

u3a
learn, laugh, live

Crouch Valley

Quarterly Newsletter

Second edition



Watercolour painting - Gardening group - Art appreciation

Chairman

Ian Robinson

Vice Chairman

David Shea

Secretary

Ray Burns

Treasurer

Don Wragg

Membership Secretary

Colin Pegrum

Group Co-ordinator

John Gable

Web Master

Don Wragg

Programme secretary

Lynda Burns

Welfare Officer

Lynda Burns

Editor

Roger Restell

June Saunders – Strollers

June Saunders – Table Tennis

Lesley Dearing – Walkers

Pat Offord – Weekenders

Ray Burns – Going Out Group

Richard Bradshaw – Computer Help Group

Sue Jacobs – Gardening

Sue Jacobs – Wine Group 2

Andy Hull – Wine Group 1

Don Wragg – Maldon & Dist cluster group

Ray Burns – Cricket lovers

Astrid Reeves – Book Group

Brenda Neale – Knit & Natter

Carol Laker – Water Colour Painting

Colin Martin – Family History,

John Acklaw – Art Appreciation

John Gable – Bird Watching

Joyce Sach – Ten Pin Bowling

Julie Ferris – Games

Linda Thomas – Play reading

Ray Burns – Jazz appreciation

Welcome to the Second edition of the on line Crouch Valley U3A quarterly news letter

The aim is to keep members up to date visually with what is going on in the various groups and as you will see group leaders have been keen to get involved.

If you have anything you wish to contribute in future issues please send it to me and I will see if it can be fitted in and if you wish to send in comments regarding the news letter please feel free.

Roger Restell

Editor

Chairmans's report – 2023 AGM

This will be my last Chairman's report as I will be standing down after four years and handing over to Ian Robinson. We are swapping positions and I will be taking over as secretary.

Our u3a has recovered well from the lockdown and the membership numbers have increased which is heartening and the numbers attending the monthly meetings have slowly recovered to pre Covid levels. Lynda has worked hard to book a variety of interesting speakers despite the fact that we no longer have access to the Essex Association speaker listing after the demise of that organisation. She would welcome suggestions of speakers who have interesting stories to tell with the remit that they have to be within our budget. There is a proposal to revive the Essex network but it's not yet clear which format this will take.

The lifeblood of our organisation are the interest groups. John Gable has taken over from Eileen Wendleken as the Groups Coordinator and has been in contact with the group leaders to offer support where necessary so that they can maintain their good work providing interest and entertainment for the members, and also the offer support to those who may wish to set up new interest groups.

We have welcomed three new members on to the committee in the last few months and it's good to get new blood and new ideas as most of the committee have been serving for years. It will become increasingly important that members are willing to come forward to join the committee and to take on some of the tasks of running our u3a because if not there will be no u3a to run.

Finally I would like to thank those of my fellow committee members who have supported me and made my job as Chairman very easy and even enjoyable, also all the members who help out at the meetings and events, those who make and serve the teas and cakes, the Meeters and Greeters, the Mentors, those who help to put out the chairs and help to put them away at the end of our meetings. To all the group leaders and those who work to make Crouch Valley u3a an interesting and enjoyable place to be. Thank you.

Ray Burns, Chairman (soon to be Secretary).

Walking group

Emerging from gloomy winter hibernation and looking forward to spring? It's time to think about getting out for a breath of fresh air, walking in our great outdoors. If you are feeling lethargic or simply a little glum, help us plan a walk and then go out and do it. Whether it is a short amble or a longer walk, you will feel much better for it. No pill, tonic or similar contrived pick-me-up

can beat a nice walk to improve your wellbeing.

Your walking group needs you!

Numbers for our walking group have diminished gradually over the past few years (pandemic lockdown excluded) to the point that we have found it difficult to keep to our full programme of up to 18 walks each year. We now have 9 monthly walking dates planned for the last Wednesday of each month from March to November 2023.

Being a hybrid between strollers and ramblers, our group members take turns to select and lead a walk of their choice. We

include many local countryside routes that have been favourites from the past, for those who can manage 4/5 miles. In addition, we still have shorter walks for those who prefer an easier pace on more even terrain. Each morning walk varies from 2–5 miles approx., with a refreshment stop at the end in a nearby café or pub. We usually meet at SWF Village Hall car park at 10.00 for car sharing.

See the table below for a sample of different places that we have visit.

