

**u3a**  
learn, laugh, live

# Crouch Valley

Quarterly Newsletter



**VIEWS OF THE RIVER CROUCH**

*( pictures by Don Wragg )*

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**Sue Jacobs** – [Wine Group 2](#)

**Andy Hull** – [Wine Group 1](#)

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**Carol Laker** – [Water Colour Painting](#)

**Colin Martin** – [Family History,](#)

**John Acklaw** – [Art Appreciation](#)

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**Joyce Sach** – [Ten Pin Bowling](#)

**Julie Ferris** – [Games](#)

Welcome to the first 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 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.

You will see that the news letter is sent out blind copy this is to safeguard your email address book from being copied.

We also aim to print a few copies for members who don't have access to the internet although I am told these are small in numbers.

I hope you like the new format so please enjoy.

Roger Restell

Editor

# FAMILY HISTORY

At the very first meeting of the newly formed Crouch Valley U3A, we were encouraged by our first Chairman John Reeves to sign up for groups we might like to attend. I put my name down for Family History. The next step was for someone to volunteer to be Contact. As the group would not get off the ground without a contact, I put my head above the parapet and took on the job.

The reason for me to see a Family History group up and running was stemmed from when my sister first got interested in family history in 1995 and discovered, in the village she had moved to 10 years earlier, contained in the Churchyard the grave and legible headstone of our 4x Great Grandparents, gradually I started to become attracted this absorbing hobby.

So when our family history group started I did have some knowledge and was able to chair the meetings we started having in member's homes. The 1911 census had been released to the public and this



seemed to accelerate growth of interest generally. Computers were becoming the norm for most researchers and our group visited our local library to make use of the subscription web sites. *(Photo Library)*

We also went further afield, with visits to the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford and to the 'Who Do You Think You Are' shows at Olympia. We have also enjoyed many Christmas time meals together as a group. *(Photo meal)*

Family History has become a very popular activity in recent years, due to vast amounts of data becoming available through the internet. DNA testing is another avenue for researches to find contacts. I had researched all the data on the family of my maternal Great Grandfather, but my family had no idea what they looked like, until a DNA contact sent me an image of a Victorian portrait photograph of this Great Grandfather and his family, that is hanging on her mother's wall, and that is the excitement of family history. *(Photo family)*

With increased membership we started running two groups, this quickly evolved into a combined meeting at the Village Hall and that is where we meet at present. So it is not surprising that most U3As in the country, including the Crouch Valley, have a Family History group.

The group keep in email contact during the pandemic and we started back with our normal monthly meeting at the start of this year. I will report on those meetings in a future newsletter. Why not join us!

Colin Martin.





## *A Remarkable Coincidence by Colin Martin.*

Golden Wedding anniversaries are not unusual and there are many members of our U3A have either had them or they are on the horizon. They are worth celebrating as you will only ever get one chance. On 17<sup>th</sup> October 1970 three weddings took place in the south of Essex, and there were perhaps many more. That is not remarkable. What is remarkable is that 50 years later it was established that three of the spouses of these three couples are members of the Crouch Valley U3A Family History Group. Colin Martin briefly met Joan after they had joined the Europa Club based at the Seven Kings Hotel. At the next event to Epping Country Club on Valentine's Day 1969 they danced the night away and started to go out together. They got engaged on Valentine's Day 1970 and married at the Langton Hall in Hornchurch on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1970.

Alan Suttle met Joan at school and have known each other for more than 60 years. One of their first dates was at a school dance after which they were both called to the heads office and reprimanded for inappropriate dancing together. They did part for a short while but fortunately got back together again and once Alan fully qualified as an electrical engineer with a secure job, they were married at North Avenue Congregational Church, Chelmsford on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1970. Alan says he cannot really remember much about the day but knows it was the best thing he ever did.

Janet met Terry Campen at a party where her friend's brother did some match-making and several years later they were married on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1970 at Southend Register Office, neither being religious. The honeymoon was a week in Tenerife, but after hours at Gatwick and getting on then off the plane the flight was cancelled and all the passengers bussed to Brighton for a night at the Metropole Hotel (Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton were also staying there but not seen!).

Colin & Jan have known for a time that they shared the same wedding date, but when it was revealed that Alan & Joan also got married on the 17<sup>th</sup> and all celebrated (as best they could under reduced covid restrictions) their Golden Wedding Anniversary, it became a Remarkable Coincidence.

