

Blackwater u3a Newsletter

**December 2023 and
January 2024**



Plenty of these around at the moment. Artwork by Jenny Riley

u3a

Reg. Charity No. 1113334

From the Chair

Having thanked Deputy Chairman Ron last month for his sterling efforts standing in for me in October (doesn't time fly) he sent me a very honest potential article, (see below - no, finish mine first) so if you are still with me, his article reminded me what self doubts volunteering for a role can often cause for some of us, especially in the beginning at least, hence we may look for excuses and convince ourselves that we probably wouldn't be any good at it anyway.

I know for instance that I am not naturally extrovert or even gregarious come to that, (no honestly, never mind the guffaws of laughter). I am happier in the back row, albeit making the occasional, what I hope is a witty remark aimed to amuse. Sometimes this can get me into an unexpected situation, for instance suddenly finding myself pushed to the front as a volunteer in the role of chairman. However it has proved strangely satisfying and in many respects quite rewarding. This brings me once again to that hoary old subject of our and indeed u3a groups in general and what it takes to keep them running.

When I first joined a u3a as a mere slip of a lad, back in the days when I lived in Kent, I just applied for membership, paid what was asked for the subscription and rocked up once a week at someone's house for my chosen subject, (the Dummies guide to Philosophy since you ask). I never even considered walking 5 minutes up the road to the village hall to the monthly meetings. So I can therefore completely understand if this is where you are also, no not up the road at the village hall.

I know this is not a real University per se but through getting involved, not just in the activities but also helping out I have come to realise it does offer a voyage of self discovery. Which neatly brings me back to the article from Ron about his experience. **Wait for it....I hadn't quite finished.** Before you go I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year and I hope to see you at the Christmas Party or if not, then next year.

Chairman, Al

Now the moment you have all been waiting for. Drum Roll....

Thoughts on Volunteering

Well, I was surprised and a little flattered to see my activities in October reported in the newsletter.

Speaking as one who generally prefers to lurk in the background doing whatever may be required, having to speak in front of lots of people was way beyond my comfort zone. Luckily, I have had to do such a thing once or twice in my distant past. The first time I'd managed to control my fears until the moment I needed to speak, then all I could manage was to croak through a very dry mouth that I needed water. Once I had a quick drink everything went well and I was surprised how easy it was.

My recent spells in the front line, whilst still a concern, could not be avoided and in fact I quite enjoyed myself once I started.

So if anyone out there is nervous about putting themselves forward for ANYTHING, jump in, the water is lovely after the first brief shock of actually starting. We have a team of people in the background to help with everything.

Ron Martin

Deadline for the February Newsletter

The deadline for the next Newsletter will be **Friday 26th January 2024**

Please submit items in the usual way to Frances Butcher

fabbutcher@talktalk.net.

Support and Befriending Group

If you are in need of some help or support, please telephone one of the following numbers and they will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.

Sheila Rowsell	01621 740820,
Dennis Eraut	01621 829758,
Christine Wright	01621 853171

Art Appreciation

Visit to Geedon Gallery

In October we visited our favourite local gallery, the Geedon Gallery in Fingringhoe for their autumn exhibition. Well over a hundred paintings and etchings plus a collection of ceramics, bronze resin animal sculptures, wood carvings and jewellery all from contemporary artists.

As always we chose our favourite three items of art work and collected the results. The winning artist was Margaret Glass with four paintings, The Map Room at Great Dixter, Towards Aldeburgh, Staithes Harbour and Spring Sunlight Provence. The single painting with the most votes was by Ruth Stage called Evening Swimmers Burnham Overy Staithe with an egg tempera medium. Other artists with high votes were Janet French, and Andrew King. The wooden bowls were also popular. I thought the most intriguing art was by Janet French with a highly innovative technique of taking field maple or oak leaves plus their stalks and processing them to a clear structure followed by arranging them to create a virtual rectangle picture size and then doing a screen print on top.

Thanks to Jacky Taber, the owner, who always welcomes us for collecting such a good exhibition of art for sale.

In November we watched two DVDs on Michelangelo. The first on his time in Florence and the second from his time in Rome. These are by Professor Kloss in the series we have watched on Italian Renaissance artists. Some of the greatest sculptures of all time.

I would really appreciate it in the true spirit of the u3a if some of the group would volunteer to give a talk on an artist or school of art. I can always help with the creation of the pictures for the computer and the talk could be for 45mins or 20 mins and share with other speakers.

Co-ordinator, Dennis Eraut 01621 829758

Walking Group

There is no walk in December, but I look forward to seeing all you walkers on Thursday 25th January 2024. We will meet in the car park of Tesco, Fullbridge, ready to walk at 10.00 am.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

Co-ordinator, John Mayes 01245 222530

Golf Group

The Blackwater u3a golfing group usually meet twice a month, on the 2nd Friday for the group's main event at one of our local golf courses and on the 4th Friday for our monthly secondary event. This alternates between Little Channels, Chelmsford, golf course or Rivenhall Golf Course and always meeting at 10.30 am at the golf course car parks.

Our Christmas Lunch will be at Rivenhall Golf Club on 8th December at 1.00 pm.

Co-ordinator, John Rowsell 01621 740820

Short Walks Group

Six of us, including a member who had previously been unable to attend our walks, met for a leisurely stroll which took us from West Maldon Community Centre towards St Giles ruin in Spital Road. We then headed towards the town where we stopped for refreshments at a café close to the Moot Hall. Once refreshed we made our way along Fambridge Road back towards the Centre. The weather was kind to us with no rain which was a bonus bearing in mind the heavy showers the previous week.

