



Crouch Valley U3A Chairman's Report

Welcome to our winter 2015 newsletter.

This has been an active year in our U3A. There have been a couple of changes in our committee; Ken Walker has taken over the Secretary's job from Jennifer Haste. Jennifer did a terrific job as our Secretary and she deserves all the thanks from our members and Bob LeBeau has taken on the role of Groups coordinator and is doing a really good job of it as well. We really do need more input from the members as a number of positions on the committee will have to be replaced in time and my own role as Chairman will have to be replaced in 2016 and our U3A cannot run without a committee so please think carefully about it and be prepared to say yes if you are asked to serve.

Our thanks must go to Lynda who lined up some really good speakers for the year, she also had to book a couple of them in very short time as the booked speakers were indisposed. She is in the process of booking more for next year and when the list is complete we will publish it on the 'Events' page on the website.

We ran three events during the year. The first was a quiz in April and our thanks must go to the quiz committee who made all the arrangements and set the questions and generally provided us all with a really fun evening. The second was a barbecue which was held at the scout hut in July. Lots of thanks must go to David Shea who arranged the venue, got most of the food and did the cooking with the help of Bob LeBeau. Lots of others pitched in to make a very successful afternoon so thanks goes to them as well, even the weather did its bit. We hope to hold another next summer but have no details as yet. The third was the barn dance in November at the village hall, which at the time of writing hasn't yet taken place, but with the same band and venue as last year it should be a very good evening. Also worthy of a big thank you are the various Group Leaders for their organisational skills and keeping their groups up to date with the news of their activities, and of course the members of those groups who pitch in and share the work load by arranging activities as well. The groups are the lifeblood of our organisation and so it is good news that we have had another two new groups. A second Wine Group has been formed as the first had become over subscribed and a Weekenders group for all those looking for a bit of companionship and fun at weekends.

We have kept up contacts with the Essex Association of U3As. We have also had an attendance at the Essex Assoc. meetings in Chelmsford and while these meetings are not the most scintillatingly interesting events in the calendar we do it for our members and it is a scurrilous rumour that suggests the only reason we attend is in order to enjoy a tasty lunch afterwards in the Wine Cellar, these plans scuppered in May when the refurbishment of the Wine Cellar meant relocation of our meal. Again this year the monies paid for tea and coffee will go to the Essex Air Ambulance and also to Aspire, the spinal injuries charity, so when you get a cup of whatever and a biscuit or cake at our meetings please be generous and put some coins in the box. The Essex Air Ambulance costs in excess of £440,000 a month to run and is not funded from central government funds but by fundraising and private donations. Aspire does wonderful work providing practical help for people with spinal injuries.

Sadly this year we have lost two of our members, Pat Ford and Iris Dickens to cancer. Our thoughts this Christmas must go out to Peter and Ray and their families who have both lost lovely ladies who will be very much missed.

Finally our thanks to June Cave who edits this newsletter and does a great job for which we should be very grateful.

Ray Burns – Chairman.



Bird Watching 2015

Birds and the Weather are unpredictable, however our group visits from May to August have provided us with some enjoyable weather and birds.

Although we normally stay in Essex our May visit took us to one of the excellent RSPB reserves, Minsmere on the Suffolk coast. We then ventured into Suffolk again in June to visit Lackford Lacks near Bury St Edmunds, this is managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

We have been to Rainham Marshes several times and it always provides interest, whether its birds, insects, wild flowers or even strange boats on the Thames! John led this July visit.

Another reserve that we return to is Fingringhoe Wick, and we were able to see the work being carried to extend the area, which will provide even more outstanding habitat. Our route to this reserve gives us the opportunity to stop at the Abberton Reservoir. This stop was an added bonus in August as we were able to see an Osprey.

If you wish to know more detail about these group outings, visit the Crouch Valley web site and navigate to the Bird Watching Group subpages, where we provide a report of each visit.

While our bird watching activities are just a few hours once a month, since we started as a group, we have listed 118 different bird species. Our identification skills have increased along with the pleasure of enjoying each other's company.

Contacts for the group are Colin Martin and John Gable.

Report on Crouch Valley Birdwatching Group Visit to the RSPB Reserve at Rainham Marshes on 15th July 2015

The day started very modestly with only three members making the trip (with one more joining late morning) and the weather was cloudy and looked threatening.

