

Baddow & Galleywood U3A

NEWSLETTER



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE



Winter 2019

Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind.

To cherish peace and good will, to be plenteous in mercy,
is to have the real spirit of Christmas.



Calvin Coolidge

Yet More Thoughts of Chairman Mo

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time." — Barack Obama

On occasions I have been asked "How did you get to be chairman?" and less frequently "Why did you become chairman?". My tongue in cheek answer to the first is that I simply stood in line, when everyone else took a step back. Hopefully the opening quote helps to provide an answer to the second.

I am happy to report that at our first committee meeting following the AGM, I was once again been elected Chairman and will continue down the path of gradual change that I have embarked on. This is only made possible by the continuing support, enthusiasm and hard work of the rest of the committee, the Interest Group Co-ordinators and the regular suspects who don't fall into either category but we all know and appreciate.

Disappointingly, at the AGM we had no new candidates come forward to join the Committee, which we will interpret (rightly or wrongly) as you all thinking we've been doing a great job. Although we have the same committee and the same Officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Membership Secretary), we do need to continually try to plan for the future. Our constitution only allows for Officers to remain in post for a maximum of three years. This is to ensure that the organisation doesn't get set in its ways and is regularly refreshed. We have had indications that a couple of the Officers will be stepping down at the next AGM (in April) to allow rotation and succession planning.

We are particularly keen to find an assistant to our Membership Secretary to learn the ropes from Loretta and be able to take on this role in future. It requires someone with basic Excel knowledge (which we're willing to teach) and good organisational skills (which I know from personal experience can't be taught!).

We are also wondering whether any of you would like to join an interest group of volunteers with a title like "Ready and Willing" which doesn't actually meet regularly. These groups exist in other U3As with various titles and can be called upon infrequently to leap (or more realistically for us, step forward gingerly) into action when certain tasks have to be done – such as putting Year Books into envelopes and addressing or hand delivering them. This could be your first intrepid toe -dip into volunteering without having to make a large commitment – who knows, you could be Chairman in a few years' time if you're not careful!

If you don't even wish to step forward for that, perhaps you might consider simply asking the coordinator of any group that you attend whether you can do anything to help. Perhaps offer to make the tea or organise a future meeting or outing. It all helps to share the load.

Following on from the novel concept of a group that doesn't meet until required, how about one that meets virtually? Allen, wishing to keep his brain active and use his work experiences, has come forward with the idea of creating a computer help desk to assist those who may be struggling with a particular issue on their computer. Rather than having to go to PC World and be charged (or ask your grandchildren and be bamboozled by the answer!), the idea is that you could phone or email Allen and explain your problem. If he couldn't resolve it, then he and other volunteers with computing experience would try to find an answer for you. We have successfully trialled this concept with one of our Co-ordinators whose laptop keyboard kept insisting on using dollar signs – now happily resolved.

Or perhaps you'd just like to write a small piece for the newsletter about your U3A experiences or what you've done in an interest group, but don't feel that it would be significant enough for inclusion on its

own. Well Wendy has volunteered to accept these contributions by email and compile them into a larger composite article – another minor issue resolved.

As you've seen, volunteering is at the forefront of my mind as I write this. I am reminded of a quote by Winston Churchill:

"You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give."

And finally just a few other titbits for those who may have already done their stint of volunteering and don't wish to hear me banging on about it.



As I hinted in our previous Newsletter, the U3A National Office have formally decided to drop "university" from the logo of the organisation as it was deemed too elitist; the new tag line now in use is "live, laugh, learn"

We have recently held our bi-annual meeting between the Committee and the Group Co-ordinators. This was one of the most positive of these meetings that I have attended, with a number of good ideas being suggested. So if you see a few member "pen portraits" and/or "why I joined U3A" articles elsewhere in this Newsletter, you'll know where the idea came from (perhaps you'd like to do one yourself for the next Newsletter?). We will also be organising some training and familiarisation sessions for Co-ordinators intending borrowing from our central equipment store to enhance group meetings.

New members join regularly during the year. So far this year we have had more than 40 - so I do hope that my occasional repetition in these articles may be excused

New Group ideas are always welcome and should be discussed initially with Wendy. Recent suggestions have included dominoes, quizzing, exploring exercise, golf, poker and backgammon. If you'd be interested in any of these have a word with Wendy.

Di Angel has come up with an interesting programme of speakers for 2020 as you will discover in the new Year Book. We know that we won't please everyone all the time, but do hope you will find something of interest and come along to join us at the general meeting. "Doctor Darts" himself, Patrick Chaplin, will be the guest at our January meeting. Patrick made the national news when he gained his PhD in the history of darts.