We will not be meeting in December therefore our next walk will be on Monday 15th January, meeting outside the Community Centre at 10.00 am. If interested in joining us for a leisurely circular walk around Maldon lasting between 1½ to 2 hours with a stop for refreshments, please contact either Robyn, or myself.

Seasons greetings to all members of Blackwater u3a from the Short Walks Group.

Co-ordinators - Di Martin 01621 85634) and Robyn Slade 01621 928536

Shakespeare Group

We continue reading Henry IV part two, not so much a story of historical fact about Henry but observations about the fat and jocular Falstaff who proved to be a very popular character in Shakespearian plays.

Our next reading is on the 8th December at 2.00 pm but there will be no meeting on 22nd as it is too close to Christmas.

Our meetings in January will be on the 9th and 23rd.

Co-ordinator, Dennis Eraut 01621 829758

Flower Arranging Group

Our meeting in October saw the Group's arrangements depicting either Halloween, or fireworks, and apart from two members who chose 'fireworks' the rest chose Halloween. At November's meeting our arrangements were an asymmetrical design entitled 'A hint of frost' using white flowers, various foliage and pine cones.



We do not meet in December but will be taking part in All Saints Christmas Tree Festival on behalf of Blackwater u3a.

Our next meeting will be on **Tuesday, 23rd January**, in the Linton Room from 9.30-11.30 am when our arrangements will be on a Valentine theme. Our programme for 2024, once agreed, will be on Blackwater u3a's web page.

On behalf of the Group I would like to wish seasons greetings to all members of Blackwater u3a.

Co-ordinator, Di Martin 01621 856347

Wine Group 1

We met in November at Jacky and Peter's home for a very interesting evening of Rhône valley wines. Peter explained the four appellations for this region, which are AOC Côtes du Rhone (the lowest); AOC Côtes du Rhone Villages; AOC Côtes du Rhone Villages + a name; and the best wine being designated Crus AOC + a name.



The tendency is to automatically think of rich reds such as Chateauneuf du Pape and Crozes Hermitage, so we were all surprised at the variety of white wines produced in this region. The biggest surprise was to find a white Chateauneuf du Pape! It was absolutely delicious with a subtle, creamy nose, and tastes of vanilla, peaches and apricots. Every wine sampled was enjoyable but maybe that was my favourite.

Our next meeting is on Friday 8th December for a Christmas wine tasting, plus supper. It will start at 6.30 pm at Frances and Brian's house.

Co-ordinator, Frances Butcher 01621 853352

Petanque Group

The Petanque group is extremely popular, consisting of members from Blackwater, South Woodham Ferrers, Limebrook and Maldon. Attendance is averaging over a dozen at a time and total membership is nearly thirty. Play takes place every Tuesday afternoon starting at 1.30 pm during the winter months (GMT) in the Maldon Promenade Park.

Co-ordinator, John Mundy 01621 854065

Table Tennis 1

Our group meets on Mondays from 9.15 till 11.45 am at West Maldon Community Centre. We are a mixed achievement group and have a good time with a little instruction from the better players. We are currently getting 16 plus players, with several welcome newcomers, and rotate play so that everyone gets a game with different partners. We can still accept more players at present.

Table Tennis 1 meetings will end on the 18th December and restart on the 8th January. Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

Co-ordinator, Peter Harden 07754 536639

Deputy, Jack Veash 07388 420968

Table Tennis 2

We meet on Thursday afternoons at West Maldon Community Centre between 2.30 and 4.30 pm. We have four tables for our use and play doubles and singles, depending on numbers.

New members are welcome with or without previous experience and a bat can be lent if necessary. Sensible non slip trainers are essential. The cost is £3 per session which includes refreshments.

Please remember there will be no play on Thursday 28th December, but it's back to normal in the New Year. For further information please contact

Co-ordinator, Kath Little 07762 312838

Birding Group

We had a dry and sunny morning at the Hanningfield Essex Wildlife Trust reserves for our recent visit. Gone was the welcoming wood burning stove in the corner and replaced with a large cabinet filled with an extensive range of scopes and binoculars. I understand the reasons for removing the stove but it was such a welcoming, cosy

sight when entering the visitors centre. The centre has had a makeover. Many more shelves of merchandise were on display and plenty of cake to go with our hot drinks.



The squirrels' antics, stealing the bird food, was much in evidence, to the delight of children and adults alike. The creatures seem to sense the glass provides protection for them therefore inside movement doesn't bother them.

We reached the second hide after a poor showing of birds at the first one, and it didn't disappoint. The curved inlet sheltered many ducks, Widgeon, Gadwall, Black tailed Godwits, an assortment of gulls and large numbers of our smallest and I believe prettiest of ducks, the Teal.

Our garden has produced 2 Goldcrests and a large flock of Long Tailed Tits in recent days. The Silver Birch are holding on to their lovely golden leaves and are supplying the birds with much of their dietary needs. The Fieldfare and Redwing, having arrived some weeks ago, are instantly recognisable by their distinctive repetitive clucking sound.

To those of you who are going to the Birding group Christmas lunch, we will meet at West Maldon Community Centre at 12.00 midday on Friday 1st December for car share.

There will be no bird meetings until March and I will draw up a new plan for the coming year soon. Thank you all for your support, I hope you have enjoyed our time together.

Have a happy, healthy Christmas and new year.

