



NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2024

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN, JEANETTE ROTHWELL

ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

- Calling all members.
- This is your chance to ensure the future of Leigh-on -Sea u3a
 - We need your help
 - Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary
 - Committee member
- PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE join the Committee or we will have to close
 - Call Jeanette or speak to a Committee Member

MESSAGE FROM CHRISTINE MAJOR, Web Manager

You will be aware (and as stated above) that in order to continue as a u3a we desperately need new Committee members to take on the roles of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Speakers Secretary. Our website <https://u3asites.org.uk/leigh/home> has links to the job descriptions on the News page.

Please read them and have a serious think about putting your name forward. The roles are not onerous but without support we will not be able to continue our lovely u3a.

11th APRIL – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETNG

Please come along, vote for your new Committee, and have your say. Otherwise, as has already been stated, it'll be "Goodbye Leigh-on-Sea u3a". Please don't let that happen. As a member since 2009, and having served as Membership Secretary, Vice Chairman, and Chairman (twice), and having edited the Newsletter for more years than I care to remember, I can honestly say that being a member of this u3a, and serving on the Committee, has been such a tremendous and rewarding experience, not to say good fun, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world – such lovely people, so many enjoyable Groups and outings. Please keep it going.

(Sally Hayes)

14th MARCH MEETING

SICILY - ITS HEROES AND VILLAINS – A talk by Pauline Short



A most interesting talk from Pauline, who regaled us with some lovely stories about Sicily. She said that, following a few years going on long haul flights, having happily enjoyed two weddings and a grandchild in a year, they wanted somewhere cheaper to get to and with a fascinating history. Sicily entirely fitted the bill. They went entirely freelance, travelling by bus and train; a good way to see Sicily, the countryside and its medieval towns. She added, of course you cannot talk of Sicily without talking about the Mafia, a criminal organisation, in direct contrast to the warmth, sincerity and generosity of the Sicilians, a deeply religious people. It was appropriate to end with Taormina which has attracted artists, writers and poets, but also home to its most celebrated ruin, the Greek amphitheatre, sitting in the shadow of Mount Etna. A wonderful island, well worth a visit.

BEACON

A reminder that Mary Watson is our new Beacon Administrator, and Group Leaders – or any member – should contact her for help and information.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

All Reports written by the Group Leaders unless otherwise stated. Please note any additional information on any Groups may be obtained from Christine French, Groups Co-ordinator.

LUNCH GROUP 1 (Jo Gluck)

6th March – This month we went to the Carvery at Saxon Hall. It was extremely good value, and the food was superb. They even had an old-fashioned sweet trolley groaning with every dessert imaginable although I went for a hot option, blackberry and apple crumble - boring perhaps but delicious.!

Next month we are booked into Cubanos in Elmsleigh Drive and any Lunch Group member not already on the list but wishing to join us, please contact me.



SCRABBLE (Duncan Horner)



After a delayed start to the new group, three members managed to meet in February. During the afternoon, 3 games were played; on the first game, one player started the game with a 7-letter word clearing their rack with a bonus 50 points, leaving the other 2 players amazed! (Picture shows the last game played) It would appear we may be 5 for our next meeting in March. We may be a new group but seems to be expanding. There is capacity at my home for 2 boards so 8 members can play at the same time, so space for new members at the moment.

Are you up for an afternoon of Scrabble? Please let Christine French have your

name to pass on. Thank you.



LUNCH GROUP 2 (Barbara Slade/Sheena Walker)

28th February – 26 of us visited Thamesbreeze, a lovely restaurant in Leigh Road. We all agreed that the starters given to us were almost a main meal as the portions were so big! The varied 2-course lunch priced at £18:50 (including tip) was well worth it and we hope to go back there. Although there was music in the background, it was hard to hear as our group chatter was quite loud!

For our next lunch we will be returning to Braken which is situated along the London Road. **(Report by Barbara Slade)**

WALKING GROUP (Leo Sleight)

25th February – Despite many of the paths churned up to a morass of mud, we managed completion of our route from Cherry Orchard Lane to Jubilee Park Lake and beyond. Considering the wintery conditions, a good number of wildfowl were seen including unusually a solitary cormorant. Further on as we exited Scrub Wood onto the Roach Valley north ridge, Southend in the distance, we had to overcome more tricky paths with brambles trying remove our woolly hats. Well done everyone for maintaining balance and good spirits over very challenging ground and joining us for lunch at The Cock Inn.