Venue	Miles
Hyde Hall	2
Wickford Memorial Park	2
Southend Pier/Prom	2.5/3
Little Burstead	3
SWF Circular	3
Admirals Park & Central Park Chelmsford	3
Benfleet Downs	3.5
Highlands House Estate	3.5
Canvey Island	3.5
Cherry Orchard Park, Rochford	4
Creeksea/Burnham	4
Heybridge Basin/Maldon	4
Belfairs Wood, Daws Heath	5
East Mersea	5
Various London walks e.g.- Bermondsey Riverside, Fleet Street, City Coffee Houses, Tower Hill, St James & Mayfair, Spitalfields	1.5 hrs

You can join the group at any time providing you are able to take a turn at leading a walk at some point during the year. If you need a buddy to reekie a possible future walk, we can arrange it.

Lesley Dearing - Walking Group contact

WATERCOLOUR PAINTING



Some pictures
painted by the
group

We meet on the second Monday of the month,
with eight in the group, always room for more!

We have different things to paint each month,
from landscapes, Christmas cards to giraffes. A
lot of talking gets done as well , but sometimes
we are so busy concentrating that there is
silence.

Still no success with finding a tutor!



A clip from the facebook page

‘Cambridge in the Good Old Days’

Yesterday after shopping in our local supermarket, I was in the queue at the Check Out, and heard when the young cashier suggested to the much older lady that she should bring her own grocery bags, because plastic bags are not good for the environment.

The woman apologised to the young girl & then sighed, "We didn't have this 'green thing' back in my earlier days."

The young clerk responded, "That's our problem today. You folk didn't do enough to save our environment for future generations."

The older lady said "Ahh yes you're right -- our generation didn't have the "green thing" in its day." She sighed then continued:

Back then, we returned milk bottles, lemonade bottles & beer bottles to the shops. The shops then sent them back to the plant to be washed, sterilized & refilled, so those same bottles were used over & over, thus REALLY were recycled. But we didn't have the "green thing" back in our day.

Grocery stores put our groceries into brown paper bags that we reused for numerous things. Most memorable was the use of brown paper bags as book covers for our school books. This was to ensure that public property (the books provided for our use by the school) were not defaced by our scribbles. Then we were able to personalise our books on their brown paper bag/covers. But, too bad we didn't do the "green thing" back then. I remember how we walked up stairs because we didn't have an escalator in every store or office building; walked to the grocery store & didn't climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time we had to go 200 yards. . . . But she was right. We didn't have the "green thing" in our day.

Back then we washed the baby's nappies because we didn't have the throw away kind. We dried clothes on a line, not in an energy-gobbling machine burning up 220 volts. Wind & solar power really did dry our clothes back in our days. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing. . . . But that young lady is right; we didn't have the "green thing" back in our day.

Back then we had one radio, in the house -- not a TV in every room. And if anyone did own a TV, it had a small screen the size of a handkerchief (remember them?), not a screen the size of a football pitch. When cooking we blended & stirred by hand coz we didn't have electric machines to do everything for us. When we packaged a fragile item to send by post, we used layers of old newspapers to cushion it, not Styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap. Back then, we didn't fire up an engine and burn gasoline just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by working so we didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity. . . . But she's right; we didn't have the "green thing" back then.

We drank from a tap or fountain when we were thirsty instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time we had a drink of water. We refilled writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, & we replaced the razor blade in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull. But we didn't have the "green thing" back then. Back then, people took the bus & kids rode bikes to school or walked instead of turning their mothers into a 24-hour taxi service in the family's expensive car or van, which cost what a whole house did before the "green thing"..

Oh and we had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And we didn't need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 23,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest leisure park.

. . . . But it so sad this current generation laments how wasteful we old folks were just because we didn't have the "green thing" back then? . . . I think you should forward this on to another selfish old person who needs a lesson in conservation from some smart ass young person. . . .

We don't like being old in the first place, so it doesn't take much to piss us off... Especially from a tattooed, multiple pierced smart ass who can't make change without the cash register telling them how much.

GARDENING GROUP

Nothing much happens in the garden group over the winter months, but we kick off each year with a trip out to see the snowdrops. This year we visited Dragons, an NGS garden in Boyton Cross, just the other side of Chelmsford



This is followed in March by a visit to Warley Place to see their wonderful display of daffodils, followed by a pub lunch. For those who have never been there it is well worth a visit, with lovely walks through the woods.

In April we always have tea and cake in one of our gardens to firm up plans for the rest of the year. It's also a good opportunity to swap plants as it's when we're all starting to divide our stock or get rid of plants we no longer need. Members come up with loads of suggestions for visits, so after a very relaxing afternoon chatting we can look forward to a good programme of visits for the months ahead.