Co-ordinator, Stephy Eraut 01621 829758

A Big THANK YOU

We are very lucky in our u3a to have so many committed co-ordinators who provide opportunities for us to enjoy activities together, but we are going to give a special mention to Dawn Mundy who, over a number of years, has organised holidays for members. We appreciate this is no mean undertaking and is also a huge responsibility but Dawn has done it enthusiastically, with a smile on her face. Members have benefitted from these holidays both socially and informatively but her recent successful trip to Norfolk was her last one.

On behalf of all those who have enjoyed taking part, can we say a big ‘thank you’ to Dawn for all her hard work in planning, researching and all the other aspects of organising a holiday for members. I am sure those who have been involved will have very happy memories of times shared together.

u3a Committee

Treasurer’s Request

When making payments by Bank Transfer please make payments for the following categories:

Membership Payments/Dairies

Sort Code: 60-13-37 Account No: 49519611

Account: Blackwater U3A

Quoting: ‘Membership’ or ‘Diary’

Group Activities/Events

Sort Code: 60-13-37 Account No: 49532057

Account: Blackwater U3A No 2

Quoting: ‘Theatre’ / ‘History’ etc.

Payments by cheque should be made payable to ‘Blackwater U3A’.

Payments can also be made at the Monthly Meetings by Debit/Credit Cards.

Thank you

Chris Daines

Reading Group

This month we all enjoyed reading 'Still me', the third book in a trilogy by Jojo Moyes where we follow the latest exploits of Louisa Clark, who is starting a new job as a personal assistant to the wife of a wealthy New York business man.

Although the story can stand alone it does help for background if you have read the previous two books – 'Me before you' and 'After You'. Louisa is a delightful and endearing character with her own unique fashion style. She becomes a strong, discreet and loyal ally to her mistress, Agnes, who has to deal with spiteful jealousy from other society wives but, sadly, she is dismissed when she quietly takes the blame for something Agnes has done. She becomes friends with a cantankerous tenant (Margot de Witt) in the apartment building after finding her dog on the loose again and, on returning the dog, discovers the old lady collapsed. Now homeless, she is taken in by Margot, becoming her dog walker and carer and discovers a wealth of fashionable clothes which Margot has collected over the years. Louisa has two suitors, Sam, the paramedic boyfriend she has left in England and Josh, the handsome American, who reminds her of her previous great love, Will. Neither relationship is smooth sailing but if you like the film, 'Sleepless in Seattle', you will be pleased with the ending. A captivating and enjoyable story with interesting characters and well worth a read – but probably best in the right order after the other two. We awarded it an average of 7½

Co-ordinator, Gill Swanson 07975 920460

Play Reading

In November we read Mr Whatnot by Alan Ayckbourn. This proved to be a play written for actors who can move and mime rather than for mime artists. The main character, Mr Whatnot, is played, completely, in mime. This necessitated a great deal of narrative which had to be made by several people.

Mr Whatnot is a piano tuner who is summoned to the stately home of Lord and Lady Slingsby-Craddock. Subsequently he falls in love with their daughter Amanda. Having eloped with her he fails to save her from marrying her fiancé Cecil, but, he wins through in the end.

This was an amusing play with a few small parts and a great deal of reading by the rest of the Group.

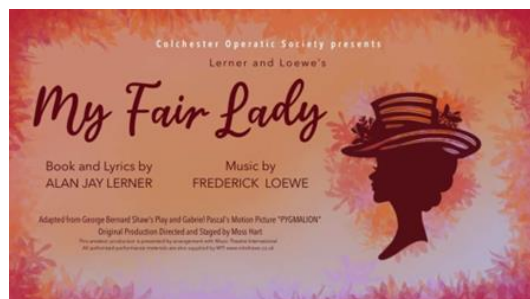
Co-ordinator, Anita Parkes 01621 857730

Local Theatres Group

My Fair Lady – Mercury Theatre, Colchester

Friday 26th January 2024 at 7.30 pm

Tickets: £26.50



Join the award winning Colchester Operatic Society as they tell the story of Eliza Doolittle, a young cockney flower seller, who meets Henry Higgins, a linguistics professor determined to transform her into his idea of a proper 'lady'. But who is really the pupil and who is the teacher? And what will become of Eliza if he succeeds...?

Adapted from George Bernard Shaw's play it is considered to be one of the greatest musicals ever written; a new production not to be missed.

Bank Transfer Payments:

Sort Code: 60-13-37

Account No: 49532057

Account: Blackwater U3A No 2

Quoting: Local Theatre (Fair)

Payment to be made by 7 December, please.

Swinging at the Cotton Club – Chelmsford Theatre

Friday 23rd February 2024 at 7.30 pm

Tickets: £24.00



Featuring The Lindy Hop Dance Company and The Harry Strutters Hot Rhythm Orchestra. Take a step back into 1920s and 1930s New York City and through the doors of Harlem's hottest nightclub, The Cotton Club. Swinging at The Cotton Club is the action-packed show celebrating the

music and dance of New York's most celebrated nightclub of the era.

In this show the exhilarating dance and music of the Cotton Club is recreated by the fabulous Lindy Hop Dance Company, alongside The Harry Strutters Hot Rhythm Orchestra, featuring American vocalist Marlene Hill and compere/vocalist Megs Etherington.

