

## Retired Members Group

### *'The Mersey Gateway Project'*

*Bernie Carr and Colleagues*

*Held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2016*

Bernie Carr, a volunteer with Halton Borough Council brought us up to date with the construction of the new river crossing between Widnes and Runcorn. The 1000m cable stayed bridge is costing £1.86bn and involves 7.5km of new roads, 12 new bridges across 3 rivers, 3 rail tracks, 3 canals and 3 existing roads. Of concrete construction the multi wired cables are suspended from 3 pylons up to 130m tall and sunk into coffer dams as far as 40m into the river bed. The tolls are ANPR at £2 per trip except for local residents and the estimated opening is autumn 2017. The talk was illustrated with superb video simulations of modern machinery.

### *'The Royal Hospital Chelsea'*

*Reverend Steven Brookes, Chaplain, Former Rector of Liverpool*

*Held on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016*

The Rev Steven Brookes, former Rector of Liverpool, has been the chaplain to the Chelsea Hospital for three years and is enjoying the role enormously as judged by his enthusiasm in his presentation wonderfully illustrated with predominantly scarlet photographs. Founded by Charles II, the pensioners now number 320 housed in Wren's perfect building providing updated single accommodation plus every conceivable leisure facility. Also included is a separate hospital - The Margaret Thatcher Infirmary in the grounds of which lie her and Denis's ashes.

The great hall, the chapel, the bar and the grounds provide much needed funds when hired out especially for the Chelsea flower show and local rich dog owners.

Several of the well attended audience enquired of admission criteria!

### *Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel 1883-1971. "Coco"*

*Christine Dawe*

*Held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2017*

Our speaker, Christine Dawe, is a former teacher, actor, writer, cruise lecturer and broadcaster. She outlined the two sides of this celebrity courtier and perfumist and her fraternisation during WW 2 with high ranking German Officers in Paris such that her links with Winston Churchill and the Duke of Westminster had the potential to be interpreted as espionage. Her early years included brainwashing by nuns, enjoying liaisons with the Paris rich and famous of both sexes, maturing into a millionairess before dying in Switzerland, a heroin addict, having been arrested in Vichy France for treachery and horizontal collaboration.

This was a beautifully constructed talk, well illustrated, with a message. "Throw away your Chanel No 5!!"

### *Summer Outing to Bodnant Gardens*

*Held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017*

On Election Day plus 1, a dozen intrepid visitors, in their own transport congregated in the National Trust car park and enjoyed coffees, cakes and reflection. The focus for the trip was the Laburnum Arch, but in keeping with the majority of attendees, it was past its best, whereas other sections of the beautiful gardens were in their prime. Some adventurous visitors reached the vale and others the new woodland section. A lunch table evolved in the garden centre, where plants were purchased as well as the consumption of food and drinks.

The weather was perfect after a night of storms, and I believe all returned home safely by whatever route the driver fancied.

Chris Evans