Upon entering the Visitors Centre we were greeted by a hive of activity with perhaps 30 or more people milling around, all dressed with similar coloured T-shirts. We found out later that it was a group from Goldman Sachs on a Corporate Bonding visit to the Nature Reserve.

After leaving the Visitors Centre we were looking at birds flitting around and discussing whether one of them was a Whitethroat and we met one of the wardens who confirmed our identification and pointed out a Linnet flying by. Meeting some experts later on in the morning we also had valuable identification of a Green Sandpiper,

Greenshank, Dunlin, Yellow Legged Gull and Black tailed Godwits. They also confirmed that a bird of prey that we had seen earlier was indeed a Peregrine Falcon.

Whilst this expert advice was invaluable I feel that my highlight of the morning was watching a Kingfisher fishing.

After our circuit of the Reserve we had actually recorded seeing 46 different species (see list below).

After refreshments we were considering leaving when we heard that a Royal Navy Frigate would be passing along the River Thames. (For those who do not know the Reserve is on the River Thames a little down river from The Dartford Crossing). The Frigate, a Type 23, was HMS St. Alban's and had been in the pool of London for the week.

The four of us sat on the wall and were joined by one of the wardens, who had stopped by us in his 4 x 4 truck on the track that runs along the river at that point. Eventually we saw the Ship come into view round a bend in the river and we noticed that several hundred yards ahead was a small Rigid Inflatable Boat marked police and containing two personnel dressed in black wet suits. We realised that this was some advance security for the Frigate and indeed the warden thought they would be SBS. We were then a little taken back when it suddenly changed direction and came towards us at high speed. We realised that we were considered terrorist suspects. We were all looking through binoculars and the truck could easily have contained some sort of missile launcher and it was being partly obscured by one of our member sheltering from the hot sun with an umbrella. Fortunately this is not Greece and they quickly realised we were harmless and carried on their way.

Yes as I mentioned by this time the weather was gorgeous and everyone had a very rewarding visit. I reflected that in order to do this all we needed to be was a member of Crouch Valley U3A and not be

high powered bankers from Goldman Sacs. John Gable

Birds seen:

Little Grebe, Cormorant, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Shelduck, Gadwall, Mallard, Shoveler, Peregrine, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Common Tern, Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Swift, Kingfisher, Sand Martin, Swallow, Blackbird, Reed Warbler, Whitethroat, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Starling, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Reed Bunting.



Book Group

The Book Group continues meet every 3rd Monday of the month at 2-30, in the upstairs back room of the Village Hall.

Our local Library provides our reading material, and we are very grateful for the service given to us by the Library staff. Although we do indicate our preferences of the authors, sometimes there is a challenged to finish the book.

Some of the authors of the books recently read and discussed at our meetings are, Lionel Shriver, Fay Weldon, Hannah Kent, Daphne Du Maurier and Barbara Kingsolver.

Our two hours seem to pass quickly as we listen to the differing views that members have of the books we have read the preceding month. A break for a cup of tea is enjoyed, and the conversation continues.

Contact for the Book Group is Joan Martin.



(Proposed) Computer Improvers Group 2015

Games Group.

Games afternoon takes place on the 4th afternoon of the month we hold it in the Village Hall upstairs in the players lounge start at 2pm finish at 4 pm, cards, board games , scrabble, drafts, any games you wish to bring along , we also have use of the back room with pool table and snooker tables , so if you want an afternoon of fun away from the t.v come along and join us .

No need to book in just come along . Joyce Sach



Family History

Perhaps one of the best features of the Crouch Valley U3A Family History Group is the encouragement we get from dialogue with each other. Although each member researches their own 'tree', others can suggest a way forward and helpful advice.

The records we use have rested / been hidden/ lurked or something evocative on dusty shelves, some for centuries, it is only in recent years that they have been made increasingly available for home use via the internet. With the result, there are many stories to be told that can be included in our family histories.

The example here ends in quite a gruesome way! The story's focus is on Bury St Edmunds and the tiny village of Little Saxham, four miles to the west.

My sister Anne and her husband Derek moved into a property in Little Saxham in 1985. The house was just two minutes walk from the small 12th century Church. Ten years later they became interested in family history. To their astonishment, the research lead them to finding that Anne's Great Great Great Grandparents were buried in the nearby Churchyard.