Bank Transfer Payments:

Sort Code: 60-13-37

Account No: 49532057

Account: Blackwater U3A No 2

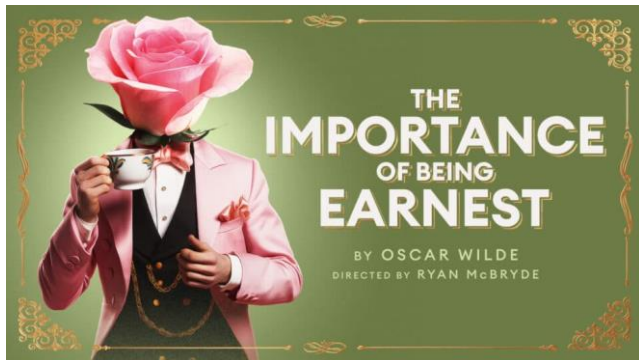
Quoting: Local Theatre (Cotton)

Payment to be made by 4 January 2024, please.

The Importance of Being Earnest – Mercury Theatre, Colchester

Friday 1st March 2024 at 7.30 pm

Tickets: £15.00



Jack Worthing is living a double life. To escape his dull country existence, he has invented a younger brother Ernest, whose scandalous behaviour requires Jack to travel to London regularly. With lush period design, this gold-standard comedy guarantees a Wilde night out! Once in the city, Jack

becomes Ernest, a playboy with a decadent reputation. He is head over heels in love with Gwendolyn Fairfax, the daughter of a formidable Lady Bracknell. When his best friend Algernon discovers that Jack has a secret identity and a beautiful niece called Cecily, he heads down to the country posing as the delinquent brother Ernest. Sparkling with razor sharp quips.

Bank Transfer Payments:

Sort Code: 60-13-37

Account No: 49532057

Account: Blackwater U3A No 2

Quoting: Local Theatre (Earnest)

Payment to be made by 4 January 2024, please.

Please note if you wish to have tickets these **MUST** be paid for at least 6 weeks before the event to ensure we can purchase.

Co-ordinator, Janet Watson 07952 925164

Local Theatre Group – Review of a previous production

What an evening we had at the Civic Theatre on Friday 20th October. As we left the bar with our drinks the sound of Phantom of the Opera rang out and hit our ears in the Foyer. Four gentlemen entertained us with their wonderful operatic voices with music ranging from 1930s Gershwin, to songs from most of the musical greats ever written, to the modern day finishing with 'Thank you for the music. It was a slick and well rehearsed stage performance which nearly brought the house down with rapturous applause. The Opera Boys were a humorous foursome who also delighted us with la Traviata and Sole Mio performed in immaculate classic style. They will be back next year hopefully.

Thank you, Janet for organising this entertainment.

Stephy Eraut

Places of Worship

Our first two visits in 2024 are chosen for being very local. We hope that we will be able to meet with many of you whatever the weather!

Friday 5th January: Geoff Pugh invites us to the Roman Catholic Church, Assumption of Our Lady, Victoria Road, Maldon, to hear the church's history - refreshments will be served - time to be confirmed.

Friday 2nd February: 1.30 pm at St Mary the Virgin, Church Street, Maldon. The history of St Mary's uncovered, and to hear how the charity 'Friends of the Friendless Churches' save our heritage – refreshments.

Friday 1st March: St Mary the Virgin, Church Street, Kelvedon, CO5 9AL and All Saints, The Street, Feering, CO5 9QJ - a full day with lunch.

For further details or register interest please email dawnmundy21@btinternet.com or phone co-ordinators,

Dawn Mundy 01621 854065 or Geoff Pugh 01621 843297

Meditation Group

Our last meeting for this year will be on Monday 11th December, and we will resume meetings on Monday 8th January 2024.

I would like to wish everyone in u3a a Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

Co-ordinator, Di Reddish 01621 810653

Canasta Group

There were 11 of us at the Canasta meeting in November. We all seem to be enjoying the challenges the game brings forth each time we meet. It would be nice if we could have a full complement of twelve players next time we meet on Thursday 18th January. Please note there will be no meeting in December.

I wish all members a Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

Co-ordinator, Stephy Eraut 01621 829758

Family History Group

Our November meeting was led by Roger Smith whose topic was 'Military Records'.

We looked at a U-tube presentation given by Will Butler who is the Head of Military Records at the National Archives. Researching your family history: Military sources - YouTube . This showed us examples of how to locate your Ancestors' records which are available for all the Services – Navy, Army, and Air Force. Roger showed us some records he has located for some of his family members.

It was agreed that we would not hold a meeting in December as it was too close to Christmas.

Geoff produced a printed list of 'Ideas for Meetings' with the object of producing a programme of topics for 2024. Some of the proposals are 'Trades & Professions', 'Huguenots', 'Writing up a Family History'.

January's meeting will be a working session where we will research a member's family history which will include some family history research abroad using Ancestry and other resources. Do come along if you plan to do your own family history, as this may provide you with a few helpful tips.

Co-ordinator, Geoff Pugh 01621 843297

Rummikub Group

There were ten of us so that was three groups, two of three and one of four members. Marg won in her group, Janet won in her group and I won in my group.

Marg was the winner of all the groups so well done; you have to use your brain which is good for you and take your time for the next move.

Co-ordinator, Patricia Harding 01621 843099

Art Group

Art group members decided to have a post-Christmas lunch to look forward to, so we will meet at the Queen Vic after the session on January 31st. But then one of the group suggested some mulled wine (non-alcoholic of course) on December 13th and it grew ... so we will have a small Christmas celebration to end our last meeting of the year.

These photos show work in progress as well as some of the charcoal drawings done earlier in the month. I apologise for the indifferent quality of the photos.