And finally... the usual boring reminder that we have a closed group Facebook page for our U3A which we'd love you to join. You can find it by using the **Links** page on our website - or typing the following address into your browser **u3asites.org.uk/baddow/links** Maurice

A Note from the Editor:

Welcome to the Winter edition and thanks to all our contributors, to Margaret for her poem, on p 10, and to Allen for his *snow photographs. I am pleased that we have lots of articles, making this a packed issue. Special thanks to Linda and Denis, who have started us off with our new venture: '**Why I joined the U3A**'. Let's hope many more readers will contribute to this in future Newsletters, making it a regular feature - it's really interesting to hear about people's reasons for joining our organisation.



This edition also contains important information about renewing your membership, details for Co-ordinators and when / how to send contributions for the Spring issue, due out in March This is *your* Newsletter, so please let's fill it with *your* U3A news!

I hope enjoy reading it!

Happy Christmas. Maggie

* Are they bird foot prints or is it an aeroplane— what do you think?

Membership renewal for 2020

Forms for renewal will be available from the December (Wednesday) meeting and after that from your group co-ordinator, further Wednesday meetings or from me if you do not attend any groups. If you attend more than one group, your form will be available from one of those groups. Your group co-ordinator should know which.

The annual fee remains at £9 for Full members and £6 for Associate members. Once again, I cannot take cash, only cheque or BACS or Standing Order can be accepted.

If you pay by Standing Order and haven't done so already, please contact your bank as soon as possible to ensure you are paying the correct amount. The bank needs a few weeks to make the change. Standing Orders can only be amended by you.

This year, I will be producing the membership form using the data I have stored on our Baddow & Galleywood U3A database. Please check the information as it is printed on the form, correct if need be, arrange payment, sign the form and return it to me either:

- At the Wednesday meeting
- Via your group co-ordinator
- Via post or
- To my house (address is on the form)

When I have received your form I will issue your membership card and 2020 Yearbook. They can be collected:

- From the Wednesday meetings (from January)
- Via your group co-ordinator – please let them know in advance
- Via post – enclose an A5 stamp addressed envelope (9" x 6 3/8") when you return the signed form to me
- From my house – by prior arrangement

I will hold onto the membership card and Yearbook until you make arrangements to collect them.

If you have previously Gift Aided your membership fee this will be indicated on the form and will be claimed by the Baddow & Galleywood U3A until further notification.

The 2020 New Member forms will be available on our U3A website, Links page, from January. However, they should only be used by new members NOT existing members.

Contact me if you have any queries.

Loretta - Membership Secretary



I like nonsense; it wakes up the brain cells.

Dr. Seuss

Interest Group Chat

The Co-ordinators' meeting on Monday October 28th 2019, was an enjoyable, productive and interesting gathering which was well supported by the Group Co-ordinators and the Committee. The introduction was given by the Chairman Maurice, in his usual charming and timely fashion, explaining the importance of the group co-ordinators role and the fact that the committee had made great efforts to make the main meetings easier and more interesting with the introduction of the rolling screen. This introduces information and updates provided by the groups and also advertises various events. It is necessary to nurture our new members, because whatever reason brings them to U3A, the first meeting is quite daunting and Maurice called on the meeting to make sure any new member felt welcome.

I was concerned about accidents, any of which need to be recorded and for me to be advised. It is important that this is done correctly, as it could at a future date involve the assistance of the insurance company.

Help is required by Loretta, who does a splendid, very busy job as membership secretary. Perhaps someone out there could help.

Maggie, our newsletter editor, needs more support, not only from the co-ordinators but also other members, who may like to tell us why they joined U3A, perhaps. There is a wealth of knowledge out there, so why not write an article about your life. For those who do not feel confident writing a lengthy article, send a few lines to me, so that I can incorporate into my chat. It is our newsletter, we are the U3A family, and we need to share and feel part of it. The co-ordinators & their groups are the heart of the U3A.

Bluebird is another wonderful way of contacting U3A, do NOT underestimate its importance. Linda does an absolutely fabulous job guiding the new enquirers to the correct location. New members have joined this way, so thank you Linda.

GROUP NEWS :-

Creative Writing: Unfortunately has had to close, but Frances will continue to run this group but not as a U3A one.

Strollers: Ted has undertaken to take over this group so it will continue. A very big thank you to Isobel for all her dedicated years

Table Tennis: Allen has decided to hang up his red shoes as leader but will continue to give us the benefit of his knowledge. Thank you for the joy and fun of the game you have created.

Registers:- Please make sure they are correct, with the correct members numbers and delivered by:- December 1st 2019 & March 1st 2020

Accounts:- 1st January & 1st July 2020,

The year book entries by 1st October 2020

The committee have also created guidance notes for co-ordinators, if you need them please contact me. Most of you are 'old diehards', but some of our new co-ordinators may feel that they need some assistance.