Derek wrote at the time: "We thought that we might have difficulty locating the plot and headstone, since much of the churchyard has been cleared and levelled, with the headstones placed near to the Church itself. When we went to look, Anne found it in the original position, about ten yards to the north of the round tower, beneath a box tree

An inscription on the tomb concerning our 4x Great Grandfather reads:-

Nathaniel Martin died March 30th 1824 aged 64 years

Consider that ere long you must

Depart and then return to dust

Or suddenly, as well as I

By some sad accident may die

Over the years attempts have been made to find out how Nathaniel died. A breakthrough came in 2014 when I found that a newspaper had reported an inquest verdict. He had been accidentally killed in Hatter Street, Bury St Edmunds.

This year a member of our group discovered the last part of the mystery that I and my family had been seeking for 20 years. In the Bury & Norwich Post which was dated Wednesday 31st March 1824 the following was reported:-

'On Tuesday at 1 o'clock a dreadful accident happened opposite the office of this newspaper. A horse drawing a tumbrel, the property of Mr Rodwell of Saxham, took fright at the rattling of some iron which it contained, and ran off, when the wheel passed over the head of the driver, and he was killed on the spot, the blood pouring in streams down the road'.

An unfortunate ending for Nathaniel! Also reported was that he 'was a very steady man, and had worked as a labourer upon the farm occupied by Mr Rodwell upwards of 35 years. He had, previous to the above fatal accident, the misfortune to break both his thighs, and dislocate his arm'.

From an 1830 Directory, now available online, we find the Newspaper office was at number two Hatter Street, Bury St Edmunds. As the street layout has little changed in nearly two hundred years, we can today pinpoint the likely spot where the accident happened and with the aid of Google 'Streetview' we can take a look at the buildings on Hatter Street as it is now.

Colin Martin.

The sketch of St Nicolas, Little Saxham, is by the late Derek Turner.





Games Group

The Games group meets on the 4th Thursday afternoon of the month at the South Woodham Ferrers Village Hall. We meet upstairs in the players' lounge at 2pm. We have 2 hours of mixed games: cards, board games, darts, pool and snooker. Members are encouraged to bring their own games if they have a preference.

This group runs until the end of May then we have a break for the Summer holidays and start again in October. If you want to have some fun and get to know other people in the U3A. There is no need to book, just come along and you will be made most welcome.



Garden Group

The Garden Group has enjoyed some favourite visits to popular gardens in the last few months. This included Marks Hall gardens, a return visit to Oasis, that I would still love to visit if I am not on holiday. Then last month we went to Cambridge Botanical Gardens.

These were worth the trip to see the autumn colours and their amazing green houses, if you have not been you must put this on your list to visit.

I am arranging our annual visit to Perrywood's Garden centre at Tiptree, it is worth a visit just to see their spectacular Christmas range and displays. We normally have lunch there. You will need to let me know if you are going so we can arrange transport for those who don't drive.

We have had a number of new members join the group recently, there are now 26 on the garden group, If you wish to be removed from the list please send me an email, sheadave@hotmail.com Details of garden visits can be found on the web site.



A magnificence tree at Cambridge

Going Out Group

The Going Out Group has had a number of interesting outings in the last year. The two most memorable were within a few days of each other in August. The first on Saturday 15th seventeen of us went up to the Imperial War Museum at Duxford for a behind the scenes tour of the wartime buildings on the site. Colin Martin did an excellent write up of that visit which is on our website together with a number of photos.

The second on Wednesday 19th another seventeen of us visited the Houses of Parliament where we

had a very interesting guided tour. We weren't allowed to sit down on the benches of either the Lords or the Commons which is a shame as I am getting old and I could have done with a lay down and a nap by that time. After the tour ten of us had tea on the terrace, quite expensive but it's a chance to experience something that you might not get another chance to do.

There were other outings but as there is quite a bit of days out sharing between the Garden, Local History and Going Out Groups I couldn't necessarily claim any of the others as ours but it shows that it's worth joining all three groups for some interesting days out.



Jazz Appreciation

We've had a couple of visits to the Belvedere club recently. We saw the Skelton-Skinner All Star Septet which were very impressive playing selections from the small bands of Duke Ellington and Count Basie, so impressive that I bought a couple of their albums and booked to see them again when they appear at the Chelmsford Jazz Club in December. Then we saw the Harry Harris/Simon Bates Quartet who also gave an excellent performance. It amazes me that all these musicians who are so talented get so little public attention in comparison with the latest pretty-pretty boy bands but wasn't that always the case.

