

Issue 116

RAYLEIGH  
u3a  
learn, laugh, live

## APRIL 2024 NEWSLETTER



### **Happy Easter to all our Members!** **Also 1st April brings the start of a new Membership year. We hope that you all have an enjoyable and fulfilling year with us!**

The blossom and bulbs are out and the weather is finally cheering up (well it was when I wrote this!) and the days are getting longer. The promise of sunshine and warmth is in the air, together with some excitement over what the coming months may bring.

Maybe it's a new interest to explore, or the opportunity to meet with like-minded people to socialise and get to know? Do look at our Group Vacancies on the last page which may whet your appetite for something new!

And please do support your Committee by offering to help if you can - we only need you to be enthusiastic, willing to give a little of your time and ideally a little computer literate. Our Speaker Secretary who organises our Monthly Meeting speakers is stepping down and this is one of the roles we need to fill. She has lists and contacts to pass on so it is a relatively straight-forward role to take on but a very important one if we wish to be able to offer such a variety of interesting topics at our meetings.

Do speak to any of our existing Committee - you would be welcome to attend a Committee meeting to see what it is all about!

Thank you - Debbie Bamber, Newsletter Editor

**Thank you to all the contributors to this edition of the Newsletter — we love to get news of what is happening in your groups and the photos are an added bonus. Do keep them coming by email to: [debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk](mailto:debbiebamber@rayleighu3a.co.uk). Closing date for the June 2024 Newsletter is 15th May.**

# FUTURE MONTHLY SPEAKERS

## 3rd April 2024

We are delighted to welcome back Andrew Baker who will be speaking to us on the History of Russia - giving insights into the times through which the Russian people have lived and the huge changes that have shaped the country it is today.



## 1st May 2024



Alison Mees - Wildlife Photographer, returns to give a talk on Safaris in Africa. Alison will transport us to Africa by sharing her journey with her photographs and stories. She shares her experiences having lived and worked for 16 years in the safari industry. Her illustrated talk covers her travels in Selous, Serengeti, Mara with camps, wildlife & community projects.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 3rd April - Main Monthly Meeting 1.45pm Mill Hall

**Friday 19th April - Cyber Security Talk 2pm or 3pm at Mill Hall - last few spaces left - please sign up at the April Monthly Meeting**

Wednesday 1st May - AGM and Main Monthly Meeting 1.45pm Mill Hall

**Monday 20th May - Talk for All - Grace Darling & the Fine Art of Saving Lives at Sea 1pm Cloister Hall, Holy Trinity Church - Tickets available at the April & May Meetings**

Wednesday 5th June - Main Monthly Meeting 1.45pm Mill Hall

Tuesday 3rd December 2024 - u3a Christmas Lunch!

## NOTICES

Sadly we have been informed of the death of one of our members. We have sent condolences from Rayleigh u3a to their loved ones.

*Stanley Burdett—passed away on 22nd February*

# RAYLEIGH u3a AGM

**The Seventeenth Annual General Meeting of the  
Rayleigh u3a  
will take place on Wednesday 1st May 2024.  
At The Mill Hall, Rayleigh  
commencing at 2.00pm  
followed by our Speaker at 2.30pm**

Copies of all paperwork will be displayed on the noticeboard at the April Meeting, will be emailed to members and will also be available to view on the Rayleigh U3A website.

We have vacancies for a Chairman, a Vice Chairman and Committee Members, including a Speaker Secretary.

For more information, please contact the Secretary, Jane Reeve

Nomination Forms (available at the April Meeting, on the website and will be emailed) must be returned to the Secretary, by Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Any motions which you would like to raise at the AGM, will need a Proposer and Seconder, and should also be submitted to the Secretary by 10th April 2024.

Jane can be contacted on 07931 584140 or

[janereeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk](mailto:janereeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk)

**Please consider becoming part of the Committee!**

Membership of Rayleigh u3a encourages us all to participate and support the running of the organisation but we are finding it harder and harder to get members to help which will impact on what we can offer to our members.

## TALKS FOR ALL

# Grace Darling & the Fine Art of Saving Lives at Sea Monday 20th May 2024

**Cloister Hall, Holy Trinity Church, Rayleigh**

**Doors Open 1.00pm Talk 1.30pm**

**Refreshments included**

**Ticket Price: £4.00**



Dr James Taylor, a former curator of pictures at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich will talk about Grace Darling's daring rescue of steamship passengers off the Northumberland coast in 1838 that brought her international fame.

Discover more about her bravery and short life living in the Brownsman and Longstone Lighthouse alongside the artists who helped to keep her in the public eye well into the 1970s.