Alan, our Vice Chairman, reported on Risk Assessment and Incident Reporting. This is an enormous and complicated task, which needs to comply with legal regulations, and so for the moment is ongoing. When this has been completed all members will be advised.

I need to conclude with my grateful thanks to the Co-ordinators, who gave me lots of ongoing useful advice, Debbie for minuting, for Hugh and Chris with their constant help with the accounts, the committee for their faith in me for doing this job and for Sue Wells, without whom, none of the halls would have been booked and none of the refreshments delivered. (They were delicious and she did it all by herself)

Finally :- Date of 2020 Interest Group Co-ordinators meetings Monday 30th March and Friday 30th October 2020. Both at Great Baddow Parish Hall

AGM 8th April 2020.

My grateful thanks to all who contributed to my first meeting as IGC. I welcome any correspondence or contact at any time.

Wendy

I went window shopping today! I bought four windows. Tommy Cooper

INTEREST GROUP REPORTS

Art Appreciation

Douglas Adams wrote

"I've come up with a set of rules that describe our reactions to technologies:

1. Anything that is in the world when you're born is normal and ordinary and is just a natural part of the way the world works.
2. Anything that's invented between when you're fifteen and thirty-five is new and exciting and revolutionary and you can probably get a career in it.
3. Anything invented after you're thirty-five is against the natural order of things."

The same applies to art and not just in this generation. In the September meeting of the Art Appreciation Group the topic was 'Extremes and Extremities'. This proved very challenging and some of the extremes we came up with were *biological* – hands and feet, *emotional* – mainly horrific, and *social* in terms of the history of art.

In the biological category we had, amongst others Durer's 'Praying Hands'. We found out that Durer came from such a poor family that only one of the children could afford to go to Art School at any one time. Durer went for four years, while his brother went down the mines. When Durer came back, his brother's hands were so crippled with arthritis that he was unable to go to Art School, so Durer continued and painted his brother's hands as an appreciation.



The emotional category was very harrowing and though there were several pictures, we spent most time looking at the three hundred muscular figures painted by Michelangelo for the Altar wall of the Sistine Chapel. We could have spent many hours studying this, but we were most fascinated by the flayed skin with Michelangelo's own face, held dangling by St Bartholomew. Art historians suggest that Michelangelo was referring to the Greek myth of Marsyas and Apollo. Marsyas challenged Apollo to a music competition, and for his temerity in considering himself equal to the gods, he was flayed. Michelangelo was so lauded in his lifetime that he was concerned that God would think he was above himself and tried to conciliate Him by acknowledging that this could be the result and asking for mercy.



Manet's *Dejeuner sur l'Herbe* was chosen as it was considered extreme when he painted it, although, as with Adams' view of technology, it is now quite mainstream. Manet painted it as a rebellion against the French Academy which would only show pictures with well worked brush strokes and classical themes. This picture has recognisably modern characters, loose brush strokes and a naked lady who just stares impassively at you the viewer. It references some previous pictures but is presented in a completely different way and, of course was rejected by the Academy. However it was hung in the Gallery of 'Refused' paintings where it was seen by thousands of people.



After a fascinating, but fairly depressing two hours, we decided that our next theme should be something a bit more upbeat. Watch this space!

Debbie

Mahjong – a success story

This year has been good for the Mahjong Group: we have met regularly twice a month all year through, at the lovely White Horse pub in Great Baddow and our numbers are growing. Three new members have joined since August, bringing us to 15, with an average of 8 players at each session.

If you have even just a basic knowledge of the game and you would like to join us, do contact me for any further information.

Martine



We got to the moon on Christmas Eve 1968, at the end of a poor year for this country. We had Vietnam. We had civil unrest. We had the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. But we went around the moon and saw the far side for the first time. A script writer couldn't have done a better job of raising people's hope.

Jim Lovell

Local History

We recommenced our meetings in the URC in September with an unusual talk entitled Suffer the Little Children. Our speaker had researched the lives of children in the past who had their lives sadly affected by poverty, broken families or illness, etc. Although we may feel our present lifestyles and social services are not the best, with the stories of life in the past, we left the meeting realising how much better off we are today.

In October, after illustrating the location of the former parish of Prittlewell within the present Borough of Southend-on-Sea and its subsequent development, we were given an insight into the changes by comparison of old and current views of the town. The history and role of the EKCO factory in the development of radio and electronics was illustrated with some sound bites.

In November, the things 'strange and unusual' about the County was our subject. With no meeting in December, we start the New Year on January 22nd with a talk on Essex women who rocked the boat! Some famous, some not so well known will feature this afternoon in Alan Pamphilon's presentation.