We shall then be visiting the famous tulips at Ulting Wick at the end of April - we are so lucky to have this award winning garden so close to us and I go every year and never cease to be amazed at the number of tulips in the garden.

Outings beyond April will be on the website, once they have been agreed.

We are a large group, but always happy to welcome new members, so if you are interested then drop me an email and I will add you to the mailing list.

Sue Jacobs

Bunty172@btinternet.com

Wine Group #2 meets monthly at the homes of our members.

Whoever is hosting chooses the theme, sometimes serious, sometimes silly, but always a very lively evening. We decided to embrace Halloween this autumn, though some of our members didn't think far enough ahead and wore masks which interfered with their ability to drink! Needless to say, I didn't make that mistake.

Most months, the wines are based on the grape, country or continent and we usually taste eight wines each time. Sometimes there is a quiz and always some raucous guessing as to what the wine is! In the summer months we meet in gardens if the weather is dry (taking along layers and blankets to stop from freezing), but from October to April we meet indoors. This means our group is kept small to enable all members to be able to host during the year and provide everyone with a seat.



Following last year's successful event, this April we are again holding a wine tasting at Bar Vino with Wine Appreciation#1. We shall taste 10 wines, with the help of a Sommelier explaining about each wine in detail and it will make a nice change to attend a more formal evening.

Although Wine Group #2 is full at the moment, if anyone is interested in joining I'm happy to run a waiting list, and if enough people wish to join I am happy to help Wine Group #3 to come to life.

Sue Jacobs

Bunty172@btinternet.com

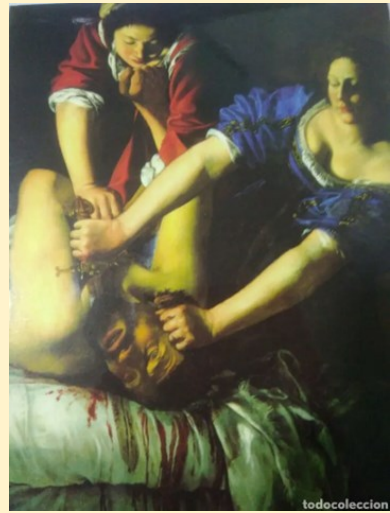
THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW TO LEARN

Before starting the Art Appreciation Group the only great painters in history I could name were male. I had never studied art and, like many, knew only the names of painters like Micheal Angelo, John Constable and Picasso. Working with members of the Group has opened my eyes to significant female painters in the history of art many of whom are not give the prominence they deserve.

Artemisia Gentileschi is one. She was a 17th century Italian artist who can be said to be an early feminist. She suffered injustice when she was raped as a young woman and the power of her

**painting of Judith beheading
Holoferens might be a clue to
the effect of this on her.**

*Judith Beheading Holofernes:
Artemisia Gentileschi*



Angelica Kaufmann was another female artist who overcame society's restrictive attitude to women and became one of the most successful artists of late 18th century. She was the first woman to be admitted to the Royal Society of Arts. It was nearly a century and a half before another was admitted.

Self Portrait: Angelica Kaufmann

That was Dame Laura Knight who was admitted as a full member in 1936. It not until 1965 that she became the first woman to have a retrospective exhibition at the RSA.



The Night Balloon: Laura Knight

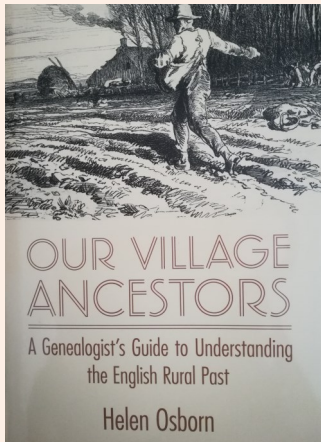
For me, meetings of the Art Appreciation Group offers all the benefits the the U3A offers to us Oldies. There's the social benefit of meeting others regularly and getting to know them over a cup of tea or coffee and a shortbread; even mince pies and cheesecake on occasion. The exercise of climbing the stairs to the Village Hall Games Room might also count as a monthly benefit to someone of my sedentary habits. But perhaps most beneficial is the opportunity to exercise the brain and find out that learning new things is not the monopoly of the young. We meet from 10 a.m every second Thursday of the month.

John Acklaw



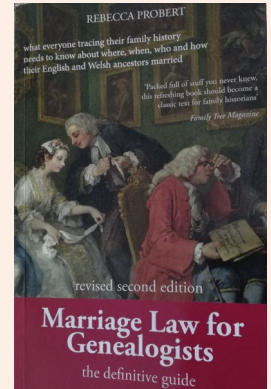
THE FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

Last year with the Covid epidemic largely behind us, we were about to resume our monthly meetings with an average attendance of seventeen.