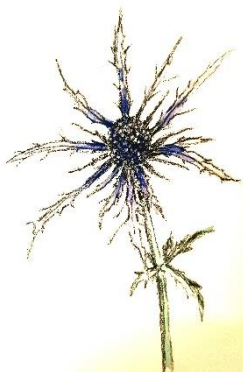
Anita Sandison



Mary Clark

Pauline Hinchcliffe

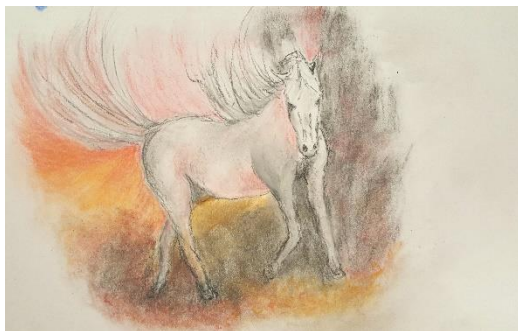




Val Wilson



Jenny Riley



Gill Newman



Graham King



Ann Hutchison

Group project for December - we will look at using reed pens and ink ... I will collect enough reeds but please bring a sharp knife.

Our final meeting for this year will be on December 13th and we will start again on January 17th 2024.

Co-ordinator, Anita Sandison 01621 741351

Garden Group

We were very lucky on Monday 23rd October to have fine weather for our visit to Marks Hall Arboretum where 12 of us met up despite various road closures. We were there to witness the glorious autumn tree colours. Unfortunately, we were a little premature. Autumn colours everywhere are very late this year.



Do any of you remember this time of year, about the time of Guy Fawkes night, when all the leaves had gone and it was cold enough to see your own breath in the cold night air as you waited for the bonfire to warm you up. Now roses, salvias, rudbeckia, fuchsia, dahlias and many others are still blooming in the walled garden at Marks Hall, as I expect they are in most of our own gardens.



A kind volunteer drove the buggy up there with 5 of our less able members on board. I must say I would have liked to have joined the party; they seemed to have had a hoot of a time and the volunteer driver

imparted plenty of local gossip about Marks Hall and its owners. There were some of what I would call sculpted areas of grass which were a little lost on me but overall the Arboretum is a delight to visit at any time of the year.



Our last meeting of the year was well attended; 16 people gathered at Woodham Walter Women's Club for a fun Quiz afternoon which I think was enjoyed by all. It was followed by the traditional teas, coffee and cake. Thanks to all who contributed goodies.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 19th February when we will be visiting Blunts Hall Witham CM8 1LX. It is a restored three acre Victorian courtyard garden, with a terrace leading down to lawns with a reinstated parterre.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy and healthy New Year to you all.
Thank you to all who have supported the group throughout this year.

Co-ordinator, Stephy Eraut 01621 829758

Tai Chi Group

The Tai Chi group recently gave Pat, our teacher, a surprise birthday present. We had a collection for Pat and celebrated the occasion with cake and drinks. Our group has 37 regular members now and we have gone back to the start of the set to re-learn the moves, so please if you feel like having a go you will be welcome. It is two hours of gentle exercise with a break midway for a drink and biscuit. All you need are a pair of sensible shoes and loose-fitting clothes.



Tai Chi meetings will end on the 11th December and restart on the 8th January. Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

Co-ordinator, Peter Harden 07754 536639
Deputy, Sue Thomson 01621 852751

Cribbage Group

A happy group of 13 had a fun afternoon playing crib and chatting with each other during a wet and miserable afternoon. The star of the afternoon was definitely Peter C who not only scored the highest points (18) but won 3 games....very well done Peter.

At our next meeting in December we will play until our refreshment break and then enjoy some Christmas nibbles provided by all of us to share.

I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. Best wishes to you all.

Co-ordinator, Terri Hardcastle 01621 929656

STEAM Group

For our November meeting, Dennis gave us a really interesting and thought-provoking talk on Genetic Engineering or Genetic Modification (GM) – how it's done, what are the potential benefits and what are the risks. Dennis explained that by extracting a minute particle of DNA and replacing it with a different particle it is possible to change the characteristics of a plant or animal. This is a highly complex process and, although banned in the UK, has been carried out successfully in the USA for over 30 years.

The benefits achieved so far are mainly to do with crop resistance to disease and insect damage but herbicide tolerance can also be achieved, making weed control easier.

The dangers are that pollen from the GM crop can get carried to adjacent fields causing GM weeds to grow which can be very difficult to control. In animals, GM has been used to increase meat and milk production but this process is quite controversial.

Recent STEAM meetings have been quite poorly attended, to the point where the subs collected barely cover the room hire cost, let alone the speaker fee. We have therefore decided to combine the STEAM and History groups, and in future the group will be known as 'History and Science'. The first meeting of this group will be at **2.00 pm on Tuesday 12th December** when John Walden will be speaking about the history of the Maya civilisation of Central America (see History report for more information).

Co-ordinators, Peter Holmes 01621 854108 and Dennis Eraut 01621 829758

London Theatre Group

We are going to see Les Miserables on 25th April 2024. I have been in contact with all those who signed up at the last monthly meeting and also contacts from my lists of previous London Theatre visits. At the moment I have one seat left to sell from the 50 I have reserved - and the ability to add 3 more, as the coach will take that many people. This is the most positive response I have had in all the six years that I have been arranging the trips

I am happy to hold a list of names of any members who might join us at the last minute if someone is not able to come and needs to sell on their ticket (this often happens). Please get in contact, if you would like to join us, on the number below,

Co-ordinator, Brenda Broom 01621 841520

History and Science Group

On a dark rainy day we had an excellent speaker to talk us through the history of the modern Fire Brigade. In 1966 Keith joined the fire brigade and then started many years training in the various aspects of not just fire fighting and rescue, but car, train, water and even cat rescue. His first slide showed us Victorian fire engine with 70ft ladders that had to be extracted from the fire engine and manually wheeled into place. A fireman was dressed in plastic over trousers which could melt. In 1976 the ladders were still in use.