For further information about the Group and its meetings please get in touch. We look forward to meeting new members.
Brian - Co-ordinator



Strollers

The walk at Maldon in October was the last walk that I shall lead as coordinator, so for me it was quite emotional. For various reasons many faithful members could not join us,

Doug was celebrating his 93rd birthday (I can remember his 80th!), Linda was on holiday, having it rescheduled after her first tour operator famously failed and poor Peggy had spent the previous evening at Broomfield, but is now recovering I am glad to say.

But six of us made it. We decided that as the paths were so wet and muddy we would not walk out to the battlefield, close to Osea Island and site of the battle of Maldon. It is worth remembering that we have in Essex the oldest authenticated battlefield in the country and perhaps the town should be publicised for this, rather than the mud race. Instead we walked down to the statue of Brythnoth, the hero but loser of the battle of Maldon 991. It is worth remembering that heroes are not always victors, and victors are not always heroes. Anyway, Brythnoth is remembered fondly in Maldon with a statue on the church in the High Street, a statue at the end of the promenade and a stained glass window in the iconic church that stands a little way from the quay and which features in so many paintings of Maldon.

We then repaired to the Queen's Head and enjoyed a delicious meal. What a lovely day, the sun was still shining. After Christmas, Ted Dyer will be leading Strollers. We could not have a better leader and I know everyone will support him. John and I certainly look forward to joining Ted's outings; as I have always said: **Keep Strolling!** *Isobel*

Book Group 2

A Week in Paris by Rachel Hore

It's 1956 and Fay is on a school visit to Paris, visiting Notre Dame when she has a feeling she has been there before. It isn't possible she thinks, I know we lost our house in London during the war and moved to Norfolk, so how come it feels like home here in Paris?

Six years later, preparing for a visit to Paris with an orchestra, Fay tells her mother about that experience and her mother reluctantly decides to let Fay do some research. She gives her a rucksack with an address label inside and Fay is immediately intrigued by the mystery of the past.

The book has two storylines: one of Fay in 1961 as a young violinist going with the orchestra to Paris for a week, and one of her mother Kitty, who as a young girl went to Paris in 1937 to train as a concert pianist. What happened in France in WW2? Fay needs to find out about her mother's past life and what happened to her father. All Fay knows is that her father died during the war and her mother brought her up on her own.

I loved this book because I'm interested in family history; Fay researches her mother's early life and what happened to them as a family and how they ended up in England. *Audrey Jeffries*

Family History

Since our last entry in the newsletter the family history group has been busy!

We have had two of our 'successes and problems' sessions and one of our members commented how much she enjoys them as she always learns something new! At the end of the second one we had a theme – ancestors' houses that we have visited, and what a variety we had! A house that was originally the Bluecoats school in Beverley with the most beautiful view of Beverley Minster; a grand house [and super car] near Stansted Mount Fitchet, that had lost some of its garden to the airport; a hotel in Scotland which was the Manse where her husband's ancestor lived; Red Holme, North Berwick [now apartments] which was a Barnardo's home; and a log cabin in Beaver Lodge, Alberta, Canada! We also had someone who met the person who now lives in the house in Hornchurch where she once lived; and one member had regretted visiting a house she once knew well – it was so different. We also saw a lovely photo of a house in Broadstairs – remember that if you look at Google maps you can go to street view and see the houses – the one your ancestor lived in may still be there!

Tony Allen gave us an entertaining talk about how he put together his book 'Tale and Tattle' which he sells to raise funds for Farleigh Hospice. He had many funny and interesting stories including the one when he recently had a letter informing him that he had an inheritance from a relation who had named his grandfather and Tony was the only living descendant – he hoped for a house but got £103! He had found he is related to D. H. Lawrence. His mother lived until she was 101 and remembered the Boer War - she was a music hall singer and her songs were far too risqué for Tony to sing one at her funeral when requested by the vicar! He remembered frequent parties, even during the war. He did his National Service in Egypt but never knew why he was there, then had two careers – first as an editor on the Sheffield Telegraph and then in scouting when the Chief Scout was Sir William Gladstone. [One of our members confessed to me that she worked as an editor for the Chronicle and corrected an item about U3A to USA as she hadn't heard of U3A.]

Thanks to Maurice the meeting when Linda gave a talk on 'The Gooch family of Hylands' was a great success! The old projector would not recognise the computer, so in desperation Maurice, our chairman was asked for help and he came along before the meeting with the lovely new projector. It worked brilliantly - so thanks Maurice! The Gooch family lived in Hylands House from 1904 to 1920 – some interesting times when the House was fitted with electricity; Sir Daniel went with Shackleton on his last expedition; the House was a Military Hospital; the heir to the title died aged eighteen; and the elder daughter married in Widford church plus much more.

We have had some very lively and interesting meetings!

Linda

No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.

Aesop

Gardening

At the beginning of October our U3A Gardening Group visited our local Abercorn Nurseries in Beehive Lane. Twenty five of us turned up to a talk and demonstration on winter baskets, pots and troughs.