## **Crouch Valley U3A Interest Groups**

### **Did you know that Crouch Valley U3A has 17 Interest Groups?**

Sounds a lot, but some U3A's have 50 plus Groups and there are currently 167 interest groups within the various U3A's. Not a lot of people know that!

We are always looking for volunteers to start up new groups, so do you have an interest which you would like to share with others? Don't be shy, it's informative and fun. No restrictions on the subject (within reason!), which can be from Astronomy to Zoology. Without Group Leaders, there would be no U3A's.

Here are just some ideas:

**Metal detecting Quizzes Petanque Archaeology Astronomy Bridge British History**

**Films Cryptic Crosswords French Geology Military History Singing Philosophy**

**Science Shakespeare Opera Golf Zoology**

Please see Eileen Wendelken, our Groups Co-ordinator, if I have inspired you to set up a new Group. There is an extremely informative Group Leaders guide on the U3A web-site to get you started.

Good Luck!

**Ken Walker**, Committee member

# Bird Watching & Wildlife Group

As many of you will know our U3A started when there were so many people on the waiting list to join the South Woodham Ferrers U3A that it was decided it was possible to start a separate U3A group and so Crouch Valley came into being.

Kath and I joined just after this and I think it was in 2012 that a young man (Colin Martin) stood up at a general meeting at Champions Manor and enquired as to whether there was anyone interested in forming a birdwatching group. We subsequently had a meeting and the Group was formed. We agreed that our main aim was to enjoy each other's company and the natural environment and to help each other recognize various species of birds, wild flowers, butterflies etc. and definitely not try to become 'Twitchers'.

I became Group Leader last year, after Colin decided to take a back seat within the group. I am pleased to see he has continued to come whenever he can and it is with much thanks and pleasure that I look back upon many monthly visits to places that I would never have thought to go.

I recently challenged our Group to recall where we have been and I think it must be their age because they were useless. We have actually been to 25 different places over the years as follows:-



## Essex Wildlife Trust

Abberton Reservoir, Abbots Hall Farm, Blue House Farm, Chafford Gorges, Chigborough

As far as actual birdwatching is concerned I believe we have all become better as time has gone on but it is most annoying when even though you get a reasonable view of a bird you still cannot identify it. I have always thought they should be made to display little labels with their names on.

I have drawn up a short list of some of the more exotic birds we have seen on our visits over the years :- Osprey Spoonbill, Smew, Goosander, Red Kite, Marsh Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Red necked Phalarope, Cuckoo, Kingfisher, Nightingale, Black Tern, Snow Bunting, Stork and Bittern.

We are still carrying on with our monthly visits to reserves, usually on the third Wednesday in the month. The visits usually last for the morning and are followed by lunch.

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

### Other Wildlife Trust etc.

Lackford Lakes – Suffolk, Fishers Green-Lea Valley, Cements Green Creek-SWF, Cudmore Grove-Mersea Island, Souhend sea-front and pier, Coal House Fort, Heybridge Basin and Bradwell.

John Gable

### Essex Wildlife Trust

Abberton Reservoir, Abbots Hall Farm, Blue House Farm, Chafford Gorges, Chigborough

Lakes, Fingringhoe Wick, Hanningfield Reservoir, Ingrebourne Nature, Roman River,

Thameside Nature, Tollesbury Wick and Two tree Island.

## A Treasurers Lot

Following Covid and the end of restrictions and getting back to normality my role of Treasurer has changed with more on-line banking for income and expenditure.

Notwithstanding we still have a lot of cash to bank after our monthly meetings and with closure of the South Woodham Branch some time ago It is a monthly trip to Maldon.

Our u3a as with all others in the country is a registered charity and we have to submit our accounts to the Charity Commission on an annual basis.

I know some of you may know or may not know we are not allowed to directly raise monies and donate to another charity. This is in accordance with the National u3a constitution. We do however have agreed to support 4 charities from monies from our tea and cakes at our monthly meeting.

The 4 organisations we will support are;

**Dementia Adventure - Helen Rollason Cancer Charity - Lupus - Blossom Suite at Broomfield Hospital**

Each of the above will receive an equal amount from the years tea monies.

*Don Wragg*



## REVENGE AND THE ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Would you want this painting on your wall? Art Appreciation is more than deciding what we do and don't like. More important questions include: "What is it about? Who painted it? What is their story and how did their life influence what they painted?"