The Belvedere's Christmas Show is fully booked even as I write. It's very encouraging that a jazz club can sell out as often as the Belvedere does and it's a tribute to hard work and the appreciation of their public's taste that Phil & Carole Church, who run the club, are so successful.

The jazz highpoint of this year for me was the publication of Simon Spillett's biography of Tubby Hayes 'The Long Shadow of the Little Giant', a book ten years in the making and a masterpiece of research and enthusiasm for the subject that does credit both to the author and his subject who was probably Britain's greatest ever jazzman, an object lesson in how to do it. We are also very much looking forward to Simon's Tubby tribute set at Ronnie Scott's on November 1st.



Knit & Natter

We are a group of around 27 very industrious ladies, meeting upstairs in the Village Hall from 11 am to 1 pm on the first Monday of the month.

During our Sept meeting, a member of J's Hospice came to explain their work as we had donated some of our patchwork blankets. They look after people between 16 and 40 giving palliative care in their own homes. The blankets were gratefully received and this has given us the inspiration to carry on making them. Some of our ladies knit the squares and then pass them on to a very enthusiastic "sewer upper".

We are happy to knit any other items needed by any charity who would gain from our help. Please advise if you know of any such charity.

Brenda Neale

32039 nanaben@hotmail.co.uk

Local History Group

2015 has been a mixed year with some blank months through lack of ideas/volunteers and a cancellation through a miss-understanding, but generally another varied and interesting series of visits. These included Gainsborough House, Tilbury Fort, Sutton Hoo, Rayleigh Mill, Bata, Flatford Mill and a couple of us took advantage of the SWF U3A offer to join their coach trip to Ickworth House. Our next planned visit will be to Colchester Castle on 17th November and 2016 planning meeting will take place on the 8th December.



Spanish Conversation

This group started in 2011 with about 6 people. Sometimes we have had more but members drop out for various reasons. Currently we are down to 4 members. New People but we are now into quite complicated Spanish. Although I have been approached to start a Beginners group, so fare this has snot materialised. We meet on alternate Fridays at 1.30 in a members house



Strollers

Our strollers group meet weekly on a Tuesday morning 10.00 at the river car park, Marsh Farm road. Our usual stroll takes on the river footpath across the Fenn to Tropical Wings, we vary our walk on the first Tuesday of the month, and have enjoyed Strolls at Hanningfield, Hylands Park, Heybridge Basin & Hyde Hall. Our strolls always involve a refreshment stop & natter, and when we are further afield we usually have Lunch.

So if you fancy a stroll come and join us you will be made welcome. Pat Fayers

Table Tennis

We started playing table tennis in 2011 and we are still going strong thanks to the support of an enthusiastic and friendly group of players. A couple of years ago, we had too many players for one table and so we asked for a second table in the room so that no-one has to sit out for long and this has proved very successful.

If you would like to join our group we play table tennis every Wednesday from 7.00 to 8.00 p.m. in the Activity Room at the South Woodham Leisure Centre and you are welcome to come along for an hour of exercise and fun – not only for ladies!

Eira Jonson



Ten Pin Bowling

Ten pin bowling takes place twice a month at Maddison Heights in Maldon the 1st and the 3rd Thursday of the month we meet 9.50. Inside , we have two games with refreshments in between games, we have been going as a group for about three years now and some of us are getting quiet good so we would like some new members to come along and see if you can beat some of us .

Details of Ten Pin Bowling are on the website with my contact details

Joyce Sach .



Walkers

We will be meeting in early December to put our heads together for ideas to go in the 2016 programme of walks.

Throughout the past year we have experienced a wide range of walks from local routes e.g. in the Danbury, Woodham Walter & Steeple areas, to those slightly further afield around Tilbury and Fyfield and pretty much everywhere in between. We have passed by sites of local history, such as old churches, forts and windmills. We have completed walks along rivers, creeks and estuaries. We have marvelled at bluebells and sea heathers and admired other people's front (& sometimes back!) gardens. We have strolled amongst ancient and modern in the City! So never a dull moment for our Walking group. We all feel invigorated at the end of each walk and reward ourselves with a grateful stop for refreshments at a nearby pub or café. If you feel you would like to join the group and own a pair of walking boots (if not, then ask Father Christmas to bring you a pair on 25th Dec,) please feel free to join us. Walks are normally mornings and never more than 5/6 miles max. We usually meet at SWF Village Hall car park at 10.00 for car sharing. During winter & early spring months we go out on the last Wednesday of each month. When the clocks change forward for BST we then try to include another walk on the 2nd Monday of each month, but this can be variable, depending on Bank Holiday Monday dates. Check our Crouch Valley U3A website for more info.