David Gilliam, the manager and his staff made us very welcome. He gave us an excellent demonstration how to make attractive and long lasting pots. His enthusiasm and knowledge always gives us extra insights. This time he explained that if ceramic and terracotta pots are lifted off the ground onto pot feet they are far less likely to crack in the frost. How did this information manage to pass me by for so long?

The new accommodation and improvements at Abercorn allows them to have a tea shop. We were all impressed with the delicious home-made cakes.

It was a very enjoyable afternoon.

Sue



Book group 2 by Margaret Hale



Some books we love, some books we hate,
It doesn't really matter.
We meet, discuss, appraise, debate
And generally chatter.

The book's too long, the print's too small,
Where did I put my specs?
Perhaps I'll read it after all,
The plot's not *too* complex!

Many books we now have read,
(And most from start to finish)
Our Book Group 2 by Maggie led
I hope will not diminish.



The only way to survive is to have a sense of humour

Bob Newhart



Music Performing

Our Spring meeting was held on May 10th, and once again enthusiasm was matched by achievement! A wide variety of musical styles was in evidence, ranging from the 18th to the 21st century!

Bruce and Barbara (*violin and piano*) set us on our musical voyage, with tuneful pieces by Shostakovich and Gluck. Soon, the duo became a Hayden trio, played beautifully by Davina (flute), Shirley (cello) and Pam (piano) playing two movements of Haydn. Trio expands to quartet! - with the first performance of a Klezmer suite by Ken, featuring Jenny (violin), Lynn (clarinet), Davina (accordion) and the composer(!) (piano.)

A change of mood and instruments - a guitar solo by Ross followed, including "Sorrento," which in turn was followed by the singing group, accompanied by Pam (piano), Davina (flute), Ann (violin) and Shirley (cello.) The first half finished with a spectacular performance of a Richard Rodney Bennett piece by Penny (alto saxophone), and Ken (piano.) A welcome cup of tea followed, plus arrangements for the next set of collaborations.

We started the second half with a very engaging Trio by Carl Bohm, played with verve by Bruce and Mike (violins) and Barbara (piano). They may not thank me for noting that their combined age approaches 250 years!

Debbie (flute), Davina (clarinet - how many instruments does Davina play???) and Jane (piano) played some light and tuneful music by S.Foster and P.Harris. Debbie was then joined by Ken for a lovely flute/piano duet by Mouquet, a romantic French composer. Bringing the afternoon to a rousing conclusion were Lynn and John Cox (alto saxes) with a couple of contemporary "takes" on traditional songs.

We are a group of people who love music, enjoy each others' company - and like to stay young- if you play - or sing - join us! Many thanks once again to Pam for organising it all! *Kenneth*

Music Performing



For a change, I was not performing at the September meeting of the Music Performance group, due to illness of one of my partners, and lack of rehearsal time with the others. So I was able to sit back and enjoy the concert without the usual feelings of tension before my own efforts, and relief or frustration afterwards.

As always there was a tremendous variety of musical styles and combinations of instruments, but one thing struck me in particular. There were twelve items on the programme, and other than the guitar solo and accordion solo, each performance had a piano accompaniment. At the end of the item, the soloist is acknowledged with a generous round of applause, whilst our accompanists, who this time were Pam, Ken, John and Barbara, hide behind the piano and then sidle back to their seats. So I wanted to pay tribute to their accomplishments, to the fact that each one often is involved in two or three items on the programme so must spend many hours in practice and rehearsals, and often, let it be said, their part is as hard if not harder than that of the soloists.

We welcomed a couple of new members who, having 'had a go' last time, decided to take the plunge and perform again this time and had a potential new member who will be on the programme for our Christmas concert. And it was lovely to hear Davina on her accordion. She took it up about 18 months ago and played extremely tentatively to us about a year ago, spending more time explaining about how the instrument works than actually making music on it. This time she played three delightful pieces, and had she not told us afterwards, we would not have realised that she has been learning these for 6 months and is not allowed to move on until they are perfect! I reckon you are there, Davina!

It was also lovely to hear a couple of violinists play the first movement of the Bach double violin concerto. One of these performers learnt violin at school, put it down, and just picked it up again a few years ago. She started performing at the U3A as a relative beginner and now, having had lessons and the motivation to play in public is going from strength to strength. I think that this is what our group is about – making music to whatever standard you can in a supportive atmosphere with an audience which completely understands what you are going through. And then moving on to the next exciting venture. *Debbie*

Weekenders

The weekenders have been out and about over the summer, Coffee Mornings, Sunday lunches, and our very popular day trips.