A 4-year apprenticeship taught many skills including breathing apparatus, and climbing up to a 3 story building to rescue trapped people with just a hook over the top window sill. Keith then showed slides of the rescue of people in the Rowan Point disaster, bombed hotels during the IRA campaign and the Moorgate train crash in 1979 where 49 people died. Nowadays with health and safety considerations, a number of the old practices have been modified.

We have organised an extra meeting on Tuesday 12th December at 2.00 pm. Most people are fascinated by the Maya civilisation of Central America. We are very fortunate to get hold of a world expert Archaeologist / Anthropologist John Walden (yes, son of our Liz Walden). He is a Post Doctoral Scholar in the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University. He currently directs fieldwork at a Late Classic Maya Centre in the Belize River Valley. He will cover the history and development of the Maya from humble beginnings, as villages around 1,000 B.C. through the time of chiefdoms and the building of pyramids, to the collapse of the Maya around 1,000 A.D. This reconstruction of ancient life in the region is based on a number of archaeological approaches, from traditional survey and excavation through to cutting edge genetics.

This will probably be very popular so it will be first come first served if you have booked with me or signed up at the monthly meeting. The Linton Room will only take so many. Sign up sheet will be at the December monthly meeting or email me denniseraut@googlemail.com and I will put you on the list. I already have 17 names as a result of my email.

The January meeting will be on 9th at 2.00 pm and Dennis will be showing two History DVDs. 'Daily Life in the 13th century' - a time when life could be violent but the Parish was so important. It was a time of great building of our Parish churches. The second DVD is 'The disastrous reign of Henry III'. Henry and the Barons were still arguing post Magna Carta who should run the country and we have the early development of Parliament.

Co-ordinators, Geoff Pugh, Dennis Eraut, Peter Holmes

Members on Their Own (MOTO) Group

During November we went to the German Christmas Market at Meadow Croft Garden Centre, which was very busy and a lovely atmosphere. Also, some of us went to the Cromer Pier Christmas Show with Lodges Coaches. It was a wonderful show.



On 9th December we will enjoy a Bring and Share Christmas Afternoon Tea in the Jubilee Room, West Maldon Community Centre at 2.00 pm.

Wishing all our u3a friends a Happy Christmas and Good Health in the New Year. If you are interested in joining this group or finding out more about it, please contact the

Co-ordinator, Robyn Slade 01621 928536

Nature Walks



Ten of us, and one lovely dog, set off from Burnham-on-Crouch on a very sunny but cold morning taking the sea wall westwards. The bright sunshine made it difficult to see the birds but Brent Geese were there in number and a little egret (see photograph) was spotted on the inland water.

We skirted the marina and someone commented 'It's not as muddy as I expected'. Don't speak too soon I said, as the following half mile or so tested our boots and poles through plenty of mud and puddles. An advance party in Wellington boots checked the depth and forged the way through towards Creeksea before turning inland across field and track. We enjoyed welcome refreshment at the Parlour Café before

continuing around the vines and the goat enclosure and through scrubland to return to the marina and along the sea wall to the car park. Ten of us and one lovely dog made it back.

Future events:

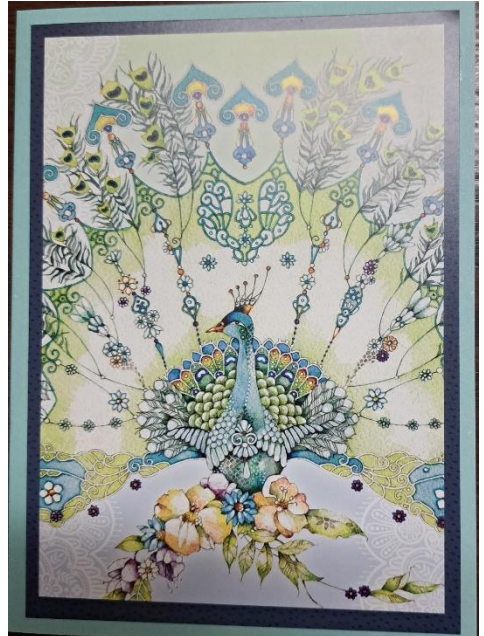
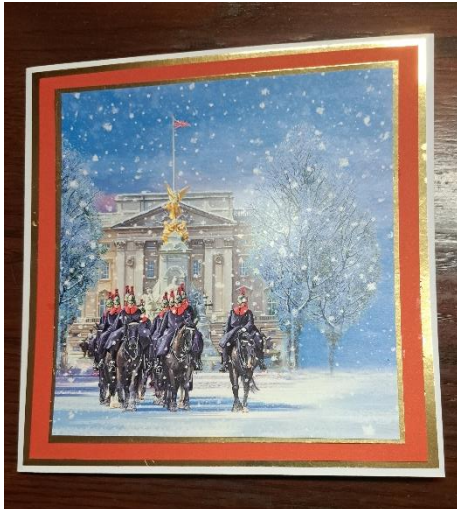
Friday 15th December 2023. Meet at 10.00 am outside the Museum entrance in Promenade Park. We will follow a tree trail around the park on well made paths and grassy verges.