This gruesome scene was painted in 1612 by the female Italian artist, Artemisia Gentileschi. It depicts the biblical story of Judith slaying Holofernes, an enemy of the Israelites. Other artists have painted the scene but perhaps not with the same brutality as Artemisia. Why?

Artemisia was living in a man's world. She had been raped at the age of 18 by a friend of her fathers and was tortured in the trial of her rapist to test the reliability of her testimony. She was tortured as an innocent female victim while her male abuser went free. This fact alone is sufficient to understand that a painting like this is not just an illustration of a biblical story. It is about revenge with Artemisia herself wielding the sword. It

shows two strong determined women holding down Holofernes and asks a question that was revolutionary at the time, and is still relevant today: "What if women got together? Could we fight back against a world ruled by men?"

So the Art Appreciation Group does more than look at nice pictures. We are learning to look at paintings with an eye to their meaning as well as to their detail. No expertise or special knowledge of Fine Art is required to enjoy the process at our monthly meetings.

John Acklaw



# Walkers

Of course, you probably know that any physical activity, including walking, is a boon to your overall health. But walking in particular comes with a host of benefits:

- increased cardiovascular and pulmonary (heart and lung) fitness
- reduced risk of heart disease and stroke
- improved management of conditions such as hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol, joint and muscular pain or stiffness, and diabetes
- stronger bones and improved balance
- increased muscle strength and reduced body fat.

protection of the joints — especially the knees and hips, which are most susceptible to

osteoarthritis — by lubricating them and strengthening the muscles that support them.

boosts immune function. Walking can help protect you during cold and flu season. and if you do fall ill, it is likely to be for a shorter duration, and symptoms can be milder.



Our walking group is a hybrid between strollers and ramblers. We have many local countryside routes that we now revisit. We usually go out for a morning walk and these can vary from 3–5 miles approx., usually ending with a stop for refreshments at lunchtime in a nearby café or pub. We usually meet at SWF Village Hall car park at 10.00 for car sharing. Throughout the year, we go out walking on the last Wednesday of each month,

except December. Plus, for Spring, Summer & Autumn, we try to fit in an additional walk on Mondays earlier in the month.

Each year we always try to include a London walk with our regular official London City guide. This takes us out from home all day, allowing for a comfortable morning ride into town by train so that we can meet our guide after lunch for the afternoon walk.

So, if you feel like stretching your legs to discover the Essex countryside, come along and join us for a walk

Lesley Dearing - Group Contact

CV U3A Walkers at Hylands House Estate

## Wine Appreciation Group #2

Wine Group #2 meets monthly at the homes of our members. Whoever is hosting chooses the theme, sometimes serious, sometimes silly - June was unusual shaped bottles and we have also had unusual labels! Mostly, it's 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 tend to meet in gardens (taking along layers to stop from freezing), but from October to April we meet indoors, so our group is kept small to enable all members to be able to host during the year and provide everyone with a seat.

In April we had a joint wine tasting at Bar Vino in the town. They put on a marvellous evening, supplying tasty platters of food to go with the eight wines we tasted. There was a sommelier there to explain about each of the wines, which was very helpful. It was great fun and I'm sure it's something that will be repeated in the future.

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 can even help Wine Group #3 to come to life.

**Sue Jacobs**    [bunty172@btinternet.com](mailto:bunty172@btinternet.com)



## Gardening Group

After a lull and inactivity over the winter months, the Gardening Group made their first visit in February to see the snowdrops at Dragons, a beautiful garden just the other side of Chelmsford. We have visited Dragons before as it is a garden that is fabulous whatever time of year one goes. It was so nice to go out together again.

We then held our first real meeting in April in my garden, and were very very lucky with the weather as it was a warm sunny day. The April meeting is always hosted by one of the members and is used as a plant swap - it's the time of year we are all dividing plants or getting rid of those we don't want. As we sit around chatting, drinking coffee and eating cake, we also use the opportunity to plan out what we are going to be doing over the coming months. Following the April meeting we now have an interesting mix of places to visit across the coming months.

The first of these was in June, when eight of us visited Marks Hall near Coggeshall for a walk around the estate, followed by a picnic. The walk took us longer than expected so the picnic was very welcome as we were all ready for something to eat and drink, especially as it was such a lovely hot day.

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

**Sue Jacobs**    [bunty172@btinternet.com](mailto:bunty172@btinternet.com)

