior and his brother Jabez Thompson. After initially running the Alliance Works in Marston, Jabez Thompson went off to run other family businesses. John Thompson Junior continued to run the salt business with his sons Henry Ingram and Alfred Jabez. In 1888 the majority of the remainder of the business was sold to the Salt Union.

[Working in a salt works was relatively lucrative which allowed workers to save some money and then start their own salt extracting businesses. This led to a widespread fragmentation of the salt business and fluctuations in the price of salt. The Salt Union was created to try and stabilise the industry by buying up all these small businesses.]

John Thompson Junior went into retirement but, in 1894, he and his son, Henry Ingram Thompson, opened a salt works in the coal yard of the Red Lion Hotel in Marston, and the works became known as the “Lion Salt Works”.

Development of the Lion Salt Works Site



A brine shaft was sunk in the yard of the hotel to enable brine to be pumped up and stored in the brine tank (1) which still stands today.

The engine house was originally situated under the brine tank but had to be moved as the building kept sinking.



The old brine shaft was abandoned and filled with cinders in the 1930s. A new borehole was built in 1938 and served by a reclaimed steam engine housed in the pump house and a nodding-donkey pump (5), still visible on site today.

The picture above shows the interior of the pump house with part of the original steam engine at the back. The system is now driven by an electric motor which is at the front.

The picture on the right shows the arm of the nodding donkey pump above the brick building.



The first salt pan (2) faced onto the canal. It became unsafe in the 1980s and was removed. The Thompsons built two new pan houses attached to this first pan.

Pan House No 3 (3) runs alongside the road and Pan House No 2 (4) stands close to the brine tank. Each pan house had a stove house attached.



Pan House 3 (shown in the picture) was used to produce fine and lump salt. A pan house was a lightly constructed timber shed covering a large iron salt pan filled with brine. The construction of the timber shed allowed heat and steam to escape as the brine was heated by fires lit in the brick furnace situated underneath the pan. The furnace was coal fired and stoked from ground level.

At the right temperature brine evaporated to form pure crystals of salt. As these crystals grew larger, they sank to the bottom of the pan. Lumpmen stood on hurdles beside the pan and raked the salt crystals, lifting them out with skimmers and into moulds known as tubs (and also salt dogs). The tubs were placed on shelves hanging along the inside of the pan and filled in sequence. This allowed the excess brine to drain back into the pan. When drained the lumps were turned out onto the hurdles before being moved to the stove house.

The pan was drained at the end of each week. This removed impurities which would cause the salt to become bitter and meant that the pan could be cleaned and repaired. Scale which had built up on the bottom of the pan was removed. It was rich in calcium carbonate with magnesium and potassium salts and was sold to farmers as animal salt licks. Repairs were made to the iron plates of the pan, and to the brickwork of the furnace and flues below, by raising the pan itself.

Pan House No 4 (6) was erected in the 1950s by Henry Ingram's son, Alan Thompson, to replace four common pans.

The fifth pan (7) was installed in the 1960s, making use of a chimney built for the earlier common pans.

When the salt works were in operation, salt lumps were wheeled on open-sided barrows to a Stove House where they were placed on the tops of the hot flues to dry, a process which took two weeks. Once dry, they were lofted through hatches in the ceiling to the warehouse above. The warehouse was used for storage, the cutting or crushing of lumps, and packing.



In the warehouse at the top of the building is a large crushing machine where the lumps of salt were crushed into a powder form. From the top floor, salt could be loaded on barges on the Trent and Mersey Canal for distribution.

The boiler and furnaces at the works were originally fuelled with coal, but were converted to oil in the 1970s, when Pan Houses 3 and 4 were also rebuilt. An automated salt raking system and a series of conveyors designed to dry the salt were added to Pan and Stove House 2.

The bridge and the canal running past the site have had to be reconstructed several times because of subsidence.



The outbreak of the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) precipitated the demise of the works, as the main market located in West Africa was lost. The Lion Salt Works closed in 1986. The site was run by the Lion Salt Works Trust for a number of years before it was purchased by Vale Royal Borough Council.

The Lion Salt Works has now been restored in a £10.23 million project and opened in June 2015 offering an interesting journey through the life of the country's last open-pan salt making site.

As well as the buildings described above, also on the site are the Red Lion Inn which now houses a small museum, the Manager's Office and the Smithy.

Derek Gatenby

Things to Do

Sudoku No 55

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

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

Below is the solution to No 54

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

More quiz questions from Hooha.

1. Who is the author of the TV series Happy Valley?
2. What colour is an aeroplane's black box?
3. Which football team does Vincent Kompany manage?
4. Where is the most northern cathedral in the British Isles?
5. What is the collective noun for a group of crows?

Below are the answers to the questions in the previous edition.

1. Which state in the USA has a Union Jack on its State flag?
Hawaii
2. What did the very first text message say?
Merry Christmas
3. What was the name of Julia Roberts' character in Pretty Woman?
Vivian
4. How many legs does a green fly have?
Six
5. What was Jingle Bells written for? a. Christmas, b. Thanksgiving or c. Halloween
Thanksgiving