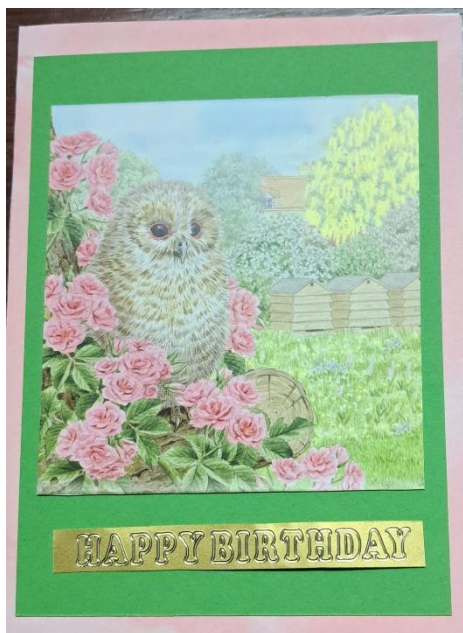
Friday 19th January 2024. Meet at 10.00 am at Daisy Meadow Car Park, Heybridge Basin, CM9 4RW. Please note that charges apply in the car park. If you need a lift, please let me know.

Co-ordinator, Gerry Davis 01621 843217

Cardmaking Group

The card makers have been much busier this month making both Birthday cards and Christmas Cards. This is despite the fact that we have had a couple of members with Covid and one on a three week cruise to celebrate her engagement.





It is hoped to have a Christmas Party in December.

Wishing all Members of the u3a a Very Happy Christmas and Health and Happiness for 2024.

With all good wishes,

Co-ordinator, Kathy Leggett 01621 852377

Local News

Maldon Society

An Extraordinary Meeting was held in November, when the appointments of David Smye as Chairman, Jean Smye as Secretary and Janet Watson, previously co-opted, was voted as a full member of the committee.

Unfortunately there will be no public meeting in January as the Swan Hotel will be closed for the first week of the month. On Thursday 1st February we will have a talk on Stow Maries Great Aerodrome, given by Roger Smith.

The meeting to be held in the Cygnet Room behind the Swan Hotel, High Street, Maldon. Doors open at 6.30 pm with the meeting starting at 7.00 pm. It is important that anyone who is interested in coming along pre-registers by emailing: maldonsociety@aol.com or rings Dorreen on 01621 853428.

Real Ale Group

Seven of us made it to this meeting, all on the bus to Witham, going to two pubs because of the food and beers on tap availability. First, we visited The Red Lion where we had a meal and 2 beers, Tribute and Doombar both of which we gave a score of 8. We then moved on to the White Hart for a few more halves of different ales !!



Unfortunately no one made any notes !!

Our next meeting is on Wednesday 13th December which is our Christmas meeting at my home.

Co-ordinator, Paul Allen 01621 856303

Speakers' Corner

December 6th

Christmas Celebration

2024

January 3rd

to be confirmed

February 7th

Our Street, Brian Carline

March 6th

The Titanic, Steve Lester

November's speaker, Tim Turner, entitled his talk 'From coffee houses to Clarice Cliff, Auctions over the past 300 years'. It was a really entertaining and interesting talk and several members spoke to me afterwards, saying how much they had enjoyed it. He spoke without slides or notes and ably answered questions from our membership.

Speaker Organiser, John Hayes 01621 843855

Scottish Country Dancing

The group has been meeting now for over a year in the pleasant surroundings of Langford village hall. We are a happy, vibrant, and informal group committed to learning Scottish dances in a friendly environment. We are always looking forward to welcoming new members and if you join us you will not be disappointed.

Our Scottish dancing is not too vigorous but helps to keep the body supple and the mind active whilst making new friends. Many members of the group offer lift share to Langford. Our last meeting for this year is on December 14th, but we will NOT be dancing on December 28th.



Our dates for the New Year are January 11th and 25th and February 8th and 22nd.

Please come and see what we do and if it appeals, join the group. For more information, please contact the

Co-ordinator, Diana Rogers 07860 162328 diana.rogers2@btinternet.com

Local U3A contacts (Our Cluster Group)

You will find details of the other members of our Cluster Group on their websites.

Maldon	http:// www.maldonu3a.co.uk/
Heybridge	https://u3asites.org.uk/heybridge
Limebrook	https://u3asites.org.uk/limebrook-maldon/home
Burnham on Crouch	https://boc-u3a.org.uk/
Dengie	https://u3asites.org.uk/dengie/home
Crouch Valley	https://u3asites.org.uk/crouch-valley/home
South Woodham Ferrers	https://swf-u3a.org/

And of course, a reminder of our own website:

Blackwater U3A <https://u3asites.org.uk/blackwater/home>

Rotas for Refreshments

DECEMBER	Flower Arranging and History
JANUARY	Cribbage and Rummikub
FEBRUARY	Wine Group 2 and MOTO

Doors will be open for helpers and co-ordinators setting up at 1.30 pm. Doors are open for other members at 2.00 pm. If you have insufficient members between your groups, please contact me in advance.

Welcome Team:

Jenny and her buddies will be on hand to welcome new members.

Set-up and Clear-up rota

DECEMBER	Scrabble and Table Tennis 2
JANUARY	Walkers and Tai Chi
FEBRUARY	Wine Group 1 and Reading

When setting up the hall please start with the row furthest away from the speaker, leaving sufficient gangways as normal. When clearing up, please do not put the chairs away until requested by a committee member.