Every couple of months we have an International meal: we have had Chinese, Indian, Greek, and Turkish. This month it was Nepalese at The Gurkha Restaurant in Broomfield Road. The food was great and they made us very welcome and everyone came away very satisfied.

Another less exotic meal which has become a yearly tradition is to go by bus to have fish-n-chips in Burnham on Crouch. In previous years we battled rain, wind, and cold, this year 12 of us enjoyed beautiful sunshine. We didn't eat in a restaurant but outside, the meal was cooked and served from a small cabin. The staff were so friendly and the fish so fresh and flaky - white, we will definitely return next year.

If you care to join Weekenders and enjoy the company, you will be made most welcome. *Denis*

Table Tennis

None of the longest standing members can remember exactly when it was, but probably about 7 or 8 years ago Allen started the Baddow and Galleywood U3A table tennis group. Unlike other groups this met weekly and Allen, as well as having sorted out the venue and acquired equipment, was committed to coming down each week to open up the hall, get the two tables ready, sort out the money for the hire of the hall, and stay to the end to lock up again. Over the years various members have helped him with this, but he has finally decided to 'hang up his hat' as group organiser, although he will continue to come along to play and to offer his experience to the less skilled players.

Under his leadership the group has grown from around 10 players to a healthy 22, it has replaced the two ropey old tables with two brand new ones and has another on permanent loan. It has moved from a small hall to a larger one, and just recently started an extension hour whereby members who wish can stay an extra hour for singles playing and coaching.

So thanks to Allen for his inspiration and help, and thanks to Janette who will be taking over as group organiser from January. *Debbie*

Family History

On 8th November we welcomed back Kate J Cole whose talk was 'Al Capone's gangster car and the Kursaal in 1930s Southend. We were pleased to have with us some friends we hadn't seen for a while, members of other groups and members of Chelmsford U3A.

Kate told us about her maternal great-grandmother from the Welsh valleys who ran away to America to join the circus! She worked with Barnum, Buffalo Bill and Houdini as 'Thauma the half woman'.



She worked doing that until she was in her late 40s! [And had had three children!] By 1911 she was living in poverty and her elder son, Harry, paid for her to travel back to England and then to Wales This brought us to Harry's story – Together with the owners of the Kursaal he bought 'Eric the Whale' in America, transporting it back to England and eventually to Southend where it attracted thousands of people to view it and to sit inside it!!



<https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/17435950.vintage-photos-show-when-eric-the-whale-visited-southend/>. Harry's next entrepreneurial venture was to buy Al Capone's gangster car which was displayed in the Kursaal's ballroom.

If you want to see Kate's great-uncle Harry and the car in Southend – there is a short film here - <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/al-capone-s-killer-car> Linda

Art Appreciation

HUMOUR AND HAPPINESS

Following a session that had produced a somewhat dark selection there was a unanimous decision to look for something a little more uplifting with a title of 'Humour and Happiness'. As neither of the topics is as open to interpretation as the artwork itself, it's unsurprising that the contributions were diverse.



Four Hogarth works required explanation of Electioneering in 17th Century Britain, well - constructed and colourful, amusing when the context was understood; surprisingly little seems to have changed? Another 'political' work: Repin's 'October 1905' gave as a depiction of elation, and a reminder of legislation's effect on citizens' happiness. More amusing William Henry Hunt's picture of a greedy little boy 'L'attacco' and 'La Sconfitta'; Beryl Cook's 'Self Portrait' brought a much happier mood to the group, and we indulged ourselves with a selection of her light hearted sketches. Self-taught she may be, but she certainly has the ability to catch the body movement and essence of some well recognised social scenes.

My personal favourite was Paula Rego's 'The Dance'. We had a lively discussion as to whether the 'dream - like quality' was of a pleasant dream or a nightmare – for me certainly not a vision of happiness. The 'dance' of her life is energetic and her bright yellow Dior - like costume in the foreground gives it life. For me the overall feeling was of sadness, that it was undertaken whilst her husband was dying. One of the advantages of our group is that the person who selects the piece researches it to illuminate the background.

I'm grateful to the group and the internet for introducing me to some new artists and, on this occasion, some light relief. Kathy Group photo with thanks to Allen B

Canasta

"Hey, why don't you join the U3A canasta group? It's really thriving and meets twice a month".

"Oh no, I played many years ago but I'm far too rusty to play now. I'd feel embarrassed as I've forgotten most of the rules and would almost have to start from scratch".

"That wouldn't matter - several like you have joined, improved gradually and now play regularly. In fact, lots of us started that way; why don't you come along and give it a try?"

This is exactly how my conversation went 7 years ago, and now I hardly miss a game. In fact the meeting on 12 November may have been a record attendance with 21 players! We usually hover around 12-14 but numbers aren't important - we all mix in and play with whoever turns up. What is important is that there's always space for new players - of any ability. Even someone who has never played but is keen to learn is very welcome.