She became the 'poster girl' of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution that celebrates its 200th anniversary in 2024, and was the first woman to be awarded their medal for gallantry.

**Tickets available at April & May Monthly Meetings**

# 'Talks for All' Dementia Friends Information Session.

On Monday 11th March we welcomed Mr Mark Neville, Dementia Friendly Communities Coordinator for Alzheimer's Society. His role is to educate and support businesses, organisations, Health and Education providers, and broader communities to have a better understanding of the impact of Dementia, to enable them to adjust their services to meet the needs of those affected, and to develop 'Dementia Friendly Communities'. He travels through Mid and South Essex giving talks to groups as diverse as primary school children, providers of Health and Social Care, the hospitality industry, travel and tourism, and groups such as ours.

What could have been a sad and pessimistic session was in fact largely positive and surprising fun; Mark was a very warm and engaging speaker, with 20 years experience with people with dementia. It was an interactive session with Mark actively encouraging questions, comments and 'lived experience' observation from members present.

Mark told us that 1 in 3 of us will develop dementia, but that it must be remembered that 2 in 3 will not. He said that although research is progressing, that a blood test to predict Alzheimer's looks promising, and medication may help some people, dementia is non preventable and some forms are hereditary or familial (Huntingdon's disease). However there are many things that we can do to try to lessen its impact - these include maintaining general good health, weight management, not smoking (including vapes), keeping to recommend alcohol levels, and crucially, keeping an active and enquiring mind, to remain sociable and avoid becoming isolated. It was suggested that doing puzzles such as sudoku and crosswords may help keep dementia at bay, but this, whilst fun, has no scientific backing.

Mark also used a very clever analogy to illustrate how dementia impacts an individual. It is too lengthy to recount here, but I encourage you to search online, 'Alzheimer's Book Case analogy', and you will also find a YouTube video on the same presented by one of Mark's colleagues.

It was a very informative and valuable session

Report by Juli Fowles.



# BUMPER CROP OF NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS!

## Rayleigh U3A Wine Appreciation Group

Do you like wine ? How do you buy your wine ? Do you try new ones and risk spending money on one that you will not enjoy or just stick to the ones you know you like and thereby miss out on finding new favourites?

The wine appreciation group provides an opportunity for members to increase their knowledge and appreciation of wine in a friendly and relaxed environment by tasting a range of different wines.

Normally 8 bottles of wine are presented to the group for tasting with notes on what to look out for on the nose and palate followed by a discussion on what we think of them. No special knowledge is required and everybody's opinion is valued and over time everyone finds new wines that they can buy confident that they will enjoy them.

Membership is limited – there are only so many tastings that can be squeezed out of a bottle – but there are likely to be some vacancies coming up so if you are interested in joining us please give your details to Paul Reeve the Group Co-Ordinator who is setting up a waiting list for those wishing to join. Cheers!

Bob Keeley Wine Group Leader

## YOGA PRACTICE

The Yoga Practice group is a new group which started last November and is going from strength to strength.

Yoga is about stretching and holding the pose . Everyone works to their limit. It's turned out to be a very friendly successful group.

Sue Suri - Group Leader



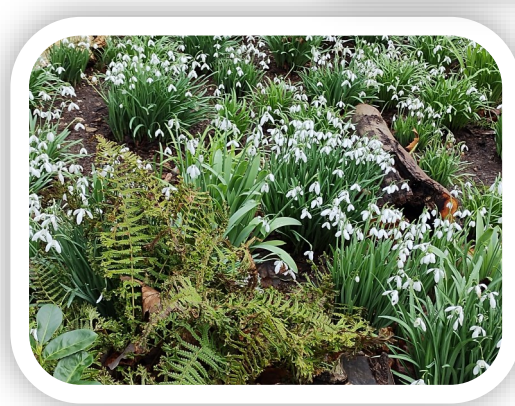
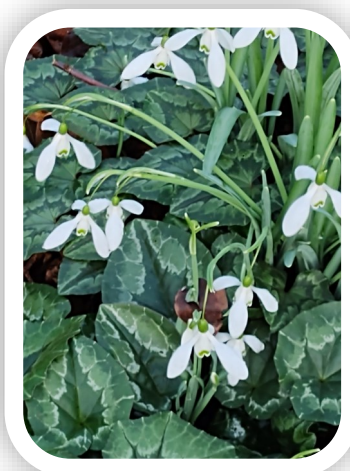
## **GARDENING GROUP 1**

Our visit, on the 14<sup>th</sup> February, to Anglesey Abbey to see the snowdrops went very well and we all enjoyed ourselves, especially as it was so mild and amazingly rain free - so lucky.