Lesley Dearing - Group Contact

Weekenders Group (new)

This group has been started following some of our members finding themselves at a loose end one Sunday a few weeks ago, and arranging to go to the Fly-In of lovely old planes at Stow Maries Aerodrome (see picture). We had a very enjoyable day and so we are getting together a list of those who are sometimes on their own at weekends and would like to enjoy get-togethers and days out on a Saturday or Sunday, as all of the groups at the moment meet during the week.

With the nice weather recently, for three Sundays we have had a stroll along the river from noon, picking blackberries, and ending up at the Marsh Farm Tea Shop for a coffee/tea. With the weather turning colder and nastier, we could arrange to meet for coffee in town on a Saturday and/or Sunday with others, but if there is something on (indoors) that some of us would like to go to, the group would give us someone else to go with who had the same interests. Weekends can sometimes be lonely during the Winter if family is not near, or away or busy, and it is nice to break up the days with a get-together with others.

It is a very informal group, hopefully with all of us coming up with ideas of where to go and what to do. I am quite happy to be the contact and send out emails, but any suggestions from others are very welcome. If any members are interested in joining and were not at the September meeting to hear about it, please contact me or come and add yourself to the list at one of the monthly meetings.

Jan Talikowski



Wine Appreciation

Wines from Iberia, wines to accompany summer fruits, cocktails and wines from Africa have all been the tasting themes of the wine appreciation group in recent months. Members responded well to a request to dress appropriately for drinking cocktails with the 1920's and the Caribbean having an influence on their attire. Seven cocktails were prepared and drunk over the course of the evening, which got merrier as time went on. Africa was the tasting for our most recent meeting. Members noted the of a very good sparkling wine by Graham Beck sold by Waitrose and no doubt it will be

offered to family and friends over the Christmas period. They also liked a Rockridge Sauvignon Blanc 2012, which can be bought from Marks and Spencers and a very nice Charles Beck red Babera 2008. Over the next few months we shall be tasting Chilean wines, some more from South Africa and Christmas drinks.

Earlier in the year we tasted beers at one of our meetings. Between 31 October-2 November the Maldon and Dengie Branch of CAMRA will holding a second Beer Festival in South Woodham Ferrers following the success of their event last year. The event is to be held at Champions Manor Community Centre and is open from 11am-11pm on each of the three days. So if you enjoy good beer and cider make sure you put the dates in your diary.

The importance of a 'Power of Attorney'

Case History:

My brother's wife has just been admitted into a home with acute Dementia. Because they do not have a 'Power of Attorney' he is unable to access their investments and bank accounts without his wife's signature, which is now impossible.

It will take about several months to allow him to obtain the legal right of access to these funds. He needs to raise about £48,000 per annum to pay for the home.

He is worried out of his mind: if only they had both taken out a 'Power of Attorney' when they made out their Wills and were in good health, none of this would have happened.

None of us know what is in store for us in the future.

Many Thanks

Jan Robertson, Maldon U3A.

Group	Contact Name	Phone No.	email	Meeting time
Bird Watching	Colin Martin	327129	cs.martin@live.co.uk	Third Wednesday in the month
Book Group	Joan Martin	327129	jm.martin@talktalk.net	Third Monday of the month at 2.30pm in the Village Hall
Bowling	Ray Dickens	426663	raymond_dickens@hotmail.co.uk	Summer Only
Computer Group	Lesley Gregg	400779	lesley.gregg@greggzone.net	Second Wednesday of the month. 10.30 am at the Village Hall
Family History	Colin Martin	327129	cs.martin@live.co.uk	Fourth Thursday morning
Games Group	Joyce Sach	324936	joycesach@hotmail.co.uk	Fourth Thursday of the month at 2.00pm in the Village Hall. Begins again September
Gardening	David Shea	324645	sheadave@hotmail.com	Afternoon of the third Thursday of the month
Going Out Group	Ray Burns	323226	burns4@waitrose.com	Non specific outings
Jazz Appreciation	Ray Burns	323226	burns4@waitrose.com	By Arrangement