What I particularly like about the game is that someone could be on the brink of winning but then lose, or vice versa, and it's such fun. It's not about the winning (well not much anyway), but about having an enjoyable and light hearted afternoon with a group of friendly people. So fancy a game? Once you start you'll find you become, like the rest of us, a canasta addict. Just turn up and introduce yourself. Coordinator Pat would be very happy to see you. (See meeting details in the Year Book). Sue

NEW FEATURE!

Read these below, then feel
inspired to write your own!
And send to me next time.
Editor

Why I joined the U3A

Because of personal circumstances and looking for a place to call home, now after a frustrating search for good accommodation, I found a room to rent. It was in The Maltings Great Baddow. Previously after retiring at 63, I had a very active life, which included breeding pedigree Tibetan Terrier puppies which were sold to personally selected customers who we thought would have good homes. We showed some of our dogs around the country and were privileged to show one at Crufts.

Another hobby was to make and sell ceramic figures at the larger Craft Fairs in the Home Counties. I had built a shed to pour liquid "slip" into moulds and acquired a kiln into which the figures were baked prior to painting or glazing.

I was now on my own and getting back to an active life was essential, so on a trip to the library I found an advert for new people to join The Galleywood Short Mat Bowls Club. I had played normal bowls many years before and decided to give it a go; it suited me very much, was local and could be played in the warm and dry.

I had also acquired a free bus pass, so I took many trips around the county but that got very boring, I needed more.

One day my landlady asked if I had heard of an organisation called the U3A, which I hadn't; it sounded just what I needed, so after a little research, off I went to the Chelmsford meeting held at the old Marconi social club building now called Hamptons. I was asked my name, but nobody spoke to me. The chairman made his announcements, didn't mention newcomers and then introduced the speaker. I cannot remember the topic, but I came away very unimpressed.

Weeks later I heard about the Baddow U3A, I was still sceptical but decided I had nothing to lose, so off I went. What a difference! I was greeted with a smile and introduced to various co-ordinators who explained what their group did. Over the next few weeks I joined several groups including Photography, Computing, Weekenders and Singing for Pleasure, later I dropped Computing but joined Strollers.

Belonging to these groups and now as co-ordinator of the Weekenders, I have met and become friends with so many people and satisfied my desire to be active. *Denis*

'Why I joined U3A'

After teaching for many years in various places - East Yorkshire, Malaysia, Germany, Wales, and London, I ended up in Chelmsford, teaching at Oaklands Infant School, ending up as deputy head-teacher. When I retired colleagues wondered how I would cope as I had always been very busy! I have coped and haven't taught since! When I retired I decided I would not commit myself to anything for the first year, but I did remember that someone I worked with was a member of U3A and I was interested in finding out more. I couldn't remember who it was, but eventually found out it was Peggy who had been our school secretary. Peggy and Neville collected me and brought me to my first main meeting, and I have missed few main meetings since. During the first year of my retirement I started researching my family history, so joined the family history group. I remember going to my first meeting at Pauline's in Howe Green, when the group was small enough to meet in her home. For a few years I was on our U3A committee and also used to enjoy visiting Essex churches. After my first 'free' year I volunteered on the Helpline [and then worked on the staff] at BBC Essex, joined the committee of the Friends of Hylands House [and volunteer in the Bookshop], joined the committee of Chelmsford Theatre Association, and now research for Hylands House and prepare and present exhibitions with Shirley Harman from March to December in the House. Now I am the coordinator of the family history group. So in my 16th year of 'retirement' – I am back to being very busy!
Linda