Such impressive and pretty gardens with snowdrops, aconites and crocus. Many early spring flowering shrubs too, which emitted a beautiful perfume. The Abbey itself was wonderful to walk round.

We also had an excellent lunch and lots of chat.

Gay Groombridge



## **COFFEE & CONVERSATION FOR LADIES**

Our group started with just three members in November 2023. Initially we got to know each other and our conversations grew into recommending holidays and places of interest we had visited, our hobbies and in the week before Christmas, our family festive traditions and memories of our childhood Christmases, but we chat about almost anything and have a laugh too. Two new members joined our group in the New Year and we are a settled group of five now, who enjoy each other's company.

We meet in a coffee shop in Rayleigh as some of our group do not drive and find it difficult to attend group meetings held in people's homes. We have been very good and have not be tempted by the cakes on display, yet!!!

We meet roughly every 2 weeks on a Monday afternoon at 2.30pm which is usually a quiet day and time, apart from school holidays, which we try to avoid.

It's a great way to meet new people, make new friends, enjoy a coffee (or cup of tea) in a convivial way. Anyone interested, there is the possibility of starting a second separate group.

Barbara Whitehead - Group Leader

## **GARDENING GROUP 2 visit Warley Place**

On a bright sunny day in February members of the newly formed Gardening Group 2 visited Warley Place to see the snowdrops. We had a guided tour learning about the history of the gardens and seeing the beautiful flowers including hundreds of snowdrops that grow in the nature reserve.

The Willmott family, comprising Frederick Willmott, his wife Ellen and his two daughters Ellen Ann and Rose, moved to Warley Place in 1875. The three women were all keen gardeners, but it was Ellen Ann who really transformed the grounds into one of the most celebrated gardens in the country. Her father died in 1892 and her mother in 1898, her sister Rose having married into the Berkeley family in 1891 and moving to Spetchley Park, near Worcester, in 1897.

As well as developing the gardens in 1882 Ellen, at 24 years of age, started on her new alpine garden engaging Jacob Maurer from Switzerland in 1894 to oversee it. It was a major undertaking, involving building a ravine with a stream running along it and a special cave for her filmy ferns. The ravine and the massive rocks exist to this day, but sadly there is no sign of the original plants.

Jacon Maurer stayed at Warley until Ellen died forty years later. The cottage in which he lived, with his wife and nine children, was South Lodge which still stands by the entrance to Warley Place.

Ellen Willmott soon made a name for herself in horticulture and helped to finance expeditions to acquire new plants. Queen Mary, Queen Alexandra and Princess Victoria visited her, and her garden became famous throughout Britain and beyond. She was one of two women awarded the RHS Medal of Honour in Queen Victoria's Jubilee Year, 1897. The other was Gertrude Jekyll.

Sadly, in some ways she spent all her money on the garden and her musical and other interests and died, in 1934, almost penniless. Many of the rarer plants were removed to Spetchley Park to be cared for by the Berkeley family, but some of the trees and shrubs exist to this day.

The land and house was purchased then the house was demolished in 1939, the garden reverting to a wilderness. It was leased to the Essex Naturalists' Trust (later Essex Wildlife Trust) in 1977 and has gradually been brought up to its present standard as a nature reserve, but still retaining as many as possible of the features of the original garden.

Val Whitehouse - Co-Group Leader





## **STROLLING GROUP 2 - NEW**

With the help and advice of Val Skam (Strolling Group 1), Strolling Group 2 was set up.

There are 10 of us in the group, meeting up on the 2nd Monday in the month for a stroll, a chat and we usually have lunch together too.

So far, the places we have walked /strolled have been along the seafront to Southchurch Park , Victoria Station down to Priory Park, and again along the seafront to the Cliffs Pavillion.

Thank you all that have joined the group .

Carol Hyde - Group Leader

## **SIT & SEW GROUP - NEW**

The Sit and Sew group is really just starting to get going. We met for the first time just before Christmas but everyone agrees that it is a most enjoyable pastime and a very pleasant afternoon.

We meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month for a relaxed session of hand sewing. This can be embroidery, needlepoint, cross stitch or hand pieced patchwork. The attendees choose their own project but help is at hand if needed. Tea and a chat are also par for the course!

At the moment we have space for a couple more folk. Beginners are most welcome. Tuition and guidance are available to anyone wanting to take up needlecraft for the first time.

Lesley Lovett - Group Leader

*See pictures below of some of the projects the members are working on.*



## **DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP**

In January Jim and Amanda arranged a portrait photography session in the Cloister Room, Holy Trinity Church Cloister.