Thank you all for your co-operation, *Janet Watson*

Committee Members 2023/4

Allen Griffiths	Chair	01621 732191
Ron Martin	Vice Chair and Database Manager	01621 856347
Chris Daines	Treasurer	07973 342283
Gill Swanson	Secretary	07975 920460
Esther Pugh	Committee Member	01621 843297
Sholto Morton	Minutes Secretary	01621 929238
Janet Watson	Groups Co-ordinator	07952 925164
Jenny O'Connor	Monthly Meeting Coordinator	07903 959450
Liz Walden	Website Manager	01621 852689
Sue Watson	Membership Secretary	01621 852941
Roger Wilson	Committee Member	01621 842455

Newsletter Production:

Editor	Frances Butcher	01621 853352
Publisher	Roger Wilson	01621 842455

Joint groups with Maldon U3A

Singing for Pleasure	Jacky Holmes	01621 854108
Tenpin Bowling	David Arnold	01621 853866

December and January Programme

As well as the schedule on the back of this booklet, please check the Events page on the Blackwater U3A website and the Newsletter items for the latest up to date information.

Co-ordinators

Interest Groups Co-ordinator	Janet Watson	07952 925164
Art	Anita Sandison	01621 741351
Art Appreciation	Dennis Eraut	01621 829758
Birding	Stephy Eraut	01621 829758
Canasta	Stephy Eraut	01621 829758
Card and Board Games	Sheila Rowsell	01621 740820
Card Makers	Kathy Leggett	01621 852377
Community Garden	Dorreen Linton	01621 853428
Cribbage	Terri Hardcastle	01621 929656
Family History	Geoff Pugh	01621 843297
Flower Arranging	Di Martin	01621 856347
Gardening	Stephy Eraut	01621 829758
Golf	John Rowsell	01621 740820
History and Science	Dennis Eraut	01621 829758
	Geoff Pugh	01621 843297
	Peter Holmes	01621 854108
Local Theatres	Janet Watson	07952 925164
London Theatres	Brenda Broom	01621 841520
Luncheon Club 3	Sid Sutton	07711 258802
Meditation	Di Reddish	01621 810653
Memories	John Mundy	01621 854065
MOTO	Robyn Slade	01621 928536
Nature Walks	Gerry Davis	01621 843217
Petanque	John Mundy	01621 854065
Places of Worship	Dawn Mundy	01621 854065
Play Reading	Anita Parkes	01621 857730
Reading	Gill Swanson	07975 920460
Real Ale Group	Paul Allen	01621 856303
Rummikub Group	Pat Harding	01621 843099
Scottish Dancing	Diana Rogers	01621 853841
Scrabble	Sylvia Harden	07840 369496
Shakespeare	Dennis Eraut	01621 829758
Short Walks	Di Martin	01621 856347
	Robyn Slade	01621 928536
Social Group	vacant	
Table Tennis 1	Peter Harden	07754 536639
	Jack Veash	07388 420968
Table Tennis 2	Kath Little	07762 312838
Tai Chi	Peter Harden	07754 536639
Walkers	John Mayes	01245 222530
Wine Group 1	Frances Butcher	01621 853352
Wine Group 2	Paul Allen	01621 856303

December 2023 Programme

RED INDICATES A MORNING MEETING

BLUE INDICATES AN AFTERNOON MEETING

BLACK INDICATES UNSPECIFIED TIMING

Monday	Tuesday	Wed'day	Thursday	Friday	Sat	Sun
				1 Birding	2 MOTO	3
4 Table Tennis 1 Tai Chi	5 Card Makers Petanque Card and Board Games	6 Monthly Meeting	7 Table Tennis 2 Card makers	8 Golf Singing Shakespeare Wine Group 1	9 MOTO	10
11 Table Tennis 1 Meditation Tai Chi	12 Card Makers Petanque History and Science	13 Art Real Ale Cribbage	14 Play Reading Scottish Dance Table Tennis 2 Card Makers Reading	15 Nature Walk	16	17
18 Table Tennis 1	19 Card Makers Petanque Scrabble	20	21 Rummikub Table Tennis 2 Card Makers	22 Golf Singing	23	24
25 Christmas Day	26 Boxing Day	27	28	29	30	31

January 2024 Programme

RED INDICATES A MORNING MEETING

BLUE INDICATES AN AFTERNOON MEETING

BLACK INDICATES UNSPECIFIED TIMING

Monday	Tuesday	Wed'day	Thursday	Friday	Sat	Sun
1 Bank Holiday	2 Petanque Card and Board Games	3 Monthly Meeting	4 Table Tennis 2 Card Makers	5 Places of Worship	6 MOTO	7
8 Table Tennis 1 Meditation Tai Chi	9 Card Makers History and Science Petanque	10 Cribbage	11 Play Reading Table Tennis 2 Card makers Reading	12 Golf Singing Shakespeare	13 MOTO	14
15 Table Tennis 1 Short Walks Tai Chi	16 Card Makers Petanque Scrabble	17 Art Family History	18 Rummikub Table Tennis 2 Card Makers Canasta	19 Nature Walk	20	21
22 Table Tennis 1 Meditation Tai Chi	23 Card Makers Flower Arranging Petanque Art Appreciat	24 Art Real Ale	25 Walkers Table Tennis 2 Card Makers	26 Golf Singing Shakespeare Local Theatre Newsletter Deadline	27	28
29 Table Tennis 1 Tai Chi	30 Card Makers Petanque	31 Art				