LOCAL HISTORY (Sally Hayes)

23rd February (a week later than usual) – We continued to hear members' research of local events taking place in various decades – from the 1800s through to the present day. All very interesting and well researched.

15th March – We were pleased to welcome Simon Deacon, a local surveyor, born, bred, grew up and schooled in Southend, who has completed a lot of research into various topics of local interest. He gave a most interesting, illustrated talk about Chalkwell and Westcliff, including the building of the Chalkwell Estate, with wonderful views down to the Estuary, the Crowstone (pictured in Priory Park) and the beginning of the railway. He has a number of topics under his belt, and we hope to welcome him back later in the year.

19th April – A local history walk, organised by Sheena and Maureen.

17th May – May meeting cancelled as the Group Leader and our “catering executives” will be on holiday!



CHURCH VISITING (Susan Bond)

29th February – Visit to St Lawrence Church Eastwood, (near the airport). Our guide for the visit is Mr Martin Newman, the Deputy Church Warden. Report next month.

For more information about this Group, contact Sue.

ART APPRECIATION (Eddie Bailey)

This month members of the Group discussed their own choice of 'Artist of the Month'.

These are just a few of those discussed.

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, known mononymously as Caravaggio, was an Italian painter active in Rome for most of his artistic life. During the final four years of his life, he moved between Naples, Malta, and Sicily until his death.

Gustave Courbet started and dominated the French movement toward realism. Art critics and the public were accustomed to pretty pictures that made life look better than it was. Courbet, against much opposition, truthfully portrayed ordinary places and people. Born in June 1819, he went to Paris in 1841, supposedly to study law, but he soon decided to study painting and learned by copying the pictures of master artists. Courbet's early work was exhibited successfully in 1849. *The Stone-Breakers*, followed by *Burial at Ornans* in 1850, were both quite unlike the romantic pictures of the day because they showed peasants in realistic settings instead of the rich in glamorized situations. In 1855 he completed a huge canvas, *The Artist's Studio*, and, when it was refused for an important exhibition, Courbet boldly displayed his work himself near the exhibition hall.

Keith Waring, street artist between 1980 and 1989. Having achieved international recognition and participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions, his first solo exhibition in New York was held at the Westbeth Painters Space in 1981. His artworks were always colourful and animated, and tackled some hard-hitting and challenging subjects concerning people, not just in America but around the world.

Paul Cézanne was a French Post-Impressionist painter whose work introduced new modes of representation and influenced avant-garde artistic movements of the early 20th century. Cézanne is said to have formed the bridge between late 19th-century Impressionism and early 20th century Cubism.

Thomas Gainsborough was an English portrait and landscape painter, draughtsman, and printmaker. He is considered one of the most important British artists of the second half of the 18th century. One of Gainsborough's most famous pictures, *The Blue Boy*, was probably painted in 1770. This subject in Van Dyck dress, he was following an 18th-century fashion in painting, as well as doing homage to his hero. Among the portraits Thomas Gainsborough painted while living in Bath is a small likeness of a young boy in shirt and waistcoat, clutching a handful of paintbrushes and glancing anxiously out of the feigned oval in which he's framed. The boy – dubbed 'the Pitminster Boy', for the small Somerset village he came from – was one of Gainsborough's studio assistants, a local lad who used to carry the artist's materials and pass him brushes when he went into the countryside to paint landscapes. The portrait is hastily done, but the expressiveness Gainsborough captures in the boy's face – the hesitation around the selection of a brush – indicates the remarkable attention he paid to the way people around him looked can be viewed in Sudbury.



Others discussed included James Gilroy and Michael Derek Elworthy Jarman.

10th April – Our next meeting when our subject is the genre: Futurism.

QUIZ GROUP (Sally Hayes)

28th February – Another fun evening, although our numbers were down, but Denise and Keith posed the questions and struck a very happy medium between very easy and very hard! Their interval table round of American Presidents was excellent.



We meet on the 4th Wednesday evening each month, at Leigh Community Centre at 7 p.m., finishing at 9. I would like to welcome new members, so if anyone is interested in joining the Group, or would like more information, please let me know.