A back drop was set up and we had a beautiful model - baby Lottie. What a star she was! We all took photos and then each selected our five favourites.

Lottie's mum Laura selected the one she liked best which was one taken by John Edwards - well done John! We have had it printed and framed for Laura to say thank you.

Amanda Lowe - Co Group Leader

## **WAFFLING FOR MEN - NEW**

This group starting meeting in November last year and is proving to be very successful with 16 members joining so far. Members meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday each month and on alternate months meet either at a pub in Rayleigh around lunchtime or visit places of interest.

Last month, the Group spent a few hours ten-pin bowling at CJ's in Hockley which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Visits planned over the next few months include a trip to Stow Maries WW1 airfield, London Transport Museums and Crazy Golf and in fact the group has a list of nearly 20 locations it intends visiting already on their ideas board.

With many of our groups more predominantly of interest to the ladies in our u3a, this is proving a great way for our men to spend some time with like-minded guys and is our equivalent of the 'Men's Shed' operating in many communities.

Paul Reeve - Group Leader

## **SUNDAY LUNCH GROUP 2 - Waiting to start**

Our existing Sunday Lunch Group is very successful and is full with a number of members on the waiting list to join.

A further group could easily be established meeting on a different Sunday and perhaps someone might be interested on taking on the role of arranging these or indeed sharing the organisation with somebody else.

The Group Leader of the existing group would be very happy to share her planning thoughts with anyone interested in starting a second group.

Do speak with Paul Reeve if you would like to find out more.

## **VISITING INTERESTING PLACES IN ESSEX go backstage at Chelmsford Theatre**

A fascinating tour backstage at the Chelmsford Theatre was given to members of the Visiting Interesting Places in Essex Group by Nick Wheatley who was extremely knowledgeable about everything concerning the theatre.

We were shown all the interesting places visitors to the theatre do not normally see including backstage dressing rooms, the Green Room (which was actually white), the room where stage props are constructed, the prompt area, the stage lighting and much more.

Nick explained the full workings of a theatre back stage and how performances are brought to an audience.

Chelmsford Theatre started as a multi-purpose venue in May 1962 known as the Assembly Hall for dances, talks and meetings (the sprung floor is still there but now unseen). In 1977 Chelmsford Council assumed full operating and programming responsibility. In 1982 came the addition of the Cramphorn Studio (anyone remember Cramphorn's shops?) using a fund left by Alderman Cramphorn. It was adjacent and connected to the renamed Civic Theatre which eventually had an auditorium and was developed into a proper theatre.

In the Summer of 2022, the building closed for only the second time in its history to give the front of house a makeover and re-opened in January 2023. The Chelmsford Theatre can seat 500 and The Studio can seat 145. This is a more intimate and flexible auditorium used for local and community groups to perform, host weekly lunchtime concerts and also live screenings.

We learnt so much about the workings behind the scenes and how performances are booked to appear at the theatre.

Val Whitehouse - Co Group Leader



# EXISTING GROUPS WITH VACANCIES

Please note that vacancy levels change over time, so please treat this list as indicative.

- ART (1<sup>st</sup> Thursday morning)**
- BADMINTON (every Monday & Tuesday at 4pm  
at Rayleigh Leisure Centre)**
- BOOK READING 4 (4<sup>th</sup> Monday afternoon)**
- CERAMICS (1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday morning)**
- COFFEE & CONVERSATION FOR LADIES 2  
(starting a second group)**
- CREATIVE WRITING (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday)**
- DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY (2<sup>nd</sup> Monday)**
- FAMILY HISTORY 2 (4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday)**
- GARDENING 1 (4<sup>th</sup> Friday)**
- GARDENING 2 (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday)**
- KNIT & NATTER 3 (day yet to be determined)**
- LONGER WALKS GROUP (2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday)**
- PATCHWORK & TEA (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday afternoon)**
- REAL ALE (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday lunchtime)**
- RUMMIKUB (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday)**
- SIT AND SEW (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday afternoon)**
- TABLE TENNIS (1<sup>st</sup> Tues & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed at  
Rayleigh Leisure Centre)**
- VISITING INTERESTING PLACES IN ESSEX (3<sup>rd</sup> Monday)**
- WAFFLING FOR MEN (4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday)**
- WALKING (there are 3 groups – some have vacancies)**
- WINE APPRECIATION (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday evening)**

For more information or to register your interest, contact:

**[paulreeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk](mailto:paulreeve@rayleighu3a.co.uk) or 07825 430159**

Do contact Paul for a chat if you are interested in starting up a new interest Group - Paul will be able to offer you advice and support in getting started.