We started off by looking at civil registration and the 1921 census which had just been released to the general public. We then decided to do a study of the recently published book 'Our Village Ancestors' by the genealogist Helen Osborn, which we covered in six monthly meetings. This book suggested the many resources that will help us with our own research, as well as learning about the laws and restrictions our ancestors lived under.

The Group also made a study of a smaller book 'Marriage Law for Genealogists' by Rebecca Probert. This helped us understand what the marriage law was at any given time through the centuries. We learnt that a couple jumping over a broomstick did not lead to a valid marriage!



In October Jan Talikowski gave an interesting presentation of part of her family history. We were able to note what resources Jan used. The final meeting in November was a medley of episodes involving several of our members. This included photos memories of being close to our late Queen.

We meet on the 4th Thursday day of the month in the upstairs back room of the Village Hall at 10 am until 12. We are at all different levels in our knowledge of Family History with every one willing to share what they know and very welcoming to new members.

Colin Martin, contact for the Group.

Crouch Valley U3A Interest Groups

As you know, Crouch Valley u3a has 18 Interest Groups.

Sounds a lot, but some u3a's have 50 plus Groups and there are currently some 167 interest groups nationally.

We are always looking for volunteers to start up new groups, so do you have an interest or passion which you would like to share with others? It's informative and fun. No restrictions on the subject (within reason!), which can be from Astronomy to Zoology.

Please contact John Gable, our Groups Co-ordinator, if you would like to form a new group. There is an extremely informative Group Leaders guide on the u3a web-site to get you started.

Ken Walker, Committee member

Bird watching group

You might be surprised to see a picture of a Royal Navy frigate in a Birdwatching article but that is the beauty of being out and about birdwatching and stumbling across something unexpected.

I believe it was in 2014 and the Group had gone to the RSPB Reserve at Rainham Marshes. This is a premier reserve and is sighted right next to the River Thames.

This particular day we had completed our birdwatching tour of the Reserve and as is usual we settled down in the café area for lunch (as a group we are good at this). The cafe is situated on the upper floor of building complex and has a superb panoramic view over the reserve.

Our group finished lunch and were preparing to leave when we were advised by the staff that a Royal Navy frigate would be passing on the high tide in a short while. As far as I can remember it was a Type 23 Frigate and possibly was HMS Westminster. It had been on an official trip to London and had moored for several days in the Pool of London next to HMS Belfast.

Several of us decided to stay and watch it go by.

I think there were about 5 or 6 of us and we assembled on the river bank, which is outside the reserve (between the river and the fence of the reserve).

It was a very hot sunny day and of course we had a variety of equipment - binoculars, telescope,

Rucksacks etc. and I am sure there was at least one umbrella up as a sun shade.

It was not too long before looking down the river the dramatic sight of the warship came into view.



As it got nearer we suddenly realised that just in front of the ship was a small boat with two people in it. We had no idea what this was but obviously we had binoculars up and tried to ascertain what was going on. Suddenly the boat speeded up and came rushing towards us and then eventually turned away at the last minute.

We gradually realised that the two figures were dressed in dark military wet suits and were definitely something to do with the ship.

I later found out that, as the river is relatively narrow, there is a real terrorist threat to the warship from the banks of the river. This small boat was a lookout (probably manned by SBS troops) and was travelling a little ahead of the warship. If you think of our little group on the bank behind umbrellas and looking through binoculars, with other equipment around us, we must have from a distance looked rather suspicious. Fortunately they decided we were no threat and carried on their way down the river.

Who would have thought that a birdwatching might get you arrested for terrorism.

Our Group are still carrying on with our monthly visits to reserves, usually on the third Wednesday of the month. These visits usually last for the morning and is followed, if possible by lunch.

If any newcomers would like to join our group do not hesitate to contact me direct or through the Group Contact page on the web site.

Group Leader : John Gable

TEN PIN BOWLING GROUP



This is some of the group that go to Ten Pin Bowling, we go twice a month the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, it's proved so popular that I have had to stop people joining us, as I have 28 people coming and Maddison Heights are getting very strict with the time now we are only allowed two hours and of course we have a cup of tea half way through the morning and I'm only allowed 4 lanes so most week we only just manage to finish in time so what I suggested if anyone wants to start a new bowling group it's so easy to do, I can always help if need be, it's great fun and a bit of exercise.



If you need to contact me my details are on the U 3 A website.

Joyce Sach