MARITIME and AVIATION GROUPS (Tony Weber)

MARITIME GROUP

13th March – We had a comfortably crowded meeting, and the usual fiendishly tricky quiz was compiled by Phil and won jointly by Richard and myself.

The One Fact Wonder was on Aircraft Carriers. Offerings included HMSs Formidable and Unicorn getting too close to battles; the USS Gerald R Ford; the British development of the Angled Flight Deck and Mirror Landing System; Problems on HMS Queen Elizabeth; the Furious, Glorious and Courageous; Carrier Aircraft involved in the Sinking of the Bismarck and a rant from myself on the Limitations of the Queen Elizabeth class.

Topics raised and discussed included the Development of RN Carriers in the 1930s and '40s; Convoy HX84 and the Admiral Scheer; the Modernisation of HMS Victorious; the Sieble Ferries and German barges intended for Operation Sealion; the Westfall Larsen shipping company; the Sinking of the Lusitania, Conspiracy or not? And the Ironclad La Gloire.

10th April – The next meeting when the OFW will be on Surviving Active Steamships.

AVIATION GROUP

28th February – We held a well-attended meeting; the quiz, devised by Phil, was won narrowly by yours truly. The One Fact Wonder was on Prototype Aircraft that never went into production. Offerings included the Bristol Brabazon, the Avro Canada C102, the Miles M20, the Miles M52, the Lockheed CL 1201 nuclear powered transport and the Hughes H4 “Spruce Goose”.

Topics raised and discussed included the Brabazon Committee, the Hawker Hunter, the Bristol Freighter, Pan American, and the Bombardier C220.

27th March – The next meeting when the OFW will be on Russian Passenger Jets.

Contact Tony if you would like more information.

OUTINGS GROUP

This Group is now under the leadership of Margaret Dowding and Pat Watkins, with the assistance of Alan Jaspas and Barbara Pickney.

22nd February – On a wet and windy day we set off for Ely. On arrival we were met by our hosts at Oliver Cromwell House with coffee and biscuits. We were shown around the house by a lady in costume. We walked



through various rooms as she told us about Cromwell's life and how people lived at that time. A couple of our group tried on the heavy armour! We visited a bedchamber and, with the lights dimmed, we felt an eerie presence in the room, which was supposedly haunted by a ghost. The kitchen, with replicas of food laid out, was accompanied by an account of victuals and drink they had consumed, mainly meat. Their table manners included being served with a chamber pot, should they wish to relieve themselves whilst eating and drinking, the contents being thrown away outside!

After lunch in one of the pubs, we arrived at the beautiful Ely Cathedral. After admiring the amazing architecture and decoration, we visited the wedding exhibition that was ongoing. Another addition was the comprehensive



Stained-Glass Museum. This had details on the making of stained glass, as well as many wonderful examples from the 13th Century to the present day. A great day out apart from the weather!!

WEBSITE

If your group has any interesting news or pictures, please remember that we have a website that needs updating to reflect our activities. Christine Major is grateful for any updates, including photos to brighten up the site. The Newsletter is always available to read on the website u3asites.org.uk/leigh. Christine would particularly appreciate pictures for the Welcome page of the website.

NEWSLETTER

Once again, I hope you have enjoyed reading this Newsletter and have found it interesting. I welcome any feedback anyone has. I would like to ask Group Leaders, please do let me have a write up (with a photo if possible) of any get-togethers that are going ahead for future issues – I am sure all our members like to know what the Groups are doing.

It's sad to note that so many of our Groups are falling by the wayside. Please do support the Groups you are in, and think about helping to start new ones, or revive some of the older ones. At one time we had 40 Groups, sadly much diminished now. Groups are the lifeblood of any u3a and, without them, it's difficult to know how we can keep going. Similarly, it has been increasingly difficult to find members to join the Committee. Please do think about what skills you can bring. **No Committee, No Group Leaders, No u3a!!**

We know there are members who do not have email; if you know such a member (maybe someone in your Group), you might like to print a copy of the Newsletter and give to them or, let them know, if they submit a sae each month to Sheena Walker, Membership Secretary, copies can be posted to them.

AND FINALLY

Just a reminder: Please do support our u3a by coming along to our monthly meetings, and remembering “your u3a needs you”, and the Committee needs you too!!!



Thank you to all contributors.

Editor: Sally Hayes