How to Give a Cat a Pill

1. Pick up cat and cradle in your left arm as if holding a baby. Position right forefinger and thumb on either side of cat's mouth and gently apply pressure to cheek while holding pill in your right hand. As cat opens mouth, pop pill into it, allow cat to close mouth and swallow.
2. Retrieve pill from floor and cat from behind sofa and repeat process.
3. Retrieve cat from bedroom and throw soggy pill away.
4. Take new pill from foil wrapper. Cradle cat in left arm, holding rear paws tightly with left hand. Force jaw open and push pill to back of mouth with right forefinger. Hold mouth shut for a count of 10.
5. Retrieve pill from goldfish bowl and cat from top of wardrobe. Call partner in from garden.
6. Kneel on floor with the cat wedged firmly between knees. Ignore loud growls emitted by cat. Get partner to hold head firmly while forcing a wooden ruler into mouth. Drop pill down ruler. Rub cat's throat vigorously.
7. Retrieve cat from curtain rail and get another pill from foil wrapper. Make a note to buy new ruler and repair curtains. Carefully sweep 'Doulton' figures from hearth and set aside for gluing later.
8. Wrap cat in a large towel and get partner to lay on cat, with cat's head just visible from below partner's armpit. Put pill in end of drinking straw, force cat's mouth open with a pencil and blow down drinking straw.
9. Check label to make sure pill is not harmful to humans, drink a glass of water to take away the taste. Apply plaster to partner's armpit and remove blood from carpet with cold water and soap.
10. Remove cat from neighbour's shed and get another pill. Place cat in cupboard and close door onto neck to leave head showing. Force mouth open and flick pill down throat with elastic band.
11. Fetch screwdriver from garage and put door back on hinges. Apply cold compress to cheek and check records for last tetanus jab. Throw T-shirt away and fetch new one from bedroom.
12. Ring Fire Brigade to retrieve cat from tree across the road and apologise to neighbour who crashed into fence while swerving to avoid cat. Take last pill from wrap.
13. Tie the cat's front and back paws together with garden twine and bind tightly to dining table. Find heavy duty pruning gloves from garden shed and pry open cat's mouth with a small spanner. Push pill into mouth followed by a large piece of fillet steak. Hold head vertically and pour a pint of water down throat to wash down pill.
14. Get partner to drive you to A&E and sit quietly while the doctor stitches fingers and forearms and re moves pill from right eye. Call in furniture shop on the way home to order new table.
15. Arrange for local animal welfare society to collect cat and ring local pet shop to see if they have any hamsters.
(With thanks to Norma)

Speaker reports from the Autumn meetings.

In **September** we held our AGM and the current committee were willing to stand again until the next AGM. After this, our vice chairman Alan gave us a talk the SS Uganda. The ship started its life as a liner of The British India Company sailing through the Suez canal to Mombasa and Mozambique. Amongst its passengers were doctors, nurses, engineers and office workers on 3 year contracts in African villages. In 1967 the ship was completely overhauled and became an educational school where teachers and pupils could gain experience in Europe and even as far away as Iceland.

In **October** Brian Carline was our speaker. He had spent 47 years in teaching and he related his early experiences as a new teacher having to teach pupils from 11 to 18 years old various subjects, often only being one lesson ahead of them most of the time, was very challenging. He worked his way up at different schools until he became a Headmaster, which was demanding but also very rewarding. He mentioned that teachers need to be firm with the pupils but also to have a sense of humour. This led him, with a friend from his youth, to form a Comedy Duo, and they performed at many locations around London and also in gala performances of The New Faces on TV in 1997. His talk mixed education with comedy and kept us all enthralled.

The **November** meeting welcomed Mark and Pam Bathurst who will tell us about the paddle steamer **The Medway Queen** which was also called 'The Heroine of Dunkirk'

At the **December** meeting Jan Ford and her group will entertain us with Christmas traditions. *Di*

MAIN MEETINGS: SPEAKERS / SUBJECTS

9 Jan	Patrick Chaplin	Pub Games, including Darts
12 Feb	Graham Bendall	The Life of a Gamekeeper
11 March	Roger Gibbons	Butterflies of Britain and Europe
8 April	AGM	Forte Physical Health A local Osteopath



Copy for the **Spring** edition should be with me on or before February 3rd, please.

I'd welcome short, lively, interesting articles from any U3A member, Group co-ordinator or Committee member. Don't forget our new feature: '*Why I joined the U3A*'.

Future plans, outings or activities your group has done, might interest new members, and photographs are always welcome

Thanks, Maggie (Editor)



I'd like to say a big thank you to Sue, who provided us with a marvellous lunch in October, when Group Co-ordinators and Committee members attended our twice - yearly meeting. She provided coffee, biscuits, delicious sandwiches and cakes, which I'm sure we all enjoyed. I know I did! Maggie

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our readers

INTEREST GROUP PROGRAMME

DAY		1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH
Monday	a.m.				
	p.m.		Photography German Conversation	I.T. & Computing	Travel Poetry Appreciation
Tuesday	p.m.	Table Tennis Singing for Pleasure Scrabble	Canasta Table Tennis	Table Tennis Singing for Pleasure	Travel Table Tennis Canasta
Wednesday	a.m.	Italian Walking 1 Painting & Sketching	Italian Painting & Sketching	Italian Strollers Painting & Sketching	Italian Painting & Sketching
	p.m.	Reading 1 French Conversation Mah-jong	General Meeting	Mah-jong	Local History 1 Spanish
Thursday	a.m.		Papercraft		Papercraft
	p.m.	Bridge Gardening	Bridge Local History 2	Bridge Discussion	Bridge Paper Craft
Friday	a.m.		Arts & Crafts	Walking 2	Rambling
	p.m.	Music Performing Reading 2	Family History Cribbage Art Appreciation	Needles & Pins	
Saturday				Weekenders	
Sunday		Weekenders			

Music Performing: 13th Dec



Published 1st December 2019